

## II. VIENNA ORIENTAL JOURNAL. Vol. xvi, No. 1.

Nöldeke (Th.). Zum Mittelpersischen.

Zachariae (Th.). Die Nachträge zu dem synonymischen Wörterbuch des Hemacandra.

Hess (J. J.). Bemerkungen zu Doughty's Travels in Arabia Deserta.

Negelein (J. von). Erklärung einer Veda Stelle.

Kirste (J.). Zur Interpretation des Veda.

## II. OBITUARY NOTICES.

*Elias John Wilkinson Gibb.*

BORN JUNE 3, 1857.

DIED DECEMBER 5, 1901.

AMONGST the many sad losses of a year conspicuously associated with public and private mourning, one of the most irreparable, not only to our Society but to Oriental learning, is that of Mr. E. J. W. Gibb, one of the finest Turkish scholars whom Europe has ever produced, who died after a short illness of about three weeks at his London house, 15, Chepstow Villas, Bayswater, on Thursday, December 5, 1901.

Mr. Gibb was born at Glasgow on June 3, 1857, and was educated in the same city, first at Park School under Dr. Collier, the author of the *History of England*, and afterwards at Glasgow University. His taste and aptitude for linguistic studies manifested themselves at an early age, and it was perhaps the charming stories of the *Thousand and One Nights* which first inspired him with that deep love for, and interest in, the East which characterized the whole of his mature life. I first heard of his proficiency in Turkish about 1878 (some five years before I made his personal acquaintance) from the late Sir James Redhouse, to whom I had written for advice as to my own studies; and a year later (in 1879) his first published work, an English translation of the account given by Sa'du'd-Din of the Capture of Constantinople in the great history entitled

*Táju't-Tawárikh*, appeared. This was followed in 1882 by his *Ottoman Poems*, wherein he first fixed and applied those principles of rendering Oriental into English verse on which his later and maturer work was based. An admirable enunciation of these principles will be found at pp. ix-x of the Preface to the first (at present the only published) volume of his great *History of Ottoman Poetry* (Luzac, 1900). Briefly stated, his opinion was that to make an adequate translation of an Oriental poem it was not sufficient to give a bald prose rendering, no matter how correct, nor even to construct an English metrical paraphrase; but that, in the words of the late Mr. J. A. Symonds, "a good translation should resemble a plaster-cast, the English being *plaqué* upon the original, so as to reproduce its exact form." To this principle, as applied by Mr. John Payne to the translation of Oriental verse into English, Mr. Gibb gave his full allegiance; and though there is much room for discussion and difference of opinion on the general question (for even the poets of Asia, when rendering Arabic verses into Persian, or *vice versá*, have not felt bound to preserve the metre or verse-form of the original, though the same system of prosody holds good for both languages, while it is foreign to the genius of European verse), it is probable that few have succeeded so well as he did in faithfully rendering into a European language both the meaning and the form of Oriental poetry.

It was in the Summer of 1883, a year after I had visited Constantinople for the first time, that I first made the personal acquaintance of Mr. Gibb. Both of us were working at that period at Turkish, Persian, and Arabic, and both of us held strongly that the best and fullest knowledge of the East must be sought from the people of the East. We therefore arranged to spend some six weeks together in London, working at the subjects of our common interest, and cultivating the society of some of those well-read and intelligent natives of Western Asia who are at all times to be found in the Metropolis, though their number at that time happened to be unusually large. Notable amongst

them was that wonderful old man, Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir of Bawánát in Fárs, of whom I have given a slight sketch in the Introductory Chapter of my *Year amongst the Persians*. From this period, to which I look back as one of the happiest and most interesting in my life, dates my friendship with that most illustrious yet most modest scholar of whose fruitful life and premature death it is my sad duty to write the record.

In 1884 Mr. Gibb published a translation of the Turkish *Story of Jewād*, and in 1886 a translation of the *Forty Vezirs*. A year later he printed for private circulation a small edition (50 copies) of the twelfth-century French romance of *Aucassin and Nicholete*, accompanied by a tasteful and scholarly English rendering, and at later dates he contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* the article on *Turkish Literature*, and two of the most important chapters in the *History of Turkey* published in the "Stories of the Nations" series. To his crowning work, the *History of Ottoman Poetry*, of which the first out of the projected five volumes was published in 1900 by Messrs. Luzac, I have already alluded. It was the earnest desire of his widow and his parents that the publication of this great work, the mature product of his rare learning and most diligent labour, should, if possible, be continued, and to me they have entrusted the honourable but difficult task of seeing through the press the four remaining volumes. In the *Athenæum* of January 13 of this current year I have described with sufficient fulness the state in which the manuscript was left, and that description I will not here repeat. Suffice it to say that it was nearly complete, only a few chapters in the last volume (e.g. that dealing with the work and influence of Kemál Bey, one of the founders of the Modern School of Ottoman literature) being unwritten; and that the orderly and methodical arrangement of the materials has enormously facilitated a task which, difficult as it is, would otherwise have proved almost impossible. I may add that the second volume, which was practically ready for press, has now undergone final revision, and been

placed in the hands of the careful and skilful printers Messrs. E. J. Brill, of Leyden; that some 80 pages are already in type, and that the volume will, I trust, be published in the course of this year, and will be followed as quickly as possible by the remaining volumes.

By his will Mr. Gibb has left to the British Museum his very valuable collection of Turkish and other Oriental manuscripts, which comprises some 324 volumes, and contains many extremely rare and several unique works. Of this collection a summary account is given in the number of the *Athenæum* to which I have already referred, and, should circumstances permit, I hope perhaps to describe them more fully in another number of the *Journal*. The destination of the printed Oriental books, which are also of great value, is not yet determined; but, since the chief desire of Mr. Gibb's widow and parents is that his name may be perpetuated and his work continued, it is probable that they also will be generously bestowed where they are likely to be of the greatest use to those who shall hereafter follow in the steps of him who gathered them together with such taste, judgment, and trouble.

Death is hardest to understand, and sorrow most difficult to bear, when he whom we mourn dies not at a ripe old age, his work accomplished and his labour completed, but is cut off in the very meridian of life, with faculties fully matured and energy still undiminished. We can only repeat the faith so beautifully expressed by Browning in that magnificent poem *A Grammarian's Funeral*:—

“ Oh, if we draw a circle premature,  
 Heedless of far gain,  
 Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure  
 Bad is our bargain !  
 Was it not great ? did not he throw on God  
 (He loves the burthen)—  
 God's task to make the heavenly period  
 Perfect the earthen ? ”

E. G. B.