

III. OBITUARY NOTICES.

Georg Bühler, 1837-98.

It is not often that the death of a scholar startles and grieves his fellow-workers as the death of my old friend, Dr. Bühler, has startled and grieved us all, whether in Germany, England, France, or India. Sanskrit scholarship has indeed been unfortunate: it has often lost young and most promising scholars in the very midst of their career; and though Dr. Bühler was sixty-one years of age when he died, he was still so young and vigorous in body and mind that he made us forget his age, holding his place valiantly among the *πρόμαχοι* of the small army of genuine Indian students, and confidently looking forward to many victories and conquests that were still in store for him. By many of us he was considered almost indispensable for the successful progress of Sanskrit scholarship—but who is indispensable in this world?—and great hopes were centred on him as likely to spread new light on some of the darkest corners in the history of Sanskrit literature.

On the 8th of April last, while enjoying alone in a small boat a beautiful evening on the Lake of Constance, he seems to have lost an oar, and in trying to recover it, to have overbalanced himself. As we think of the cold waves closing over our dear friend, we feel stunned and speechless before so great and cruel a calamity. It seems to disturb the regular and harmonious working of the world in which we live, and which each man arranges for himself and interprets in his own way. It makes us feel the littleness and uncertainty of all our earthly plans, however important and safe they may seem in our own eyes. He who for so many years was the very life of Sanskrit scholarship, who helped us, guided us, corrected us in our different researches, is gone; and yet we must go on as well as we can, and try to honour his memory in the best way in which it may be honoured—not by idle tears, but by honest work.

Non hoc praecipuum amicorum munus est, prosequi defunctum ignavo questu, sed quae voluerit meminisse, quae mandaverit exsequi.

A scholar's life is best written in his own books ; and though I have promised to write a biographical notice for the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, in which he took so warm and active an interest, I have to confess that of the personal circumstances of my old friend, Dr. Bühler, I have but little to say. What I know of him are his books and pamphlets as they came out in rapid succession, and were always sent to me by their author. Our long and never interrupted friendship was chiefly literary, and for many years had to be carried on by correspondence only. He was a man who, when once one knew him, was always the same. He had his heart in the right place, and there was no mistaking his words. He never spoke differently to different people, for, like a brave and honest man, he had the courage of his opinions. He thought what he said, he never thought what he ought to say. He belonged to no *chique*, he did not even try to found what is called a school. He had many pupils, followers, and admirers, but they knew but too well that though he praised them and helped them on whenever he could, he detested nothing more than to be praised by his pupils in return. It was another charming feature of his character that he never forgot any kindness, however small, which one had rendered him. He was *kṛitagna* in the real sense of the word. I had been able, at the very beginning of his career, to render him a small service by obtaining for him an appointment in India. He never forgot it, and whenever there was an opportunity he proved his sincere attachment to me by ever so many small, but not therefore less valuable, acts of kindness. We always exchanged our books and our views on every subject that occupied our interest in Sanskrit scholarship, and though we sometimes differed, we always kept in touch. We agreed thoroughly on one point—that it did not matter *who* was right, but only

what was right. Most of the work that had to be done by Sanskrit scholars in the past, and will have to be done for some time to come, is necessarily pioneer work, and pioneers must hold together even though they are separated at times while reconnoitring in different directions. Bühler could hold his own with great pertinacity; but he never forgot that in the progress of knowledge the left foot is as essential as the right. No one, however, was more willing to confess a mistake than he was when he saw that he had been in the wrong. He was, in fact, one of the few scholars with whom it was a real pleasure to differ, because he was always straightforward, and because there was nothing mean or selfish in him, whether he defended the Pûrva-paksha, the Uttara-paksha, or the Siddhânta.

