



Griffith Taylor

## THOMAS GRIFFITH TAYLOR

Emeritus Professor Griffith ("Grif") Taylor, who died on November 5th, 1963, at the age of 82, was among the most brilliant and versatile geographers of his time. He was born in the London suburb of Walthamstow on December 1st, 1880, the eldest child of James and Lily Taylor, who both hailed from Lancashire. His father, a graduate of the Royal School of Mines, had been a research chemist in the nitrate works of Chile, and a year after the birth of his son went to Serbia as manager of a copper mine, whence he returned after three years to settle in Sheffield. There he remained until 1893 when he accepted the post of Government Metallurgist in New South Wales and migrated with his wife and family to Sydney.

The young Taylor received his secondary education at Sydney Grammar School and later at The King's School, Parramatta, where owing to his disinclination for sport he was not very happy. Entering the University of Sydney as an Arts student in 1899 he changed over to Mining Engineering and after graduation went on to take a degree in Science with Honours in Geology and Physics and a graduation scholarship. Like so many others he was much influenced in his choice of a career by Edgeworth David, Professor of Geology, to whom, indeed, he owed much of his early advancement and who was responsible for his first professional appointment.

After a short period as Junior Demonstrator in Geology he was awarded an 1851 Exhibition Scholarship in 1907 and spent three years at the Sedgwick Museum, University of Cambridge, where he gained the degree of B.A. (Research), the Ph.D. having not then been instituted.

Appointed in 1909 while still at Cambridge to the post of Physiographer in the recently established Commonwealth Meteorological Bureau, he was given leave to join Captain R. F. Scott's British Antarctic Expedition as Senior Geologist. This ill-starred expedition, of which the leader with four companions perished on their way back from the South Pole, was the last of those which relied entirely on haulage by animal power. Taylor served in it with distinction, carried out extensive field-studies of physiography and glaciology in the neighbourhood of McMurdo Sound, and was chosen on two occasions to lead scientific exploring parties.

Apart from twelve months in England writing up Antarctic results he spent the next ten years in the Weather Bureau, Melbourne, busily engaged in meteorological research, writing memoirs on Australian climate and primary production, taking part in a reconnaissance geological survey of the projected new Federal Capital site and its environs and doing other geological work. During this period he also lectured on Meteorology to the Commonwealth Flying School cadets and was appointed External Lecturer in Geography in the University of Melbourne. In 1915 his contributions to the knowledge of the geomorphology and glaciology of East Antarctica won for him the degree of Doctor of Science (Syd.) with Medal.

Chiefly through the efforts of Professor David the Senate of the University of Sydney devoted part of the munificent bequest of the rich Riverina grazier Sir Samuel McCaughey to the establishment of an associate chair of Geography, the first and for many years the only one of its kind in an Australian university. Taylor was chosen as the first incumbent, and entered upon his duties early in 1921, thus beginning a strenuous and very fruitful period of thirty years as a professional academic geographer. With characteristic vigour and enthusiasm he applied himself to the task of building up a full and varied course in Geography to Honours standard. In this he was completely successful despite lack of staff, apathy from those in authority and even opposition from a few academic colleagues. After seven years, disappointed at the failure of the University Senate to raise his status and grant him adequate help, he accepted an invitation to one of the four Senior Professorships in Geography at the University of Chicago, and there he remained for another seven years, teaching, travelling, writing and lecturing. In Chicago he found himself in congenial academic company and in a highly invigorating geographical atmosphere, with plenty of scope for his energy and talents; nevertheless, perhaps in part under the pioneering urge, he left in 1935 to inaugurate a Geography Department in the University of Toronto, the first of its kind in the Dominion of Canada. With unflagging energy he set to work as he had done in Sydney, building from nothing, with such success that by 1947 his department had 3 professors, 2 lecturers, 2 teaching fellows and 15 part-time demonstrators, ministering to the needs of about 1,000 students. When after 15 years' service he retired in 1951 he was appointed Emeritus Professor "in gratitude" he was told "for the prestige you have brought to your department, and to the University as a whole as a teacher and outstanding scholar".

