

JAMES SMITH REID

1846-1926

JAMES SMITH REID, son of John Reid, schoolmaster, was born at Sorn, Ayrshire, on May 3, 1846. At an early age he was taken to Arbroath, where his school education began. While still young the boy had the great advantage of being moved to London, an experience even now rare among the sons of Scottish schoolmasters. From the City of London School he passed to Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1865. His classical course at Cambridge was brilliant. He was bracketed Senior Classic in 1868, in which year he gained the Browne medal for a Latin Epigram, and was Senior Chancellor's Medallist in 1869. In the same year he graduated B.A., and was later elected Fellow of Christ's, where also he was assistant tutor. This Fellowship he had to resign on his marriage in 1872. Meantime he had taken the M.A. of London, with the gold medal for classics (1869). Concurrently with his classical work, he had been studying Law. He was Whewell Law Scholar in 1870, and graduated LL.M. in 1872. During the following six years he held the Secretaryship of the Joint Board for School Examination, an administrative post which, though not in itself without importance, seriously hindered the progress of his research. Yet, when account is taken of this and of his activity in teaching, his output during these and the immediately following years is remarkable. He was classical lecturer at Pembroke 1873-8, and again 1880-5. He began his long connexion with Gonville and Caius College, of which society he was elected Fellow on June 11, 1878, with the duty of Lecturer in Classics attached. In 1885 he became a Tutor and a member of the Governing Body, and also graduated Litt.D. The years during which Reid and E. S. Roberts taught at Caius were the most notable period of successes in classical scholarship in the history of that College. In 1899 he vacated his tutorship

on appointment to the professorship of Ancient History in the University of Cambridge. Among distinctions which came to him were the Hon. Litt.D. of Dublin (1892), the Hon. LL.D. St. Andrews, an honorary Fellowship at Christ's College, Fellowship of the British Academy (1917), and the presidency of the Roman Society. He retired from his Chair in 1925, and died, after a lingering illness, on April 1, 1926.

Very soon after taking his degree Reid lectured on Cicero's *Academica* at Christ's, and in 1874 he published his smaller edition of that work, which embodies the fruit of his earlier studies. In doing so he was reviving an old Cambridge tradition, associated particularly with the name of John Davies of Queens', the friend of Bentley. About four years later he edited the *Pro Archia* (1877); then the *Pro Balbo* (1878), *De Amicitia* (1879), *De Senectute* (1879), and *Pro Sulla* (1882). This quintet, published in the Pitt Press Series, was followed after a long interval (1894) by the *Pro Milone*, where the notes are on a briefer scale, as the Syndics unfortunately compelled him to make a drastic reduction of the first draft. The enlarged edition of the *Academica* appeared in 1885, and the first volume of the *De Finibus*, containing Books I and II, as late as 1925, forty-two years after the publication of his complete translation of that work. A translation of the *Academica* had appeared in 1882.

This does not exhaust Reid's published work on Cicero. Much of his learning appears in Wilkins's *De oratore* (1892), and about half a dozen valuable papers on the Letters were published at intervals in *Hermathena*: nor must the notes contributed to Tyrrell and Purser's *Correspondence of Cicero* be overlooked.

It is not too much to say that Reid set a new standard for commentaries on Cicero. By close and repeated study of that author's language he attained a knowledge of it comparable to that possessed by C. F. W. Müller, and by C. F. W. Müller alone. Many *minutiae* of diction, which

even the careful reader was inclined to pass by, were duly observed by him and utilized to decide the reading or the interpretation, in cases of difficulty. Nor is he less distinguished as a translator; no commentator on Latin authors is less tied to dictionary equivalents than he. It does not appear that, except for the *Academica* (and there only to a limited extent), he made extensive collations of MSS. His name will not be prominently associated with that department of activity. He studied the best published edition, *apparatus* and all, with a microscope, and formed independent conclusions on the Ciceronian texts. Nor can he be said to have been especially strong in emendation: a number of his suggestions are passed over in silence by Professor Clark. His reputation will rest particularly on a minute knowledge of the text, and a sound defence of the manuscript tradition where it had been unjustly deserted. His conclusions with regard to Ciceronian orthography showed a critical mind and keen insight, and his views have borne the test of time in almost every particular.

