

OBITUARY NOTICES

MICHAËL JAN DE GOEJE

ON May 17 Professor M. J. De Goeje, the greatest Arabist of modern times, died at Leiden, where for forty years he had laboured unceasingly both as an author and also in his official capacity as teacher of the Arabic language. A list of his works, including editions of Arabic books, historical and literary essays, reviews, etc., would occupy many pages, but even such a list would not convey any adequate idea of the services which he rendered to science, for he was ever ready to place his immense learning at the disposal of those who consulted him, and the fruits of his researches are often to be found in the publications of other men. The only European Arabist who can be compared with him, as regards the amount of his published work, is Wüstenfeld; in critical acumen and linguistic knowledge the superiority of the Dutch scholar is immeasurable.

De Goeje was born in Friesland in 1836. In 1856 he became the pupil of the well-known Arabist, Reinhart Dozy, of Leiden; but, unlike Dozy, who devoted himself mainly to the late mediaeval period of Arabic literature, De Goeje concentrated his attention on the earlier authors, in particular the historians, the geographers, and the poets. His name will for ever be associated with the Leiden edition of the *Annals* of Aṭ-Ṭabarī, a work of stupendous size and inestimable value, the publication of which must be regarded as one of the greatest literary achievements of the nineteenth century. In this undertaking several of the most eminent Orientalists took part, but De Goeje performed the arduous task of chief editor, and to him the largest share of praise unquestionably belongs. Among

the works which he edited independently it is sufficient to mention the *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* (in eight volumes), the *Dīwān* of Muslim ibn al-Walīd (1875), and the *Kitāb-ash-Shi'r wa-sh-Shu'arā* of Ibn Kūtaiba (1904).

His greatness consisted essentially in the fact that he combined a prodigious memory for details with a rigidly scientific method. He was indefatigable in the collecting of materials, but he subjected everything to a searching criticism, and never fell into the error of supposing that it is the duty of a European Orientalist to follow blindly the guidance of the native authorities. Though he did not devote much time to the study of any Semitic language other than Arabic, he was well acquainted with the general results of comparative philology, and constantly made use of them for the purpose of elucidating Arabic words and phrases. He likewise paid great attention to the influence of Græco-Roman culture on the East, as may be seen by a perusal of the admirable glossaries which he habitually appended to his editions of Arabic texts.

His reputation as a scholar is more likely to increase than to diminish with the lapse of time. But of his personal character future generations will scarcely be able to form a notion, for his unflinching kindness, his perfect rectitude, and his entire freedom from vanity can be appreciated only by those who enjoyed the privilege of his friendship.

A. A. BEVAN.