Of the circumstances of his life, all I know is that he was the son of a clergyman, that he was born at Borstel, 19th July, 1837, near Nienburg, in the then kingdom of Hanover, that he frequented the public school at Hanover, and at 1855 went to the University of Göttingen. The professors who chiefly taught and influenced him there were Sauppe, E. Curtius, Ewald, and Benfey. For the last he felt a well-deserved and almost enthusiastic admiration. He was no doubt Benfey's greatest pupil, and we can best understand his own work if we remember in what school he was brought up. After taking his degree in 1858 he went to Paris, London, and Oxford, in order to copy and collate Sanskrit and chiefly Vedic MSS. It was in London and Oxford that our acquaintance, and very soon our friendship, began. I quickly recognized in him the worthy pupil of Benfey. He had learnt how to distinguish between what was truly important in Sanskrit literature and what was not, and from an early time had fixed his attention chiefly on its historical aspects. It was the fashion for a time to imagine that if one had learnt Sanskrit grammar, and was able to construe a few texts that had been published and translated before, one was a Sanskrit scholar. Bühler looked upon this kind of scholarship as good enough for the *vulgus profanum*, but no one was

a real scholar in his eyes who could not stand on his own feet, and fight his own way through new texts and commentaries, who could not publish what had not been published before, who could not translate what had not been translated before. Mistakes were, of course, unavoidable in this kind of pioneering work, or what is called original research, but such mistakes are no disgrace to a scholar, but rather an honour. Where should we be but for the mistakes of Bopp and Burnouf, of Champollion and Talbot?

Though Bühler had learnt from Benfey the importance of Vedic studies as the true foundation of Sanskrit scholarship, and had devoted much time to this branch of learning, he did not publish much of the results of his own Vedic researches. His paper on Parganya, however, published in 1862 in Benfey's "Orient und Occident," vol. i, p. 214, showed that he could not only decipher the old Vedic texts, but that he had thoroughly mastered the principles of Comparative Mythology, a new science which owed its very existence to the discovery of the Vedic Hymns, and was not very popular at the time with those who disliked the trouble of studying a new language. He wished to prove what Grimm had suspected, that Parganya, Lit. Perkunas, Celt. Perkons, Slav. Perun, was one of the deities worshipped by the ancestors of the whole Aryan race, and in spite of the usual frays and bickerings, the main point of his argument has never been shaken. I saw much of him at that time, we often worked together, and the Index to my "History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature" was chiefly his work. The most important lesson which he had learnt from Benfey showed itself in the quickness with which he always seized on whatever was really important in the history of the literature of India. He did not write simply in order to show what he could do, but always in order to forward our knowledge of ancient India. This explains why, like Benfey's books, Bühler's own publications, even his smallest essays, are as useful to day as they were when first published. Benfey's edition of the Indian fables of the Pankatantra

produced a real revolution at the time of its publication. It opened our eyes to a fact hardly suspected before, how important a part in Sanskrit literature had been acted by Buddhist writers. We learnt in fact that the distinction between the works of Brahmanic and Buddhist authors had been far too sharply drawn; and that in their literary pursuits their relation had been for a long time that of friendly rivalry rather than of hostile opposition. Benfey showed that these Sanskrit fables of India had come to us through Buddhist hands, and had travelled from India step by step, station by station, through Pehlevi, Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, and the modern languages of Europe, till they supplied even Lafontaine with some of his most charming Fables. Benfey was in many respects the true successor of Lassen in calling the attention of Sanskrit scholars to what are called in German the *Realia* of Sanskrit scholarship. He was bold enough to publish the text and translation of the *Sâmvêda*, and the glossary appended to this edition marked the first determined advance into the dark regions of Vedic thought. Though some of his interpretations may now be antiquated he did as much as was possible at the time, and nothing is more painful than to see scholars of a later generation speak slightly of a man who was a giant before they were born. Benfey's various Sanskrit grammars, founded as they are on the great classical grammar of Pânini, hold their own to the present day, and are indispensable to every careful student of Pânini, while his "History of Sanskrit Philology" is a real masterpiece, and remains still the only work in which that important chapter of modern scholarship can be safely studied.