Returning to Australia he settled in the Sydney suburb of Seaford, where he maintained an active interest in matters scientific and more especially geographical, and enjoyed the company of a circle of friends, including some Antarctic veterans. Increasing deafness he found a considerable handicap, and this and a general decline in physical powers forced a reluctant withdrawal from scientific activities. A fall, resulting in broken ribs, necessitated his transfer to Manly District Hospital, where he died a few weeks later. In 1914 he had married Doris, sister of his Antarctic colleague and close friend Raymond (now Sir Raymond) Priestley, and she, with two sons, survives him.

Taylor was a man of restless intellect and of prodigious mental energy, with a wide range of scientific interests and a brain phenomenally fertile in ideas. His earliest work was geological, and his first research efforts appeared in joint papers dealing with the geology and petrology of two well-known igneous intrusions, Prospect near Sydney and Mt. Gibraltar near Bowral. Impressed, on geological excursions and camping trips as a student under David, with the importance of field-observations, he was early attracted to the study of the causal relation between land forms and geological

structure, and geomorphology became an abiding interest. Even as a beginner he was not content with mere description, but must ever be interpreting and seeking for causes. Thus one of his early studies on the Hunter Valley was entitled "A Correlation of Contour, Climate and Coal" (he always had a liking for alliteration). Not all of his conclusions have stood the test of time, but it must be remembered that his work was done before the days of air-photographs, contour-maps and accurate geological surveys.

A sea-trip with Charles Hedley, conchologist of the Australian Museum, to the Great Barrier Reef in 1906 enlarged his knowledge of Australian coastal geomorphology and enabled him to study some of the problems of coral reef formation.

Although never professing any considerable acquaintance with palaeontology, he took to Cambridge for study a large collection of those rather rare organisms of doubtful affinities, the Archaeocyathinae, from the Cambrian strata of the Flinders Range in South Australia, which had previously been rather neglected by palaeontologists. Taylor, employing the method of cutting and examining serial cross-sections at very small intervals, now a commonplace in palaeontological research, was able to elucidate details of form and structure and to establish a number of genera and species. The results were embodied in a Memoir of the Royal Society of South Australia which was for many years the only standard and authoritative work on these organisms. This was virtually his only excursion into palaeontological research.

Called upon, whilst a demonstrator in Sydney, to give a course of lectures on Economic Geography to students in the Department of Economics, he was dismayed to find an almost complete lack of pertinent co-ordinated information on the subject so far as Australia was concerned. Discerning the need for a comprehensive study of the geography of the Commonwealth, he devoted part of his time in Cambridge to the preparation of a pioneer text-book on the Physiographic and Economic Geography of Australia, which attracted the favourable notice of British and other overseas geographers.

The problems of the Australian deserts and arid lands engaged much of his attention, and led him to become a keen student of arid areas in other continents.

Early travels in Europe (during his sojourn at Cambridge) in the company of the noted American physiographer W. M. Davis kindled an interest in glaciers and glaciation which was heightened by his observations in Antarctica and further increased by travels in Tasmania, New Zealand and various parts of the North American continent, and Quaternary glaciation became a lasting interest. With two others he was responsible for the first attempt at a contour or formline survey of part of the Kosciusko plateau in 1922, in the course of which a number of hitherto unrecorded glacial features were found.

Until the establishment of a Chair in the subject at the University of Sydney, Anthropology, with particular reference to the Australian

aborigines and the Melanesian peoples, formed part of his geography course at Sydney, and this broadened out into a more general study of the origin and classification of races and the causes behind their differentiation, migrations and world distribution. Indeed, for much of his life geography meant for him the study of the interaction of man and his physical environment. As a branch of this study he took up, while in Canada, the consideration of urban geography and the aetiology or urban settlement.

It was doubtless a contemplation of the tragedy of World War I, together with his association in Chicago with colleagues devoted to the ideal of world peace, that turned his thoughts more and more to a concept which he later crystallized in the name *Geopacifics*—the scientific study of geography as a contribution to the promotion of peace among the nations through a just and equitable apportioning of those parts of the earth's surface best adapted to the requirements of human existence. Intended as a kind of counter to the mischievous doctrines of the Nazi *Geopolitics*, it became a dominant interest of his later years and the theme of writings and discourses almost to the time of his death.