But it would be a great mistake to suppose that Reid was merely the greatest authority on Cicero's language. Many years ago he announced grammars of Virgil and of Tacitus, neither of which ever saw the light. He had mastered the whole Latin literature down to Suetonius, and knew something of what lay beyond. Apparently, he at one time meditated a dictionary of classical Latin, which would have been of immense value. It is a real misfortune that his offer to edit Lucretius for Postgate's *Corpus* was not accepted. He had noted that Munro became tired at the end of Book IV, and that the notes on Books V and VI did not, in consequence, show quite the same strength as those on the earlier books. He was in fact a profound student of Lucretius, and it is a pity that his paper on Books I and II in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* (1911) has been overlooked by some later writers on Lucretius. His interleaved copy of Munro will be consulted with profit in the University Library. He had detected some real chinks in

Munro's armour, and there can be little doubt that he had made a much more extended study of Post-Aristotelian philosophy than Munro, or perhaps any other scholar of the last fifty years. His primary motive for this study was no doubt the desire to illustrate Cicero's philosophical works, but he was interested in the subject for its own sake. Many years ago he wrote a paper on Lucilius's allusions to Greek philosophy, but he lacked the time necessary to put it into shape for publication, and may have destroyed it.

Had his whole life been spent in the studies to which we have alluded, it would have been a very full life. But this was not so. For very many years he was an examiner in Latin to the University of London, and must have had as extensive an experience of this kind of work as any of his contemporaries. And, till he became a professor, he was also an active tutor and lecturer, first at Christ's and later at Caius. Though his lectures were, during this period, confined to Latin authors (Cicero's Letters, Lucretius, Livy, Suetonius, for example), he read Greek also in private classes. I recall in particular, readings of Plato's *Theaetetus*, *Sophistes*, *Politicus*. He also corrected unseen and compositions, and it was his habit to consult a copy of the sixth edition of Georges, when doubtful about a usage. He edited T. H. Key's *Latin Dictionary* (Cambridge, 1888), though his name nowhere appears in it. In fact, just as his stores were always free to other scholars, as is seen, for example, in Postgate's *Select Elegies of Propertius* and Wilkins's *Epistles of Horace*, so he was ever ready of access to his pupils, who were free to call upon him informally one evening a week to consult him on questions of scholarship, &c. It would be impossible for me to exaggerate the influence he had on my own work. Before I came up to Cambridge his commentaries had inspired me, and I have endeavoured to carry out the lessons I learned from him in a field with which, I fear, he had little sympathy, though he was in reality partly responsible for the direction my work has chiefly taken.

He was not in fact prominently associated with Church matters. I fancy he had early adopted an agnostic position in theology, though I never dared to inquire what was responsible for this in a man who had much of the *anima naturaliter Christiana*. In politics he was a Liberal, and for some years chairman of the Liberal party in the town of Cambridge. Of a rather reserved disposition, his inmost feelings were known to very few, though his love for the society of children was marked. He never struck one as robust, and he really liked the Cambridge climate, of which he had over sixty years' continuous experience : yet his constitution must have been very powerful to support so much hard and tedious work. He was widely read in English literature, and his favourite novelist was George Eliot. The west of Scotland was his usual holiday haunt, and I failed to convince him that the east was also worth an extended visit. Though a Scot by birth and temperament, he was so early moved to England that neither in speech nor in scholarship could he be regarded as anything but English.

He is survived by his wife, a sister of Professors Percy and Ernest Gardner and Miss Alice Gardner, by a daughter and two sons (the third son met a tragic death in Wales some years ago), as also by his sister, Mrs. Percy Gardner. Such of his books as bear MS. notes in his hand have fortunately been deposited in the University Library at Cambridge.

A. SOUTER.

II

My acquaintance with Professor Reid dates from 1895, when I was engaged upon an edition of Cicero *Pro Milone*. My own notes were written and ready for the Press when an edition of the same speech by him appeared. I ventured to write to him about various points of interest and he responded with delightful cordiality. Our acquaintance

soon developed into a friendship which remained unbroken until his death.

