

OBITUARY

EVANGELINE DORA EDWARDS

The news of the sudden death, on 29 September 1957, of Professor Edwards caused a sense of acute bereavement not only in the Far East Department, which she had done so much to develop, and in the School as a whole, but also among the great number of friends she had all over the world, many of whom were her former students.

Evangeline Dora Edwards was born on 13 August 1888 as the third daughter of the Reverend John Edwards (1857–1934). She was educated at Redbrooke College, Camborne, and the Islington College. In 1913 she set out for China, having first taken a preparatory course at the St. Colm's Missionary College in Edinburgh. In China she enrolled at once at the Peking Language School to study Chinese. Two years later, in 1915, she became Principal of the Women's Normal College in Mukden, which was a training college for Chinese teachers. She held this post until 1919, continuing at the same time her Chinese studies, and in 1918 was awarded the Diploma in Chinese (Mandarin and Classical) by the Peking Language School.

Soon after the end of the Great War she returned to this country, and in 1921 accepted a lectureship at the School. In spite of heavy teaching commitments she registered as an external student of the University of London, obtaining the B.A. Hons. (Class I) in Chinese in 1924, and the M.A. in Chinese (with distinction) in 1925.

The next years were devoted to a thorough study of T'ang fiction, which resulted in a detailed analysis, with selected translations, of the famous *Tarnqday-tsongshu*. For this work the University conferred on her the degree of Doctor of Literature. The same year, 1931, witnessed the conferment on her of the title of Reader in Chinese, an appointment which she held at the School until 1939, when she was appointed Professor of Chinese. From 1937, when Sir Reginald Johnston retired, to 1939, she was Acting Head of the Far East Department. Her appointment in 1939 to the Chair of Chinese was coupled with the Headship of the Far East Department which she held until 1953. In 1951 she became Acting Head of the Percival David Foundation, a post which she held until her retirement from the School at the end of the Session 1954–55.

Professor Edwards' preparatory studies in China (1913–19) laid the foundation for her work as a teacher of Chinese. This period, from her appointment in 1921 to the acceptance of the Acting Headship of the Far East Department in 1939, was marked by her studies on the T'ang period. They culminated in the publication of her *Chinese prose literature of the T'ang period* (2 vols., London, 1937–38).

'This work', to quote from an assessment written by Professor A. Forke, 'is a most valuable contribution to the history of Chinese literature. It adds to our knowledge of the T'ang period, of which so far we know only the classical lyrics and the artificial prose works in high style. From the huge collection



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forming the ground work of the book we learn to know the light literature of this golden age of poetry, especially works of fiction. Many stories are translated in full, others analysed. They contain many interesting features and show us the people of T'ang times much more natural and human than in their conventional poetry.'

Further contributions included her translation into English of M. Granet's famous *Fêtes et chansons anciennes de la Chine* (London, 1932), articles on T'ang literature in the *Bulletin*, and reviews written for the latter journal and that of the Royal Asiatic Society. Jointly with Professor C. O. Blagden she published 'A Chinese vocabulary of Malacca Malay words and phrases' (*BSOS*, vi, 3, 1931) and 'A Chinese vocabulary of Cham words and phrases' (*BSOS*, x, 1, 1939).

All through her career, Professor Edwards was closely linked with the China Society. She served on the Council from 1925 to 1944, took on the Honorary Secretaryship from 1928 to 1929, and lectured to the Society on several occasions.

In the following period she became increasingly absorbed in administrative work generally and in the building up of the Far East Department in particular. Devoting her whole energy to these activities, she would be found at her desk from early morning to late in the day. In these years, she was very much concerned with the planning of the new building of the School and many will recall her never-failing assistance during the various moves of the School to temporary quarters that followed after its home in Finsbury Circus was given up. They included the move just after the beginning of the War to Christ's College, Cambridge, and from there back to London, and eventually the move to Bloomsbury.

Early in the War, as a result of the growing demand for Service courses in Far Eastern languages, the Far East Department was transferred to Sussex Square. Under Professor Edwards' headship the Department then became a practically self-contained unit of the School, consisting of three strong sections, Chinese, Japanese, and Malay. A great expansion of staff took place, and the student population amounted to almost 800. The smooth working between military and civilian authorities, between staff and students, and—last but not least—between the various members of staff, widely differing in background and temperament, was a great tribute to Professor Edwards' personal influence and inspiration. Through a rare combination of kindness and firmness she commanded universal respect and admiration. Her personal interest in the welfare of staff and students won her innumerable friends, and her subtle assessment of the abilities and potentialities of the students under her care proved invaluable to government and academic departments alike when, in the post-war period, new posts were established and vacancies had to be filled. In the same manner she gave most valuable assistance to the Treasury Committee for Studentships in Foreign Languages and Cultures, on which she served from its inception.

In spite of her heavy administrative commitments Professor Edwards was able to make further contributions to sinology. In the series 'What did they teach?' her study of Confucius (1940) took its place beside the volumes on Christ (by Dr. W. R. Matthews) and Muhammad (by D. S. Margoliouth). Her *Dragon book* (1938), written in lighter vein, included a great deal of her own translations from the Chinese, and was followed up (in 1948) by a similar anthology of the Far East, South East Asia, and the Pacific, *Bamboo, lotus and palm*. She also contributed articles to the *Bulletin*, and to *Asia Major*, on whose Editorial Board she served from its revival in this country as a British journal of Far Eastern studies in 1941 until her retirement in 1955.

