

## OBITUARY NOTICES

### Freeman Freeman-Thomas

MARQUESS OF WILLINGDON, P.C., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E.,  
G.B.E.

*President, 1939-40*

The Director, Sir Richard Winstedt, represented the Society at the funeral of Lord Willingdon in Westminster Abbey on 20th August.

Although still a strenuous servant of the Empire, Lord Willingdon consented to be President of our Society for a year. None of the Councillors will forget his extreme courtesy and charm, or his kindness in attending the annual meeting and making a speech in spite of the many calls upon his time and strength.

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### Sir George A. Grierson, O.M., K.C.I.E.

Sir George Grierson, O.M., died at Camberley on the 7th March, in his ninety-first year. It is fitting that this Society should pay homage to the memory of one who not only was a member for fifty-seven years, an honorary Vice-President, and a Gold Medallist of the Society, but also, in the grand tradition of Sir William Jones, proved himself one of the greatest scholars, perhaps even the greatest there has been, of India and its languages.

George Abraham Grierson, son of the late Dr. G. A. Grierson, was born at Glenageary, Co. Dublin, on 7th January, 1851. From Shrewsbury School he went to Trinity College, Dublin. Here the foundation of his life-work was laid. For though he took mathematical honours, he was also exhibitioner in Sanskrit and Hindustani. Robert Atkinson, Professor of Oriental Languages at Trinity College, was the first to direct his interest to those studies to which he was to make through long and fruitful years so monumental a contribution. In the

latter days of his life, in the study at Camberley with the evidence of those years about them, his friends often heard the Grand Old Man of Indian philology speak in affectionate memory of his old teacher.

In 1873 Grierson entered the Indian Civil Service and was posted to district work in Bihar. By 1896 he had become additional Commissioner of Patna. His interest in the language of the people, stimulated by his study of Sanskrit under Atkinson before he came to India, continually deepened and widened. To all who see in such a work a powerful link of sympathy between Indians and Englishmen, it is a matter of profound regret that the latter, entering the Indian Civil Service, are no longer permitted to offer Sanskrit as a subject in the final examination of Probationers. Grierson's passion for the study of Indian languages, once aroused, did not flag; and even when he was engaged in administrative duties, a quick succession of articles and books flowed from his pen. Many of them naturally dealt with the speech, customs, traditions, and literature of the people of this region of India. One of his first articles in 1877 was *Notes on the Rangpur Dialect*. Year by year many articles and books followed, including the splendid *Bihar Peasant Life*, which, being a discursive catalogue of the surroundings of the people of that province, might still find imitators in other provinces with great profit both to science and to practical government.

All this was a preparation for far wider studies of Indian languages. In 1894 the project of a Linguistic Survey of India, proposed at the International Congress of Orientalists in 1886, at which Grierson was present, was sanctioned by the Government of India. In 1898 Grierson was placed on special duty to collect and edit the lists and specimens of all the varieties of speech in the survey area, which were ordered to be forwarded through district officers and political agents. In 1903 he retired from India, and made his home at Camberley in Surrey. Here for some years he had the able assistance of the Norwegian scholar, Dr. Sten Konow, who compiled

several of the earlier volumes of the Survey. But for the most part during the succeeding quarter of a century he laboured single-handed. The year 1928 saw the completion of two very notable works in the field of linguistic science : one was the *New English Dictionary*, finished after seventy years of labour ; the other was the *Linguistic Survey of India*. The first provided an unrivalled history of the vocabulary of one language, the other has given us descriptions in 20 quarto volumes and nearly 8,000 pages, not of one language only, not even of the different dialects of one language, nor even of a group of connected languages, but of four separate and distinct families—the Austro-Asiatic, the Sino-Tibetan, the Dravidian, and the Aryan—excluding two languages as yet unclassified ; and these families are represented in India alone (or rather in that part of India with which the Survey deals) by 179 separate languages (of which the test is mutual unintelligibility) and 544 dialects. This monumental work is not only an inexhaustible mine for all those who study the languages of India, but beyond any other has stimulated in Indians a just pride in their own vernaculars and a deep interest in the long history that lies behind them.

The last volume was published in 1928 in the author's 77th year. His 82nd year saw the fourth and last volume of the great dictionary of Kashmiri, the compilation of which he had begun while still in India.

Kashmiri, an Indo-Aryan language, is the one written language of the Dardic group, then scarcely known, but of high philological interest, in the study of which Grierson's own *Pisāca Languages of North-Western India* had made a notable beginning. With the Dardic group all the three main varieties of Romani (if only because the Gypsies in their journey from India sojourned among Dardic speaking tribes) whatever their ultimate dialectic connections in Indo-Aryan, have striking affinities. These doubtless turned Grierson's attention to the study of Romani and its connection with India. A number of papers from 1887 onwards testify to this interest

and it was fitting that in 1927 he should have been elected President of the Gypsy Lore Society.

To celebrate his 85th birthday many of his friends and admirers contributed articles to a *Volume of Indian and Iranian Studies* published in his honour by the School of Oriental Studies, on the Governing Body of which he had represented this Society. The volume (*Bull. S.O.S.*, vol. viii, pts. 2 and 3) contains a bibliography of Grierson's writings. The mere list of them occupies 22 pages. Nevertheless the deputation which waited on him to present the gift was met with an *ἀντίδωρον* in the shape of his latest work, a volume in the Society's Prize Publications, which had been too late for inclusion in the bibliography.

Many universities and learned societies delighted to honour Grierson. He was made a Companion of the Indian Empire in 1894 and a Knight of the same Order in 1912. But nothing gave greater pleasure to all his friends and admirers than the conferment in 1928 of the Order of Merit on the author of the *Linguistic Survey of India*.

No attempt to assess the value of Grierson's work could be complete without reference to his broad humanity, his delightful humour, his never-failing kindness. He was big in body, mind, and soul. He had a boundless energy and enthusiasm and a firmness of spirit which, held undeviating on the path he had chosen, triumphed over every difficulty of circumstance. Neither age nor sickness diminished that enthusiasm or dimmed that spirit. Beyond all, his delight in encouraging his fellow workers and particularly the young among them made "Rathfarnham" a place of pilgrimage for scholars of all races and from every country, and especially from his own loved India. Fortunate indeed were those who enjoyed the hospitality that he and Lady Grierson offered in their home; and to all who have sat in the study of "Rathfarnham" the memory of that great and good man will be an abiding joy.

R. L. TURNER.