Possibly infected with "go-fever" by his far-flung youthful migrations with his family, Taylor was throughout his life an inveterate traveller, and there must be few geographers who have personally examined so many parts of the world. He rightly held that so far as possible a practising geographer should know from first-hand observation what he is talking about, and most of his trips were made with the deliberate intention of widening his knowledge of varying environments. It was his proud boast that by the end of 1930 he had visited all seven continents, and though he has left no estimate of the total distance covered during his lifetime this must have added up to several hundred thousand miles.

His travels in Australia were very extensive, gained over many years and with the aid of many types of transport. They ranged from the tropics of Queensland and Western Australia to the colder regions of Victoria and Tasmania in the south, from the fertile well-watered coastal lands to the arid interior. His latest trips, mostly aerial, were made in 1948 while visiting Australia at the invitation of the Australian National University.

To Cambridge in 1907 he went by way of New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa and Fiji, then across America, visiting Vancouver, San Francisco, Yosemite, Salt Lake City, Chicago and other places of geographical interest before crossing the Atlantic. During his three years' stay at Cambridge and on subsequent visits he managed to see much of Great Britain and many parts of Europe, including France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Serbia and Scandinavia. Whilst domiciled in Chicago he travelled extensively in U.S.A., giving particular attention to the arid areas; he also made a brief excursion to the Panama Canal zone and did some climbing in the Andes of Colombia.

Teaching in Toronto necessitated an acquaintance with the physical and economic geography of Canada, and this involved a

number of cross-country trips and some exploration of the Canadian Rockies, British Columbia, Newfoundland and the North-west. Other pilgrimages at various times led him to North Africa and the Sahara, Greece, Malta, Sicily, Japan, Java, Hawaii and South Africa.

Much of his journeying, particularly in Europe, was done on foot, partly for economic reasons but chiefly because he was an indefatigable walker and climber. Very quick to register impressions, his motto might well have been "*Solvitur ambulando*". He had early cultivated the commendable but demanding habit of keeping a detailed journal of his doings and thoughts, and thus amassed a vast store of descriptive geographical and other miscellaneous information and personal impressions of places visited, which later proved exceedingly useful.

Apart from the acquisition of geographical knowledge his travels, particularly in Europe, enabled him to indulge his aesthetic appreciation of architecture and of scenery, and to visit places of archaeological and antiquarian interest.

Age did not wither nor custom stale his enthusiasm for walking, and in his seventieth year, during a visit to Great Britain he joined a party of young University geographers walking and climbing in the Grampians. Back in Sydney he seized every opportunity to indulge in his favourite exercise, and even at the age of eighty essayed the task of walking from Sydney to Canberra; however, the attempt had to be abandoned after he had covered some 40 miles.

In the course of his journeyings abroad he was brought into profitable contact with contemporary world leaders of geography and allied sciences, such as Bonney, Herbertson, A. Penck, W. M. Davis, and Köppen, and he was, of course, on familiar terms with the leading American geographers, for some of whom, particularly Isaiah Bowman, he had a great respect and admiration. For many years he carried on an immense correspondence with explorers, geographers, and others interested in his unusual views on anthropological matters.

As became a man of such varied interests Taylor was a most prolific writer. He was author or part author of some 40 books, and more than 150 scientific papers and articles of various kinds. Departmental memoirs, papers to scientific journals, regional text-books and books of a more general geographical character, newspaper articles and articles for encyclopaedias, followed each other in seemingly endless succession. Not infrequently he had several works on hand simultaneously. Many of his earlier papers were geomorphological, dealing with investigations in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales, the environs of Sydney, the Blue Mountains and elsewhere, and including a rather ambitious attempt to interpret the physiography of eastern Australia. These efforts, based partly on field-work and partly on the very inadequate maps of the time, necessarily contained a large element of speculation, and some have been proved to be in error, but they included many interesting and

original suggestions regarding river-capture, diversion of drainage and tectonic interference which prompted more detailed researches by subsequent workers.