One of his chief characteristics was generosity. He was always ready to advise younger scholars and to supply them with the results of his own observations. His knowledge of Ciceronian idiom was extraordinary and extended over all parts of Cicero's works. He was an acute critic, not easily dislodged from his opinions, conspicuous for sobriety and common sense. I therefore gladly availed myself of the help which he was so ready to give and constantly consulted him during the course of my work upon the text of Cicero's speeches. I submitted to him for criticism most of the emendations which occurred to me in knotty passages, and felt much emboldened if he approved of my solutions. When he disagreed, as was not infrequently the case, I had to reconsider my conclusions, even if in the end I remained impenitent. He also set at my disposal acute and ingenious emendations of his own, not previously published. This help which he gave to me was not the only contribution which he made towards the Oxford text of Cicero's speeches. Sir William Peterson, with whom I shared the work of editing them, owed to him the information that Lord Leicester's library at Holkham contained a valuable MS. of the Verrines. Peterson examined this and found it to be a ninth-century MS. which once belonged to the Abbey of Cluny near Mâcon and had a famous past, having been in the hands of several early scholars. It is now recognized not only as a primary authority for the portions of the Verrines preserved in it, but as the oldest and best of all MSS. for the Catilinarians and the speeches *Pro Ligario* and *Pro rege Deiotaro* which it also contains.

His services to the text of Cicero's Letters were of equal moment and rendered in the same unselfish way. He wrote a series of papers dealing with various cruces which appeared in Hermathena, and was also in constant correspondence with Dr. L. C. Purser, who in vol. v (ed. 2) of

the great Dublin edition speaks of 'the invaluable assistance given me by my friend, Dr. J. S. Reid, Professor of Ancient History in the University of Cambridge, not only from his published works, but from a great number of learned manuscript notes which he was good enough to place at my disposal. Of this, as of nearly every other work on Cicero issued by British scholars, Professor Reid *pars magna fuit*'.

Reid's fame as a Ciceronian scholar rests chiefly upon two very elaborate works, his editions of the *Academica*, published in 1885, and the *De Finibus* I-II, published in 1925. The first of these was immediately recognized as a masterpiece, complete in all respects, a storehouse of new observations upon Ciceronian idiom and style. The second work was even more ambitious and represents the results of great labour prolonged over many years. The object which he had set before him was to revise and amplify the work of Madvig, the most eminent Latin scholar of the nineteenth century, in his famous edition of the same treatise. His own attitude towards Madvig was one of reverence. Any dictum of the great Danish critic, especially if dealing with a point of grammar, appeared to him a most important saying, deserving the closest examination. His edition, though it might supersede that of Madvig, was in reality a tribute to his genius.

If the work had been planned on a less elaborate scale it would no doubt have been finished long ago and hailed as a *magnum opus*. Unfortunately the better is always the enemy of the good, and Reid continued to amass materials until their abundance became embarrassing. His election to the Chair of Ancient History though gratifying in itself caused him to suspend his labours in this field, since he considered it incumbent upon him to devote himself wholly to the duties of his Chair. Shortly before the outbreak of the Great War he thought of making a journey abroad to consult the chief MSS. of the *De Finibus*, but this project had of necessity to be abandoned. Later on he was urged by various friends to put his materials in order for publication

as they stood, and to their delight consented. He was actually engaged upon this task when his health broke down. At that time his revision of Books I–II was in an advanced state, though not completed, while his notes on Books III–V had not yet assumed their final shape. Books I–II were put into the skilful hands of Dr. Purser, who saw them successfully through the Press. The rest of the work remains unpublished. It is understood that it would be difficult for a successor to arrange for publication the materials collected by the author.

Reid's *magnum opus* must therefore be judged from that portion of it which has seen the light. This, without doubt, is a monument of learning, destined to take a place in the library of every Ciceronian scholar. The notes are on the most elaborate scale: many of them may be described as monographs which it must have taken great pains to construct. At the same time the information is tightly packed and not a word is wasted. Reid's unusual range of knowledge enabled him to cover all parts of his subject. He was thoroughly versed in the philosophical systems of Cicero's time. He spoke with authority upon historical points and had a good knowledge of Roman law. All these subjects he treated with a sure hand. In two important departments he excelled all his contemporaries, viz. his mastery of Ciceronian idiom and his skill in dealing with questions of grammar. The first of these was gained by observations and tabulations conducted throughout a life of study. As a grammarian he was brought up in the straitest sect of Madvig and displayed subtlety in no way inferior to that of his master when discussing fine distinctions of tenses and moods. In *De Finibus* I–II he has made many valuable additions to the lore which has been accumulated by the labours of the great grammarians. It is not too much to hope that before long some young scholar may use the unpublished commentary on Books III–V as a quarry from which further jewels may be extracted.

ALBERT C. CLARK.

