

III. JOURNAL ASIATIQUE. Tome XX, No. 2.

Bel (A.). La Djāzya.

Poussin (L. de la V.). Dogmatique bouddhique.

Basset (R.). Rapport sur les études berbères et haoussa.

No. 3. Table des matières de la 9^e série.

III. OBITUARY NOTICES.

Professor Cowell.

Not only the greatest Oriental scholar that England has produced, but probably also the most widely learned man of our time, has passed away in the person of Edward Byles Cowell, Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Cambridge, who died there on Monday, February 9th.

Cowell was born at Ipswich, January 23rd, 1826, and was educated at Ipswich School. During his schooldays he used to read in the Public Library, and there in 1841 came on Sir William Jones's works, reading especially the translation of the Sanskrit play "Sakuntalā." "I well remember," he said, in a memorable address given to the Royal Asiatic Society in 1898, "the joy of finding a Persian grammar among his works, and I soon learned the character and began to study the anthology." From this book, he added, he gave, "thirteen years afterwards, FitzGerald his first lesson in the Persian alphabet." In the same year he saw Professor H. H. Wilson's "Sanskrit Grammar" advertised, which he bought not long after. "Of course I found Sanskrit too hard," he continued, "but I returned to Persian meanwhile," reading alone the "Shāhnāmah" and Hāfiz. His first guide in Oriental studies was Colonel Hockley, an old Bombay officer settled in Ipswich, with whom he read Jāmī. On leaving school he at first entered into commerce under his father, and it was in course of business visits to London that he formed the acquaintance of H. H. Wilson, then Librarian of the India

House. He gradually acquired considerable proficiency in Sanskrit; for in 1851 he published a translation of Kālidāsa's play "Vikramorvaśī." His actual systematic study under Wilson commenced, however, only in 1853, as we learn from his address to the Cambridge Electoral Roll. In 1847 he married Miss Elizabeth Charlesworth, and in 1850 entered the University of Oxford, being then obliged, as a married man, to enter a hall (Magdalen Hall), not a college. He took honours both in classics (First Class, Final 1854) and in mathematics, and the University somewhat tardily acknowledged his eminence by the honorary degree of D.C.L. in 1896. In 1856 he was appointed Professor of History at Presidency College, Calcutta, and in 1858 also Principal of the Sanskrit College in the same city. Here he remained till 1864, and laid the real foundation of his reputation as an Orientalist, the happy combination of wide and deep Western culture with the concentrated traditional lore of the Eastern pandit. Unfortunately for the present generation, he was one of the last survivors of this type. The present policy of our Indian authorities in replacing European teachers of Sanskrit in India by natives not only dwarfs critical scholarship in India, but also injures the proper balance of Oriental studies at home. In Calcutta Cowell and his wife were, as everywhere, not only respected, but loved. The present writer well remembers the numerous inquiries from old pupils amongst the natives at Calcutta and elsewhere, who spoke of his doings of twenty and thirty years before as if of yesterday. Foremost amongst these was the now aged Sanskrit pandit Maheśa Chandra Nyāyaratna.

In 1867 Cowell was elected to the Chair of Sanskrit, then just established at Cambridge, where the rest of his life was spent, both as a University professor and a Fellow of Corpus Christi College (1874). Here he taught not only Sanskrit of varied periods and styles (e.g. Indian philosophy, thirty years ago hardly known in the Continental universities), but also comparative philology and Persian. These subjects have now been provided by the University with separate teachers,

and the same has been done for elementary Sanskrit, and justly, so as to economize the lavish expenditure of precious time that Cowell would bestow as freely on the beginner as on the advanced student. His Pali classes, started some five-and-twenty years ago, have resulted in the Cambridge translation of the Jātaka-book, under his guidance. More recently he read Zend with several pupils.

Cowell was pre-eminently a teacher. It was quite characteristic of the man that on the occasion already referred to, when the Royal Asiatic Society conferred on him the first awarded of their series of gold medals for distinction in Oriental learning, he chose in his very opening sentence of acceptance "to recognize in it a sign that he had not failed in his life's old dream of spending his days in teaching." His life was uneventful. Within the last few weeks I inquired of him what he considered its chief events. He replied that the eras in his life were the acquisition and study of certain books. His own mental history may be illustrated by some of his chief works. To the Calcutta period belong his two editions and translations of Upanisads, and the text and translation of the difficult work of Indian logic, the "Kusumāñjali." Many native scholars were at the same time encouraged to edit texts which appeared with English introductions by the Professor. Similarly, on his return to England, his first Cambridge pupil, Palmer Boyd, was induced to translate the newly discovered Buddhist drama, "Nāgānanda," which appeared with an introduction by Cowell. To the same time belongs his new edition of the Prakrit Grammar of Vararuci, of which he had issued a first edition in Oxford days. Two important works published in Cambridge days represent the continuance of researches in Indian philosophy begun in India. These are the "Aphorisms of Śāṅḍilya" (1878), and the "Sarvadarśana-samgraha," translated (portions also by Mr. A. E. Gough) in 1882. Among the more recent of his important works were his text and translation of the "Buddhacarita" (1893-4), a publication which has created great interest amongst critical scholars abroad. Most