Bühler was imbued with the same spirit that had guided Benfey, and every one of his early contributions to Benfey's "Orient und Occident" touched upon some really important question, even though he may not always have settled it. In his article on *Θεός*, for instance ("O. u. O.," vol. i, p. 508), which was evidently written under the influence of Curtius' recent warning that *θεός* could not be equated with *deus* and Skt. *deva* without admitting a phonetic anomaly, he

suggested that θεός as well as the Old Norse *díar*, 'gods,' might be derived from a root *dhî*, 'to think, to be wise.' Often as we discussed that etymology together—and it was more than a mere etymology, because on it depended the question whether the oldest Aryan name of the gods in general was derived from the bright powers of nature or from the more abstract idea of divine wisdom—he could never persuade me that these two branches of the Aryan race, the Greek and the Scandinavian, should have derived the general name for their gods from a root different from that which the other branches had used, viz., *div*, 'to be brilliant,' and from which they had formed the most important cluster of mythological names, such as Zeus, Jovis, Diespiter, Dia, Diana, etc. I preferred to admit a phonetic rather than a mythological anomaly. If I could not persuade him he could not persuade me, *et adhuc sub judice lis est!*

Several more etymologies from his pen followed in the same journal, all connected with some points of general interest, all ingenious, even if not always convincing. In all these discussions he showed himself free from all prejudices, and much as he admired his teacher, Professor Benfey, he freely expressed his divergence from him when necessary, though always in that respectful tone which a *Sishya* would have observed in ancient India when differing from his Guru.

While he was in Oxford, he frequently expressed to me his great wish to get an appointment in India. I wrote at his desire to the late Mr. Howard, who was then Director of Public Instruction in Bombay, and to my great joy got the promise of an appointment for Bühler. But, unfortunately, when he arrived at Bombay, there was no vacancy, Mr. Howard was absent, and for a time Bühler's position was extremely painful. But he was not to be disheartened. He soon made the acquaintance of another friend of mine at Bombay, Sir Alexander Grant, and obtained through him the very position for which he had been longing. In 1865 he began his lectures at the Elphinstone College, and proved

himself most successful as a lecturer and a teacher. His power of work was great, even in the enervating climate of India, and there always is work to do in India for people who are willing to do work. He soon made the acquaintance of influential men, and he was chosen by Mr. (now Sir) Raymond West to co-operate with him in producing their famous "Digest of Hindu Law." He supplied the Sanskrit, Sir Raymond West the legal materials, and the work, first published in 1867, is still considered the highest authority on the subjects of the Hindu Laws of Inheritance and Partition. But Bühler's interest went deeper. He agreed with me that the metrical Law-books of Ancient India were preceded by legal Sûtras belonging to what I called the Sûtra period. These Sûtras may really be ascribed to the end of the Vedic period, and in their earliest form may have been anterior to the Indo-Scythian conquest of the country, though the fixing of real dates at that period is well-nigh an impossibility. When at a much later time I conferred with him on the plan of publishing a series of translations of the Sacred Books of the East, he was ready and prepared to undertake the translation of these Sûtras, so far as they had been preserved in MSS. Some of these MSS., the importance of which I had pointed out as early as 1859 in my "History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature," I handed over to him; others he had collected himself while in India. The two volumes in which his translation of the legal Sûtras of Āpastamba, Gautama, Vasishṭha, and Baudhāyana are contained, have been amongst the most popular of the series, and I hope I shall be able to publish a new edition of them with notes prepared by him for that purpose. In 1886 followed his translation of the Laws of Manu, which, if he had followed the example of others, he might well have called his own, but which he gave as founded on that of Sir William Jones, carefully revised and corrected with the help of seven native commentaries. These were substantial works, sufficient to establish the reputation of any scholar, but with him they were by-work only, undertaken in order to oblige a friend and fellow-worker. These

translations kept us in frequent correspondence, in which more than one important question came to be discussed. One of them was the question of what caused the gap between the Vedic period, of which these Sûtras may be considered as the latest outcome, and the period of that ornate metrical literature which, in my Lectures on India delivered at Cambridge in 1884, I had ventured to treat as the period of the Renaissance of Sanskrit literature, subsequent to the invasion and occupation of India by Indo-Scythian or Turanian tribes.

