

## William J. MacDonnell.

The death of Mr. W. J. MacDonnell, which occurred at Mosman, near Sydney, in the State of New South Wales, on 22nd September 1910, was an event which must have caused feelings of widespread regret and sorrow amongst the astronomical fraternity, not only in Australia, but in other parts of the world. Born in Dublin, Mr. MacDonnell came to Sydney with his parents at the age of five years. His education, which was received partly in Australia and finally in Germany, was on a sound classical basis, and also gave him control of several modern languages. The father of Mr. MacDonnell was for a number of years a large importer and manufacturer of scientific and optical instruments, and, doubtless, this it was that gave to the son that keen insight and knowledge of all that pertains to the telescope for which he was so well known. In the year 1874 Mr. MacDonnell accompanied Mr. Scott (at one time a Director of Sydney Observatory) to Eden, on the south coast of New South Wales, for the purpose of assisting in the observations of the transit of Venus. Again in 1882, when the last transit of Venus occurred, an expedition to Port Macquarie, to the northward of Sydney, was left by the Government astronomer mainly in charge of Mr. MacDonnell. As a bank manager Mr. MacDonnell resided for a number of years at Port Macquarie, where he also managed a private observatory which was equipped with a transit instrument, clock, and a fine 6-in. Grubb equatorial refractor.

His later years were spent in Sydney; he resided at the suburb of Mosman, his observatory there containing a very fine  $4\frac{3}{4}$ -in. Parkes equatorial refractor, to which he had only recently added a large number of excellent mechanical improvements. Mr. MacDonnell was a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, but it was, perhaps, as a prominent Member and active worker of the New South Wales Branch of the British Astronomical Association that he was most widely

known, and his work most deeply appreciated. For two years as President, and afterwards as secretary and treasurer, he was looked upon by many as the father of the science in Australia, and there is very little doubt that it is largely owing to his active and untiring zeal, his strong personality, and the kindly assistance and encouragement given to younger Members, that much of the success achieved by the Branch has been accomplished. The very extensive and valuable library which Mr. MacDonnell had formed contained, perhaps, the best collection of astronomical works in the State, besides many other works of general interest, and this was always available to the student seeking enlightenment.

In addition to astronomy Mr. MacDonnell was a keen follower of, and a recognised authority on, the subject of Numismatics, and his large and valuable collection of Greek and other ancient coins was well known throughout the State.

Mr. MacDonnell was 68 years of age at the time of his death.

E. H. BEATTIE.