

## II. OBITUARY NOTICES.

*Professor Albrecht Weber.*

On November 30th, at Berlin, died Albrecht Weber, one of the greatest Orientalists of our time. If less known to the public than men like Max Müller or Renan, amongst his fellow-workers in Indian research Weber occupied a position quite unique. As a writer no man has explored so many new fields; as a teacher none can boast so goodly an array of pupils.

Born at Breslau in 1825, studying at Bonn and Berlin, Weber settled (after some scholarly travel in England and France) in 1848 in Berlin, where he was appointed Professor in 1856, and taught for the remainder of his life. His first great work was the edition of the "White Yajur-veda," of which vol. i appeared in 1849 (the same year that saw the first volume of Max Müller's "Rigveda"). About the same time Weber undertook the cataloguing of the Sanskrit MSS. in the Royal Library at Berlin. The first volume appeared in 1853. This was the earliest full and scientific catalogue of Sanskrit MSS. published, and it has remained a model. Its special feature was the full description of the subordinate works of Vedic literature, till then known in Europe mostly by hearsay. Not content, however (like some cataloguers), to leave his best results to be gleaned by others, Weber followed this up by numerous essays on all branches of Indian research on subjects as widely separated as Vedic astronomy and the relatively modern cult of the god Krishna. These were published partly by the Berlin Academy of Sciences (to which he was elected in 1857), but chiefly in his own periodical for the study of Indian antiquity, *Indische Studien*, of which seventeen volumes (1850-85) appeared, in great part written by himself.

Besides his work on Sanskrit, Weber was also the first real pioneer in the scientific study (still neglected) of Prakrit, the middle stratum of Indian speech, from which

the vernaculars of Northern India have sprung. In several forms of this speech Weber edited texts, especially in that adopted by the Jain religion, of which Europe owes to him its first trustworthy information. His interest in this probably led him to compile the second volume of his great library catalogue, in 1,202 quarto pages, of which the last 787 are devoted to Jain literature. The results of the latter portion were worked out in *Indische Studien*, and have thence been translated with the author's revision into English. The results of some of his university teaching were embodied in his lectures on Indian literature, which, on the ground of their wide grasp of facts (for Weber had no graces of style), remained the standard work on the subject throughout Europe for half a century.

Angelo de Gubernatis, one of the most versatile of his pupils, calls him "le grand maître des indianistes contemporains," and, indeed, it is probable that not only half the numerous chairs of Sanskrit in Germany (where the subject is far more widely endowed than here) are occupied by his pupils, or their pupils, but also a goodly number in Holland, Switzerland, Italy, and America. Weber's personality was most genial, and his venerable figure will be missed from the numerous congresses of scholars that he attended as long as he was able. In later years his sight failed. He says pathetically in the *Vorwort* to his last great catalogue (1891): "Es ist ein mühsames Werk das ich hiermit abschliesse. Ein gut Stück meiner Sehkraft liegt darin begraben." But in spite of failing powers he died in harness, returning in his numerous recent publications mainly to his earliest subject, the Veda, and corresponding in his own hand with his many friends, in their own language, both in Germany and in this country.

C. BENDALL.

[From the *Athenæum*.]