It was necessary to prove this once for all, for there were scholars who went on claiming for the author of the Laws of Manu, nay, for Kâlidâsa and his contemporaries, a date before the beginning of our era. What I wanted to prove was, that nothing of what we actually possessed of that ornate (*alamkâra*) metrical literature, nor anything written in the continuous sloka, could possibly be assigned to a time previous to the Indo-Scythian invasion. The chronological limits which I suggested for this interregnum were from 100 B.C. to 300 A.D. These limits may seem too narrow on either side to some scholars, but I believe I am not overstating my case if I say that at present it is generally admitted that what we call the Laws of Manu are subsequent to the Sâmayâ-kârîka or Dharma-sûtra, and that Kâlidâsa's poetical activity belongs to the sixth, nay, if Professor Kielhorn is right, even to the end of the fifth century p. Ch., and that all other Sanskrit poems *which we possess* are still later. Bühler's brilliant discovery consisted in proving, not that any of the literary works which we possess could be referred to a pre-Gupta date, but that specimens of ornate poetry occurred again and again in pre-Gupta inscriptions, and, what is even more important, that the peculiar character of those monumental poems presupposed on the part of their poets, provincial or otherwise, an acquaintance, if not with the *Alamkâra* sûtras which we possess, at all events with some of their prominent rules. In this way the absence or non-preservation of all greater literary compositions that could be claimed for the period from 100 B.C. to 300 A.D. became even more

strongly accentuated by Bühler's discoveries. It might be said, of course, that India is a large country, and that literature might have been absent in one part of the Indian Peninsula and yet flourishing in another; just as even in the small peninsula of Greece, literary culture had its heyday at Athens while it was withering away in Lacedaemon. But literature, particularly poetry, can never be quite annihilated. Nor is this the question. The question is, why was it preserved, after the rise of the national Gupta dynasty, in the only ways in which at that time it could be preserved in India, either by memory or by the multiplication of copies, chiefly in Royal Libraries under the patronage of Râjahs, whether of Indian or alien origin—and why is there at present, as far as manuscripts are concerned, an almost complete literary blank from the end of the Vedic literature to the beginning of the fourth century p.Ch.?

The important fact which is admitted by Bühler, as well as by myself, is this—that whatever literary compositions may have existed before 300 p.Ch., in poetry or even in prose, nothing remains of them at present, and that there must surely be a reason for it. Here it was Bühler who, in the Transactions of the Vienna Academy, 1890, came to my help, drawing our attention to the important fact that among certain recently published ancient inscriptions, eighteen of which are dateable, two only can with any probability be proved to be anterior to what I called the four blank centuries between 100 B.C. to 300 A.D. (See "India," p. 353.) There occur verses which prove quite clearly that the ornate style of Sanskrit poetry was by no means unknown in earlier times. The as yet undeveloped germs of that ornate poetry may even go back much further, and may be traced in portions of the Brâhmanas and in some Buddhistic writings; but their full development at the time of these Sanskrit inscriptions was clearly established for the first time by Bühler's valuable remarks. So far we were quite agreed, nor do I know of any arguments that have been advanced against Bühler's historical views.