Soon after the close of the War, in 1946, Professor Edwards went to the Far East, South East Asia, and the Pacific to follow up the training of Service candidates by studying on the spot the results of the training they had received. It seemed, in fact, essential to consider the desirability of changes in the conduct of Service courses in the light of recent experience. The results of her investigations were included in a very detailed report which received full approval from the Services concerned.

In 1949, Professor Edwards again visited the Far East, wishing to gain access to source material in relation to a study on T'ang economy which she was preparing. Little did she think that before completing these studies, she would be called upon once more to place at the disposal of the School the rich experience gained in earlier years. The call came as a result of the presentation, by Sir Percival David, to the University of his world-famous and unique collection of Chinese ceramics. Once it was decided that this collection should be associated with the School as the 'Percival David Foundation' it was evident to the authorities of the University and the School alike that, pending the filling of the Chair of Chinese Art and Archaeology, nobody would be better qualified to assume the Acting Headship of the Foundation than Professor Edwards. Though fully realizing that acceptance of this post would force her eventually to relinquish the Department whose true fostering mother she had been for so many years, Professor Edwards accepted without a moment's hesitation and fully justified all expectations. To quote the words of Sir Ralph Turner, spoken at the opening ceremony in June 1952: 'By her imaginative understanding of the academic problems involved, her administrative ability, and her unerring taste she has already in these early formative days set a lasting imprint on the Foundation'.

Looking back it would seem, however, that this, her last great work for the School, had taxed Professor Edwards' strength unduly. For the last two years of her service, she suffered from an illness that gave anxiety to her colleagues and friends. Nevertheless, after her retirement in 1955, her doctors allowed her to set out on a further journey to the Far East, which she began early in 1956. After little more than one year during which she saw many old friends in Malaya, Hong Kong, Japan, and Formosa, she decided to cut short her

journey and return to this country. While enjoying apparently much better health than when she left England, Professor Edwards passed away suddenly just after she had made arrangements for a permanent residence in London.

Over and above the many voices which have spoken and will continue to speak with admiration and great affection of Professor Edwards, it is befitting to recall in conclusion the authoritative statement which the Director of the School, Sir Ralph Turner, made at the Annual Ceremony in 1955 :

‘ Of the service which Professor Edwards, appointed first in 1921, thirty-four years ago, has rendered the School, as Lecturer in Chinese, then Reader, then Professor of Chinese and Head of the Department of the Far East, it would be almost impossible to make an over-estimate. Her organization of the war-time courses in Japanese, Chinese and Malay for many hundreds of Service students was a major contribution to the war effort of the country. Her public-spirited decision to relinquish the Headship of a department in which her interests and affections were deeply involved and to accept the Acting Headship of the Percival David Foundation alone made it possible for the School and the University to accept Sir Percival David’s gift of his Collection of Chinese ceramics and to obtain from the Treasury the funds to meet the large capital and recurrent expenditure involved in its housing and display. Professor Edwards takes with her the esteem, the affection and the good wishes of all her colleagues and of many generations of students.’

W. SIMON

At the service in memory of Professor Edwards held at Christ Church, Woburn Square, on 16 October, the Director of the School gave the following address :

Our colleague, Eve Edwards, was to all who knew her a very dear friend ; and to my family and myself a beloved godmother. We know how greatly her family is missing her.

She joined the School in 1921, when many of us here were youngsters, and to the School and University for the rest of her life she gave her whole mind and effort. She drew both young and old, and the most dissimilar of colleagues into a close circle of friendship, and fashioned a Department of Far Eastern studies which now grows as a living memorial to her.

She was a delightfully sincere, tolerant, and gracious lady ; a lady courageous, endowed also with a strong, practical grasp of affairs. She flinched from no task, no enterprise, however severe. She took a lead on the outbreak of war in moving the School to Cambridge, and later back to London. She was magnificently successful in organizing war-time courses for young men from the Services, always winning their respect and affection and opening to them new worlds, new opportunities for which, I know, they are deeply and everlastingly grateful. She had a sure, indeed perfect, sense of taste, balanced and

economical. Throughout the School she has left the signs of her presence ; the delicate Chinese painting over the hearth of the Senior Common Room, the pictures about our walls, the elegance of the Percival David Foundation, which she had brought into being.

Above all, Eve Edwards had a genius for loving friendship, a capacity for creating, sustaining, and releasing kindness. In her many travels, the world over, which she so much enjoyed, no birthday was ever passed by, no friend forgotten ; and no friend forgot her.

The war had imposed a greater strain than she had realized. Illness came, almost overwhelming illness, but from it she made a brave recovery. On a sunny afternoon, a few days before she died, we spent some hours with her in the new London home which she was making. She was the tranquil, happy person we had always known, earnest in spirit, whose mood is best conveyed in the words of one of her own translations from the Chinese,

A soul recedes into the Void ; a heart
Into the past that has no end ;
A life's unfinished and imperfect tasks
New ages must complete and mend.