Other fields of investigation embraced Australian meteorology, climate, production, settlement, etc., and later he was able to institute useful comparisons between Canada and Australia. He laid firm and sure the foundations of our knowledge of the geography and climate of this country and its implications, but not without travail. Some of his conclusions, based though they were on meteorological data and production statistics backed up by personal knowledge, were not universally acceptable, and during his term as professor of geography in Sydney his articles on the climatic features of the Commonwealth and the habitability of its interior provoked a bitter newspaper controversy on the question whether Australia had in fact any deserts. The inexorable logic of facts was, of course, on Taylor's side, but so acrimonious and personal became the exchanges that in a vain effort at compromise Professor David was moved to suggest the substitution of *wilderness* for *desert*.

Scarcely less unpalatable was Taylor's estimate, based on the admittedly incomplete information then available, of the maximum population the country could support, and his telling and persistent opposition to the proposed completion of the railway from Adelaide to Darwin through the most arid and empty part of the continent evoked anything but enthusiasm in South Australia. Incidentally, his views as to the true position of the so-called Yellow Races among the peoples of the world were far from popular in a community cherishing the ideal of a White Australia. It is significant of the value of the geographical approach—and incidentally of Taylor's fearless advocacy of it—that no one now seriously questions the reality of the Australian deserts or the relatively low estimate of its population potential, and that though for strategic reasons the loose ends of the north-south railway were linked by a road, the more rational outlet from the Northern Territory to the south-east through Queensland, so strenuously advocated by Taylor, has been adopted.

For many years after he left it Australia and its problems continued to afford him material for descriptive and comparative studies, culminating in a comprehensive text published in 1948. On a conservative estimate his books, papers and articles of various kinds dealing with this country number nearly one hundred. His interest in Antarctica and Antarctic exploration also provided themes for a number of scientific articles and two books of popular appeal.

In U.S.A. he found that the regional geography was relatively well known and in any case was not his academic concern, and it would appear that, feeling somewhat frustrated by the fact that, geographically speaking, there were no new worlds to conquer, he turned thankfully to the virgin fields of Canada, which offered ample scope for the pioneer geographer and which furnished material for several scientific papers and texts, descriptive and comparative.

His early writings on Australia and Antarctica, of whose geography but little was known to the world at large, attracted the notice of geographers overseas, and he was invited to contribute to various compilations and text-books, such as the Oxford Survey of the Empire, *Geophysik* and *Handbuch der Klimatologie*, and to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Chamber's, the Italian and the Australian encyclopedias.

While still in Australia he had written a number of papers on the relation of geographical environment to human characteristics, distribution and settlement, a question on which he was greatly influenced by W. D. Matthew's work on *Climate and Evolution* (1914). His first paper on this topic, *Climatic Cycles and Evolution*, was published in 1919. The same theme was later developed in his books *Environment and Race* (1927), *Environment and Nation* (1936), *Environment, Race and Migration* (1938), *Urban Geography* (1949) and *Our Evolving Civilization* (1946); this last, intended as an introduction to Geopacifics, was an expansion of the Messenger Lectures on Civilization delivered at Cornell University in 1944.

In his racial studies he made use of hair texture and cephalic index as criteria for race classification, and, plotting on world maps the geographical distribution of racial types, languages, religions, etc., he endeavoured to explain it by what he called the Zones and Strata principle, remnants of the weaker and more primitive racial types being found at present farther from the postulated common centre of dispersal in Asia than later and more advanced types who had pushed them out, only to be displaced in turn by still later invaders. Between centre and periphery traces of successive cultures could be discerned superimposed on each other like geological strata. His novel views attracted much attention from anthropologists.

The influence on man of his physical environment is a matter that has been argued for the past 2,500 years at least, and the controversy is still on. Those interested in this philosophical aspect of geography divide themselves into Determinists (or Environmentalists) and Possibilists, the former asserting the dominance of such influences as topography, climate and soil on human behaviour, the latter stressing man's freedom of choice to control his own destiny, and contending that "the pattern of human activity is the result of the initiative and mobility of man operating within a frame of natural forces". To the outsider it would appear that there is much to be said on both sides, that the emphasis is largely a matter of approach and of personal experience, and that the influence of physical environment may be conditioned largely by the stage of human evolution reached in any particular instance. Taylor, as a result of his observations in uninhabited Antarctica and in those sparsely populated lands with exacting climate, Australia and Canada, professed a modified but emphatic Determinism and vigorously defended his convictions in a number of papers and books. It would appear, however, that most geographers, having no experience of those lands but familiar with the more closely populated areas of the



northern hemisphere in a *terrain* that lends itself to a variety of uses, are Possibilists.