There may be difference of opinion as to the exact dates of the Sanskrit Girnâr inscription of Rudradâman and the Prâkrit Nasik inscription of Pulumâyi, but they contain sufficient indications that an ornate, though perhaps less elaborate style of poetry, not far removed from the epic style, prevailed in India during the second century p. Ch. All the evidence accessible on that point has been carefully collected by my friend, and reflects the greatest honour on his familiarity with the Sanskrit Alamkâra poetry. But the fact remains all the same that nothing was preserved of that poetry before 300 p. Ch. ; and that of what we possess of Sanskrit Kāvya literature, nothing can for the present be traced back much beyond 500 p. Ch. We must hope that the time may soon come when the original component parts of the ancient epic poetry, nay, even the philosophical Darsanas, may be traced back with certainty to times before the Indo-Scythian Invasion. It is well known that the Mahâbhârata and the Purânas are mentioned by name during the Sûtra period, and we cannot be far wrong in supposing that something like what we possess now of these works may have existed then. Bühler was full of hope that it might be possible to fix some of the dates of these popular works at a much earlier time than is assigned to them by most scholars. I was delighted to see him boldly claim for the Veda also a greater antiquity than I had as yet ventured to suggest for it, and it seemed to me that our two theories could stand so well side by side that it was my hope that I should be able to bring out, with his co-operation, a new and much improved edition of my chapter on the Renaissance of Sanskrit Literature. I doubt whether I shall be able to do this now without his help. The solution of many of the historical and chronological questions also, which remain still unanswered, will no doubt be delayed by the sudden death of the scholar who took them most to heart, but it is not likely to be forgotten again among the problems which our younger Sanskrit scholars have to deal with, if they wish truly to honour the memory and follow in the footsteps of one of the greatest and most useful Sanskrit scholars of our days.

These chronological questions were, of course, intimately connected with the question of the date of the Sanskrit alphabets and the introduction of writing into India, which produced a written in place of the ancient purely mnemonic literature of the country. There, too, we had a common interest, and I gladly handed over to him, for his own purposes, a MS. sent to me from Japan that turned out to be the oldest Sanskrit MS. then known to exist, that of the *Pragñâpâramitâ-hṛidaya-sûtra*. It had been preserved on two palm-leaves in the Monastery of Horiuzi, in Japan, since 609 A.D., and, of course, went back to a much earlier time, as the leaves seem to have travelled from India through China, before they reached Japan. Bühler sent me a long paper of palaeographical remarks on this Horiuzi palm-leaf MS., which form a most valuable Appendix to my edition of it.¹ Thus we remained always united by our work, and I had the great satisfaction of being able to send him the copy of *Asvaghosha's Buddha-karita*, which my Japanese pupils had copied for me at Paris, and which, whether *Asvaghosha's* date is referred to the first or the fifth century A.D., when it was translated into Chinese, represents as yet the only complete specimen of that ornate scholastic style which, as he had proved from numerous inscriptions, must have existed previous to the Renaissance.² Thus our common work went on, if not always on the same plan, at all events on the same ground. We never lost touch with each other, and were never brought nearer together than when for a time we differed on certain moot points.

I have here dwelt on the most important works only which are characteristic of the man, and which will for ever mark the place of Bühler in the history of Sanskrit scholarship. But there are many other important services which he rendered to us while in India. Not only was he always ready to help us in getting MSS. from India,

¹ "Anecdota Oxoniensia," 1884.

² The text of the *Buddha-karita* was published by Cowell in the "Anecdota Oxoniensia," the translation in my "Sacred Books of the East."

but our knowledge of a large number of Sanskrit works, as yet unknown, was due to his Reports on expeditions undertaken by him for the Indian Government in search for MSS. This idea of cataloguing the literary treasures of India, first started by Mr. Whitley Stokes, has proved a great success, and no one was more successful in these researches than Bühler. And while he looked out everywhere for important MSS. his eyes were always open for ancient inscriptions also. Many of them he published and translated for the first time, and our oldest inscriptions, those of Asoka, in the third century B. C., owe to him and M. Senart their first scholarlike treatment. This is not meant to detract in any way from the credit due to the first brilliant decipherers of these texts, such as Prinsep, Lassen, Burnouf, and others. Bühler was most anxious to trace the alphabets used in these inscriptions back to a higher antiquity than is generally assigned to them, but for the present, at least, we cannot well go beyond the fact that no dateable inscription has been found in India before the time of Asoka. It is quite true that such an innovation as the introduction of alphabetic writing does not take place on a sudden, and tentative specimens of it from an earlier time may well be discovered yet, if these researches are carried on as he wished them to be carried on, in a truly systematic manner. In this field of research Bühler will be most missed, for though absent from India he had many friends there, particularly in the Government, who would gladly have listened to his suggestions. One may regret his departure from a country where his services were so valuable and so much appreciated. I have not dwelt at all in this place on the valuable services which he rendered as inspector of schools and examiner, but I may state that I received several times the thanks of the Governor of the Bombay Presidency, the late Sir Bartle Frere, for having sent out such excellent scholars as Bühler and others. Unfortunately his health made it imperative for him to return to his own country,