III

IN 1899, after he had already established his reputation in the fields of Latin idiom and later Greek philosophy, Reid was elected the first Professor of Ancient History in the University.¹ For some years before 1887 he had been University Lecturer in Roman History and he was known to possess a very complete knowledge of the ancient evidence for the history of Republican Rome and of the Early Empire, and during his tenure of the Chair, which covered a quarter of a century, he devoted himself to fruitful teaching and research in Roman History. His strongest interests were in Roman institutions, legal and political, and he was peculiarly well fitted to interpret the Romans by their most characteristic products. His work in this field was marked by lucidity, sobriety, and sureness of judgement, as is attested by his masterly contributions to the *Cambridge Companion to Latin Studies*, first published in 1910. Moreover, most of his published work after his election into the Professorship dealt with problems in this field to which he brought a trained legal, though not legalistic, mind. Besides lecturing on the law of the Republic and the Early Empire, he dealt with a number of Cicero's speeches and has left behind him very full notes in particular of the *Pro Caecina*. Second to this study came that of the principal Roman historical writers, to whose works he devoted a series of courses of lectures which displayed both his insight into the writers themselves and his familiarity with the course of recent research into their historical significance and methods of composition. His last published work is a paper containing a vigorous and severe estimate of Tacitus as a historian.

The main feature of the Ancient History School at Cambridge was the rigorous study of special periods by candidates for the second parts of the Classical and Historical Triposes. The study of Classics was becoming at once

¹ I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to a memoir of Dr. Reid by Dr. Giles published in the *Caian*, which Dr. Giles has kindly allowed me to consult.

broadened and specialized, and this movement laid on a comparatively small number of teachers a heavy burden. Of this Reid took even more than his full share. During the tenure of his Professorship he dealt in quick succession and in the minutest detail with a series of periods ranging from the Second Punic War to the Flavians. Each of these courses was the product of the most careful study, and the elaboration of the treatment, characteristic as it was of the teacher, satisfied rather than aroused the curiosity of the students. How deeply Reid immersed himself in these periods may be judged from his important papers on problems connected with the Second Punic War. He did not believe in short cuts to the truth either for himself or for his pupils, but from time to time in a few sentences he would sum up the results of a long series of investigations, and then would follow the unhasting flow of criticism, comparison, and elucidation of the ancient sources. On these small groups of pupils he lavished the utmost pains, and was always ready to treat with his wonted fullness of knowledge any problem or any side of their work that presented difficulties. From him they learnt exactness and lucidity of historical thinking; if they had any cause of complaint, it was that so much was done for them that they were tempted not to do enough for themselves. Yet the Professor was ever ready to receive and discuss any points they had to make with the same courteous care which their elders and betters knew so well. Students were impressed, though almost dismayed, by the readiness born of a singularly tenacious and orderly memory.

The interest of Cambridge in Archaeology was at this time centred on things Greek, and it was reserved for Professor Haverfield at Oxford to press on the advance of Roman History on this side. But Reid's interests were wide, and he played a considerable part in founding the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, of which he succeeded Haverfield as President. He was also an active member of the Council of the British School at Rome, and his last

journey abroad was partly spent with his friend, the Director, Dr. Ashby. In the progress of the *Journal of Roman Studies* he took the keenest interest and was an active member of the editorial committee from its inception. Contributors found him ever ready with courteous criticism and suggestions, and his chief published work on Roman History—with the exception of *The Municipalities of the Roman Empire*—is to be found in its pages.

This book, published in 1913, was the outcome of a course of lectures delivered in London University, and, with some changes, as Lowell Lectures at Harvard and in the Columbia University, New York. Scholars have justly lamented the fact that the absence of documentation has deprived this book of part of its serviceability, but no scholar has doubted the wide and deep knowledge which underlies its pages, and the value in particular of the chapters on the theory and history of the Roman municipality in the abstract.

These studies together with so heavy a burden of teaching placed upon him a great strain, and his health did not last long enough to enable him to put into final form for publication the edition of the *De Finibus* which was already advanced when his appointment as Professor of Ancient History diverted most of his energy to duties which he felt were nearer. But he lived to see the appearance of the first two Books by reason of the skilful help of his old and young friends, Dr. L. C. Purser and Mr. A. D. Nock.

In the various changes or reforms of classical teaching at Cambridge and in the administration of the affairs of the Classical and Historical Faculties, Reid did not take a decisive part, but he shirked nothing that belonged to his duty. He cared little for controversy and nothing for the art *sich imponieren*; he cared intensely for the advancement of learning and the loyal co-operation of scholars to that end. His own readiness to assist his pupils and indeed any scholar was unfailing and won and kept for him their affection and respect.

F. E. ADCOCK.