In his retirement Taylor found time to write some geographical articles, mostly summarizing or re-presenting views already expounded, a couple of presidential addresses and a few books of popular scientific-appeal, *Sydneyside Scenery* (including a description of the Kosciusko plateau!), an entertaining and revealing autobiography, *Journeyman Taylor*, and a small biographical volume on his old friend Sir Douglas Mawson.

Taylor wrote as he spoke, in a simple, direct and vigorous style, without complexities, clear and easy to comprehend. As in his lectures he made lavish use of illustrations—maps, graphs, charts, and above all, in his geomorphological work, block-diagrams, mostly drawn and lettered by himself. These last, in the construction of which he was an adept, were first made familiar to geographers by the works of W. M. Davis. They are exceedingly useful in the hands of an expert, but potentially deceptive to the guileless reader, since with all their air of verisimilitude they are apt to be expressions of the author's interpretation rather than objective representations.

Among graphical methods invented and used by Taylor was what he called the *Climograph*, a diagram in which average monthly wet-bulb temperatures are plotted as ordinates and the corresponding relative humidities as abscissae. The points so obtained, on being joined, form a polygonal figure. Since the two parameters in conjunction give a measure of varying degrees of physical comfort the general type of climate can be determined at a glance and the figure may be used for comparative purposes. Modifications of the climograph have been used with success by other geographers.

Many of Taylor's papers formed, as it were, variations on a theme and a certain map or chart might be used in several different papers in somewhat varying contexts. Intentionally or not, there was good psychology in this plan, since the lesson of the diagram was likely to be driven home by its frequent repetition. This was so with some of his Australian isopleth maps, as, for example, those showing the relation of sheep-breeding and wheat-growing to climate. One of the most useful was his rainfall-reliability map, which indicated that the widest fluctuations of rainfall from year to year occur in those parts of the continent that have the lowest average annual rainfall, thus emphasizing the danger of giving undue weight to average isohyets in the arid and semi-arid areas of the interior.

Though, apart from the first-year course of lectures on Physical Geography given by Professor David, Taylor had never had any formal geographical training, he was a most successful teacher. At Sydney, save for the help of his sister, who acted as demonstrator, he had to work single-handed and to lecture on all the topics pertaining to the geography course—geomorphology, meteorology and climatology, astronomy, elementary navigation, glaciology and glaciation, anthropology and various aspects of economic and human geography. It was most fortunate that he had a large store of

personal observation and research on which to draw, and naturally, much of what he taught had a distinctly Australian bias. Students found his lectures interesting and stimulating, recognizing them as expositions of a branch of scientific inquiry throbbing with vitality, which touched closely the life of the individual and the nation, and promised satisfying adventure in a new field of knowledge.

He laid much stress on laboratory work, holding that visual representation of geographical data often suggested interpretations and rendered verbal explanation superfluous; so his students became expert in cartography and graph-drawing, and particularly in the construction of block-diagrams, which some of them, like G. A. V. Stanley and F. A. Craft, afterwards used with good effect in geomorphological work. An evening-lecture course in Economic Geography for students in Economics, many of them older and more mature than the average undergraduate, was particularly popular.

In Chicago life was somewhat easier since there was less lecturing and less emphasis on practical work. In Toronto, however, he was again called upon to play the pioneer, this time in a country with geology, topography and climate vastly different from those of Australia; but in a comparatively short time he was able to lecture on aspects of Canadian geography from personal knowledge. Here, too, he was in a position to make laboratory work an essential part of the curriculum.

In America he was much in demand for extramural symposia, conferences and special lectures and lecture courses, at which he expounded his novel and unorthodox ideas, and many who were familiar with his writings were afforded an opportunity for personal discussion. He also lectured when in Britain for the British Association meeting at Cambridge (1938) and during a subsequent visit at the invitation of the British Council (1950). In 1948 under the auspices of the Australian National University he made a lecturing tour of the Commonwealth, and found the geographical climate here much improved. After his departure from Sydney in 1927 the University authorities, perhaps glad to be rid of this turbulent prof., had proposed to demote the associate chair to a lectureship, a calamity averted only by the determined efforts of Professor David. It was exhilarating for Taylor to be brought halfway across the world 20 years later to stir up interest in the study of geography at University level, to meet many of his former students, now busily engaged in teaching and applying the principles he had instilled, and to find that not *always* is the prophet without honour in his own country.