but he was soon so much restored under a German sky that he seemed to begin a new life as Professor at Vienna. If he could not discover new MSS. there, he could digest the materials which he had collected, and he did so with unflagging industry. Nay, in addition to all his own work, he undertook to superintend and edit an Encyclopaedia of Indo-Aryan Philology which was to be a resumé up to date of all that was known of the languages, dialects, grammars, dictionaries, and the ancient alphabets of India; which was to give an account of Indian literature, history, geography, ethnography, jurisprudence; and finally, to present a picture of Indian religion, mythology, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and music, so far as they are known at present. No one knows what an amount of clerical work and what a loss of time such a superintendence involves for a scholar who has his hands full of his own work, how much reading of manuscripts, how much letter-writing, how much protracted and often disagreeable discussion it entails. But Bühler, with rare self-denial, did not shrink from this drudgery, and his work will certainly prove extremely useful to all future Indo-Aryan students. One thing only one may regret—that the limits of each contribution are so narrow, and that several of the contributors had no time to give us much more of their own original work. But this is a defect inherent in all encyclopaedias or manuals, unless they are to grow into a forest of volumes like the *Allgemeine Encyclopaedie der Wissenschaften und Künste* by Ersch, begun in 1831 and as yet far from being finished. Under Bühler's guidance we might have expected the completion of his Encyclopaedia within a reasonable time, and I am glad to hear that his arrangements were so far advanced that other hands will now be easily able to finish it, and that it may remain, like Lassen's *Alterthumskunde*, 1847–1861, a lasting monument of the lifelong labours of one of the most learned, the most high-minded and large-hearted among the Oriental scholars whom it has been my good fortune to know in the course of my long life.

F. M. M.

Pandit Sankara Bâlkrishna Dikshit.

For many years past the leading Orientalists of Europe, when in doubt or difficulty in matters connected with the astronomical and chronological systems of the Hindus, have had recourse to Mr. S. B. Dikshit, of the Bombay Educational Department, for information and assistance. His name thus became well-known to all archaeologists, and I rarely opened a volume of the *Indian Antiquary* without finding his name mentioned. So that, although he was not a member of the Royal Asiatic Society, it has seemed to me fitting that his lamented decease should not be left unnoticed in the Journal. Those who have consulted him, and who have benefited by his large knowledge and careful methods of work, can alone say what was the extent of his labour in this field of science, or how generous and how disinterested was the help he rendered. For myself, I regret to say that I never made his personal acquaintance, belonging as I did to another Presidency, and that I only worked with him for a few years before his death, so that I am not competent to say all that could be said regarding him, but I am so deeply sensible of the kindness and willingness with which he helped me in the preparation of the *Indian Calendar* that I feel it my duty to attempt to do honour to his memory now that he has left us. For a year or more previous to the time when we agreed to bring out that work as joint-authors Mr. S. B. Dikshit was working for me as laboriously at the lists of mean intercalations of months, and the moments of commencement of the solar year according to the systems of the *Ārya* and *Sūrya Siddhāntas*, as he afterwards did in the attempt to prepare a complete and lucid account of the general principles of Hindu chronology. And this work was undertaken solely in order that he might give the best of his experience and his time in aid of what he believed would be a useful book; with no view of remuneration or of any self-advancement. He never even thought at that period that he would participate in the authorship of the volume. I am entitled therefore

to express my conviction that in all the deceased Pandit's labours he was guided by the highest principles known to the world of science, as he was in all his relations to his fellow-workers by the attractive kindness of his nature. His loss will be widely deplored by many friends amongst Orientalists throughout the world, no less than by his own countrymen.

R. SEWELL.

IV. NOTES AND NEWS.

GOLD MEDAL.—The list of subscribers to the above now stands as follows:—

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