

III. OBITUARY NOTICE.

Mr. Hugh Nevill, F.Z.S., M.R.A.S.

“By the death at Hyères on April 10th of Mr. Hugh Nevill, F.Z.S., of the Ceylon Civil Service, science loses an enthusiastic worker in many fields. During twenty-seven years' service Mr. Nevill had been an indefatigable collector. He had discovered and described many new species in zoology and had contributed many specimens to our museums. His collection of birds passed to the late Marquis of Tweeddale; but a large and very complete collection of certain genera of shells remains. For some years Mr. Nevill edited and published at his own cost an important journal, the *Taprobanian*, better known on the Continent and in America than in England. Mr. Nevill leaves also what is probably a unique collection of specimens of the ancient school of Kandy silver work, and took an active part in the revival of the art. The most important collection is, however, that of ancient Buddhist and Pāli manuscripts, which, from his intimacy with Buddhist priests and other native scholars, Mr. Nevill had unusual facilities for collecting. A *catalogue raisonné* of these has been prepared for publication, and the late Dr. Rost, of the India Office, was most anxious that it should be published. The catalogue is fortunately complete, and Mr. Nevill had brought it with him in order to superintend its publication in England, but was unable to rally from the severe illness that had necessitated his leaving Ceylon.”—From the *Athenæum*, May 1, 1897. Mr. Nevill was elected a member of this Society in 1891.

The late Bankim Chandra Chatterjea, C.I.E.

Among the late members of the Society, whose deaths were noticed at our last anniversary meeting, was Bankim Chandra Chatterjea, one of the greatest literary men of

modern India. He was born in 1838, the year after the commencement of the present reign, and received an excellent English education at the Presidency College of Calcutta; and in due course he obtained his degree as the first B.A. of India. Modern Indian literature owes its growth and development to a great extent to her sons who have received the benefits of English education, and among them Bankim Chandra was one of the foremost and greatest.

In 1864 Bankim Chandra produced his first historical novel, which has been translated into English under the title of "The Chieftain's Daughter." Nothing so bold and fresh and original had been attempted in Bengali prose before, and the appearance of the great work, marking the beginning of a new school of fiction, took the literary world of Bengal by surprise. A generation has passed away since the appearance of this book, and the sober criticism of the present day reckons it as one of the masterpieces of Bengali literature.

Other works flowed from the prolific pen of the gifted writer thick and fast. A wild and weird story of a strange girl, rescued in the Sundarbans from sacrificial immolation, showed the power of the author's romantic imagination; and a historical tale of the Moslem conquest of Bengal established his reputation for varied delineation of character.

In 1872 Bankim Chandra started a literary magazine, the first of its kind in India; and in its pages he brought out, what is perhaps his greatest work, a social novel which has been translated into English under the name of "The Poison-Tree." Bankim Chandra was now the recognized king of the literary world in Bengal, and for over twenty years he had no equal and no rival. Other novels, social and historical, proceeded from his pen in rapid succession, all marked by a bold conception of character, a skilful grouping of incidents, and a rich and inimitable diction which grew simpler and mellower with practice. For a generation the reading world in Bengal feasted on his unceasing productions, and Bengali ladies in their zenana, and boys

in schools and colleges, read his tales, essays, and didactic compositions, with unabated avidity.

During the last years of his life Bankim Chandra wrote much on Hindu religion, and his great work on Krishna, representing him as a man, a warrior, and a statesman, created a profound impression. Then he took up the study of the Vedas, delivered a course of lectures on Vedic religion, and undertook with the present writer the compilation of a comprehensive work of selections from sacred Hindu literature for the use of his countrymen.

Bankim Chandra was made a Rai Bahadur by the Indian Government, and the Queen-Empress made him a Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire. He died shortly afterwards, mourned by his countrymen, and leaving none behind him worthy to fill up his place in the literary world of Bengal.

ROMESH C. DUTT.

IV. NOTES AND NEWS.

The Legend of Isisinga (R̥ṣyaśṅga).—Dr. Lüders (in an interesting paper read before the Göttingen Kön. Gesell. der Wissenschaften, 1897) has discussed the Sanskrit and Pāli versions of this story. He comes to the conclusion that the Pāli verses, as distinct from the prose, are reproduced from the same old and popular ballad from which the oldest Sanskrit authorities also drew; that neither Sanskrit nor Pāli borrow from one another; that each has in certain passages the oldest form; and that the Pāli prose is inconsistent with the Pāli verses. He also discusses the illustrations of this legend on the Bharhut Tope (pl. xxvi), at Amarāvati (Fergusson, pl. lxxxvi), at Devandahalli (Ind. Ant., ii, 142), and at Bangkok (Fournerau, "Le Siam Ancien," pl. xix). The Amarāvati identification is here made for the first time.

The history of this popular gibe against the ascetics may not be of much importance for the history of Indian thought.