characteristic, too, was his work for and with others. He more than once accepted the task, at times ungrateful, of finishing works of deceased scholars. Such were Wilson's version of the "Rigveda" (finally completed by his pupil, Mr. W. F. Webster), and the huge work of Mādhava left incomplete by Goldstücker. His chief works done with others were: "The Black Yajurveda" (edited partly with Dr. Röer), 1858-64; Catalogue of Buddhist Sanskrit MSS. (with Dr. Eggeling), 1875; "Divyāvādāna," edited with the late R. A. Neil, 1886; "Harsacarita," translated with Mr. F. W. Thomas, 1897. Lastly, let it never be forgotten that it was he, the scholar, known to the few, who introduced Omar Khayyam to FitzGerald, whose version is known wherever English literature is known.

To estimate the width of Cowell's attainments one must search through many journals and periodicals. His early article on Persian literature in "Oxford Essays" (1855) must not be forgotten. His profound knowledge of Welsh was well known to Continental *savants*. Remarkable articles by him are to be found in *Cymmrodor*, vols. ii and v. In one of these is contained an elaborate parallel between Welsh poetry and the troubadours. Many of the earlier volumes of the Journal of Philology contain numerous articles from his pen, such as the folklore studies on the tale of Rhampsinitus (1868), on the Chapman of Swaffham (1876), and on the fragments of Greek comedy preserved in Origen (1872). His interest in classical matters was well maintained. Patristic study also contributed at least one interesting discovery regarding Indian philosophy. Probably no living man but he could have discoursed as he did in his presidential address to the Aryan Section of the Orientalists' Congress in 1892 on the parallel between the literature of the Indian *Mīmāṃsā* and the Talmudic Rabbis. Nor did his sympathies limit themselves to ancient or recondite languages. Italian literature was a favourite recreation; while a well-known authority on Spanish said that Cowell gave him the impression of having devoted himself to nothing else. His last complete work was a selection

of passages translated from an old Bengali poem into English verse, printed only a few months ago. There is also an article by him on a Persian subject in the current number of *Macmillan*. He leaves but little incomplete. The Jātaka-book may safely be left in the hands of two able and experienced pupils, Mr. H. P. Francis and Mr. W. H. D. Rouse, fortunately both in residence at Cambridge. His last elaborate study was one which I induced him to take up, the translation of the “Siddhānta-muktāvalī,” on Indian logic. I believe his written translation of it was approaching completion.

Of the retiring, unaffected generosity and sympathy of his character it is impossible for a pupil and a friend of a quarter of a century to speak in terms that would not seem exaggerated to strangers. A scholarly friend writes of him to me:—

“I doubt if I have ever known any other man so wholly free from personal ambition or vanity, or so ready to give his best work to others for the pure love of knowledge.”

Let me conclude this inadequate notice with his own words, addressed to his “fellow-workers in a noble cause,” the diffusion of the knowledge of all that is good in the East, and that

“by the power which personal enthusiasm and sympathy can always exercise on others. ‘Lux ex oriente’ is their motto; to help in the diffusion of that light is their work. The several generations of members pass away, but they are continuously linked together by their common aim; and the former and the present members are all parts of one long series,

‘Et quasi cursores vitæ lampada tradunt.’”

With still the same thought, he said to a band of pupils who, on his seventieth birthday, presented him with the portrait now hanging in the hall of Corpus Christi:—

“It has been a keen delight to me to hand on the torch to other and younger men, to enter into their hopes and ambitions, and thus to forget one’s own limitations and failures in the wider

horizon which opens before them in the future. The teacher's motto may well be

‘*Serit arbores quæ alteri sæculo prosint.*’”

CECIL BENDALL.

(From the *Athenæum*.)

IV. NOTES AND NEWS.

AJANTA FRESCOES.—Dr. Heinrich Lüders, of Göttingen, has succeeded in solving the puzzles of three of these frescoes. They are illustrations of the two Jātaka stories of Kshantivādin and Maitribala, according to the text of Ārya Śūra's Jātaka Mālā; and have beneath them, in characters of about the sixth century A.D., stanzas taken from that work. The proofs of the discovery, which is of great interest, are contained in an article in the last issue of the “*Nachrichten der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*” at Göttingen.

THE Royal Asiatic Society, being desirous to give a greater attention than it has hitherto been able to do to the study of Far Eastern questions, is considering the advisability of printing such articles as are contributed to its *Journal* by scholars interested in the literature of China, Japan, Siam, and the adjoining countries in a separate publication, to be entitled

“THE FAR EAST.”

It is proposed to issue *The Far East* at first every six months; and if the project should receive encouragement,