

OBITUARY NOTICE

LEONARD WILLIAM KING

It is with the feeling that the world of letters has suffered a great loss in the death of my late colleague and friend, Leonard William King, that I write this short appreciation of him. Those who knew him personally will never forget his genial presence, his kindly manner; those who were acquainted with him through his books will realize what the loss is to Oriental scholarship.

Born in 1869 he was educated at Rugby, where he obtained a scholarship, and got his cap at football. Going thence to King's College, Cambridge, he took a first in the Theological Tripos, and had he not changed his mind during his undergraduate days he would have gone into the Church. Science was, however, the gainer by his entering the Egyptian and Assyrian Department at the British Museum in 1892, where he remained until his death. He was made an Assistant Keeper in 1913, and a lecturer in Assyrian in 1910 at King's College, London, where he was subsequently elected professor. He obtained his Litt.D. at Cambridge early in his career. He was on the Council of this Society. In 1906 he married Anna, daughter of the late Henry Anthony Burke, a descendant of Edmund Burke, the politician.

After war broke out he put his knowledge of the Near East at the service of the Admiralty, who employed him in map construction in London. Then, when the stress of war in Mesopotamia had diminished and the British Museum had set on foot fresh explorations in that country which I had been ordered to begin, he was to have joined me there and taken over the work from my hands. But alas! the effect of inoculation against typhoid upon

a system already weakened by dysentery, from which he had suffered in his work at Nineveh in 1904, was followed by influenza from which he never really recovered, and a chill carried him off, just when he was in a fair way to mend.

To appreciate his work to the full is no easy task for one of his own generation. He was an extraordinarily good, neat, and accurate copyist of cuneiform, and his texts (in these days when there is so much eye-trying work published in America and Germany) were a pleasure to read. He was always a pioneer in his editions of texts; his Letters of Hammurabi marked a distinct period of English Assyriology, and his work on the Tablets of Creation embodied so much fresh material that the world was introduced almost to a new story. His *magnum opus*, the History, of which two volumes were published, shows every evidence of that care and wide reading essential to him who breaks new ground.

It was his love of adventure which first led him to Mesopotamia at his own expense to reconnoitre the ground for reopening excavation at Kouyunjik, whither he returned and dug on behalf of the Museum for more than a year. To his recommendation to the Museum Authorities I owe in great measure my first journey to the Tigris valley; and after I had joined him in 1904 we crossed into Persia together to recopy the great inscription of Darius at Behistun, and no man could have wished for a pleasanter or more energetic companion. It was the practical side of his nature which made him so keen and efficient a traveller, and, it may also be added, such a determined one. This showed itself in the sensible and judicious opinions expressed in his scientific work.

R. CAMPBELL THOMPSON.