A fluent, forthright and incisive speaker, often controversial, his talks were arresting and thought-provoking. He was rather given, no doubt unconsciously, to lecturing in argumentative fashion, anticipating and demolishing the objections of imaginary opponents, an attitude natural enough in one so frequently uttering and defending scientific heresies.

Fearless and outspoken in regard to questions on which he had strong convictions, he was apt, particularly in his younger days, to

be impatient with those who could not see eye to eye with him. On occasion he even seemed to trail his coat, for, though a man of peace, there is little doubt he enjoyed a good fight. Yet a strong and disarming sense of humour and a basically tolerant and warm-hearted disposition ensured that while he might have many critics he made no enemies; on the contrary, he won the regard and affection of his colleagues, even of those who disagreed with his views—no easy matter, since your dedicated and persistent crusader can be a very trying fellow. In Sydney his frequent and emphatic denunciation of the teaching of Latin in schools as a scandalous waste of time affronted the more conservative of his colleagues in the Humanities, but he was not amused when an exasperated classics professor retaliated with a punning Latin couplet which he rightly suspected was not complimentary. In fact it was a pointed suggestion that the tailor should emulate the cobbler of the proverb! Curiously enough Taylor himself was not above introducing an odd Latin quotation into his writings, implicitly assuming comprehension on the part of his readers.

To his students his friendly, forceful and slightly unconventional personality made a strong appeal, and with their esteem they gave him an affection and loyalty that long outlasted their undergraduate days. At least one carried his admiration to the point of imitating the professor's style of calligraphy and some of his platform mannerisms. Many were inspired by him to make geography the serious business of their lives.

The rigours of the Antarctic climate, and especially the long, dark winter, when a small group of men had to live and move and have their being within the narrow limits of a hut, with no escape from each other's company, was a searching test of character, even for the splendid band of brothers that went south with Scott. Taylor's unvarying good-humour, his never-failing supply of quips, ideas and theories, and his readiness to pull his weight in any effort for the common good, brought him through the experience with flying colours. His contributions, grave and gay, of prose and verse (for he was ever a facile versifier) and his talent for sketching, enriched and enlivened the pages of all three issues of the *South Polar Times*. And even though he might chafe now and then under the autocratic control of the Expedition's leader, "Old Grif" was acclaimed one of the most popular members of the company and a loyal and dependable colleague. The title and content of his book, *With Scott—the Silver Lining*, reflect his ability to rise superior to discomfort and difficult circumstances.

Both in Australia and in America he played an active and prominent part in organized science. He was one of the earliest members of the Australian National Research Council formed in 1919, and in 1927 was founder and first president of the Geographical Society of N.S.W., a body still vigorous and flourishing after 37 years. At the 1923 meeting of A.N.Z.A.A.S. (then A.A.A.S.) he presided over the Section of Geography and History, and three years

later was one of the Australian delegation to the Pan-Pacific Science Congress at Tokyo. In 1938 he had the honour of being invited over from Canada to be president of the Geography Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Cambridge. In the same year he was elected president of the Association of American Geographers and ten years later first president of the Canadian Association of Geographers. Back in Sydney he found, like his prototype Ulysses, that "old age hath yet his honour and his toil". He was called upon to preside over Section P (Geography and Oceanography) at the A.N.Z.A.A.S. meeting (Wellington, N.Z.) in 1954 and over the Geographical Society of N.S.W. (1957-59). When in 1959 the Institute of Australian Geographers was formed, Taylor, the G.O.M. of Australian Geography, was a foundation member and was chosen as its first president. He also served for a time on the Council of the Royal Society of N.S.W.

