



ARCHIBALD GRENFELL PRICE

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THE death on 20 July 1977 of Grenfell Price, in his eighty-sixth year, robs the Academy of one of its founders, and indeed the first elected secretary of its progenitor, the Humanities Research Council; but the loss of a man so various in his activities and his friendships will be deeply felt far beyond academic circles. It is in fact impossible, within our narrow limits, to do much more than simply to list some of his versatilities: historian of the beginnings of his native Colony and of the vast canvas of the Pacific; inspiration to the tiny nucleus of Australian geographers at a time when their infant discipline was generally neglected and contemned; explorer in the search for Leichhardt; Federal politician; administrator, and chairman of such important bodies as the Council of the National Library and the Advisory Board of the Commonwealth Literary Fund; Master for over thirty years of St Mark's College; traveller in the Indies East and West; and everywhere and at all times, a most genial companion, a most warm-hearted friend. Such a man defies the normal structure of an obituary notice; he left his mark in so many fields that selection seems an injustice.

Price began as a historian and developed geographical interests at Oxford, and most of his work contributes to both disciplines. It ranges widely: from the founding of South Australia and the troubles of Port Darwin to the explorations of James Cook and Douglas Mawson, and to the more general problems of European expansion in the Tropics, especially in its medical and social aspects. There can be little doubt that of all his books the most important is *White Settlers in the Tropics* (1939): a theme long bedevilled by myths, bigotries, illogicalities of every kind, to which Price brought careful direct observation—even on the obscurest Caribbean isle of Saba!—and thoughtful analysis, putting the discussion on an altogether more sober and scientific footing.

To all that he did, Price brought a lively curiosity, an abounding energy, a brave gaiety of spirit. Of the quality and honesty of his public service there can be no question. His stance on public affairs was essentially a Tory one, and his underlying assumptions could not always be shared by many who owed, and admitted, their debt to his infectious verve as a teacher: he held the respect and affection of students decades younger than himself, and in this age there can be no higher praise. For fifty years he had the devoted companionship of Lady Price, a quieter spirit perhaps but of kindred quality. But no printed words, however glowing, can quite recapture Archie's wit, his vitality, and—the constantly recurring epitomizing phrase—his warmth of heart. Fully to appreciate these, one must have known the man; but this was not an unduly

restricted privilege, for few men have had a greater capacity for friendship at once instant and enduring. A man eminent in many fields, but above all a personality radiating a warmth and gaiety not only precious in themselves but inspiring to others.

*O. H. K. Spate*