Apart from all these indications of his colleagues' regard, recognition of his scientific work included the King's Polar Medal (1913), and medals from the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, Queensland Branch (1917), the American Geographical Society, the Royal Society of Tasmania and the Royal Society of N.S.W. In 1918 he was awarded the David Syme Prize and Medal of the University of Melbourne. He was an Honorary Member of the Geographical Society of N.S.W. and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and in 1954 was elected to Fellowship of the Australian Academy of Science. Two glaciers in Antarctica bear his name, bestowed by Scott and Mawson respectively, and the University of New England has its Griffith Taylor School of Geography, formally opened by him in 1961. The University of Sydney, whose authorities of an older generation had not been instant to perceive his merit in 1927, made the *amende honorable* by conferring on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters in 1961, and by naming the new building that houses its Department of Geography the Griffith Taylor Building.

By the unanimous verdict of his contemporaries Taylor was in the front rank of world geographers. In Australia he was a pioneer, and as such somewhat ahead of his times, but happily he lived to see his "damnable heresies" of the 1920's accepted as orthodox beliefs if not as "comfortable doctrines". It must be remembered, of course, that when he began his geographical studies the Commonwealth had been in existence only a few years and most of the inhabitants of the six constituent and hitherto independent States were only very gradually becoming conscious of nationhood, and of the need to abandon parochial for national thinking. On the other hand some of those who rejoiced in Federation were over-enthusiastic about the future of the newborn Commonwealth. Taylor would probably not have classed himself as a nation-builder—indeed, the cult of Nationalism was abhorrent to him—but it is beyond dispute that his studies of Australia's geographical environment, his graphical demonstrations of the influences controlling its settlement and

production, and his long and stubborn insistence on the limitations to future expansion imposed on the continent by Nature, did much to educate people to an appreciation of their essential unity as Australians, and to a more sober and realistic assessment of their country's possibilities. It is not too much to say that national thinking and the broad policy of those directing the destinies of Australia to-day are based largely, if unconsciously, on the results of Taylor's pioneer researches.

In Canada, influenced to a large extent by the proximity of a virile and powerful neighbour, he found a country more mature and less geographically isolated than Australia, perhaps with fewer illusions. Nevertheless there was scope for the application of methods of study such as he had employed in Australia and he was able to contribute substantially to an assessment of the Dominion's potentialities.

His excursions into the field of anthropology have been variously commended and condemned. His criteria for the recognition of racial types were not generally regarded as satisfactory, and others, unknown and unthought of in his day, have found more favour with anthropologists. Also the zonal concept of racial-distribution, which relied so heavily on his race-classification, is no longer regarded as valid, and has given place to other theories, such as that of development from a number of centres. Nevertheless, by his insistence on the reality of geographical controls—chiefly climatic and topographical—and on the necessity for the existence of migration corridors, he focussed the attention of anthropologists on the importance of these factors and made a distinct contribution to the question of the causes of racial differentiation and migration. It is significant that a number of his books on these topics ran to several editions and that some were translated into foreign languages.

Taylor was essentially a general practitioner, partly, we may believe, from choice, for his restless and philosophical mind found satisfaction in many branches of geography and discerned the fundamental unity amid their apparent diversity. Moreover, as a new professor in an inadequately equipped university department, where he was "lord of himself" and of very little else beside, it was necessary for him to be master of many trades. To the extent that this was so he perhaps missed the opportunity of making his mark in any particular section of his chosen branch of science, and indeed he was in some measure temperamentally unfitted for the laborious, patient, somewhat monotonous delving into minutiae often so essential to the specialist's success. His was rather the inductive type of mind that gave birth to original ideas and interesting hypotheses, often fascinating and exciting, and stimulating both to those who heard and to those who read them. The stimulus of his ideas still remains in his writings, an inspiration to the faithful, a challenge to the sceptic.

But with advances in knowledge hypotheses are apt to fail and theories have to be discarded, and it is probably most of all as a

teacher that Taylor's influence will endure. The inspiration that flowed from him and the enthusiasm he aroused in many generations of University students and through them communicated to others, are as a leaven, unseen and possibly unrecognized but ever active, that still permeates geographical thinking, in this country at least, and will continue to do so for a long time to come.

W. R. BROWNE.

#### PUBLICATIONS

The compilation of a complete bibliography for a writer so prolific as Griffith Taylor is a huge task. The best list available to date will be found in *Australian Geographical Studies*, Vol. II, No. 1, pp. 3-9.