

## OBITUARY NOTICES.

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REV. JOSEPH EDKINS, D.D.

THE loss of Dr. Edkins makes another gap in our list of Honorary Members. He died in Shanghai last Easter Sunday at the ripe age of 81, having spent fifty-seven years of an active life in the service of China and the Chinese.

Joseph Edkins was born at Nailsworth, in Gloucestershire, on December 19th, 1823. He was a son of the Manse, his father being a Congregational minister, in charge also of a private school, where his son received his earliest education. The district is one of the most beautiful in England, the famous "Golden Valley," lying in the lap of the Cotswold Hills. It was here, in a village near Dr. Edkins' birthplace, that Dinah Mulock (Mrs. Craik), who was three years his junior, wrote "John Halifax, Gentleman," and her book gives a graphic picture of the scenes and influences under which the young boy must have grown up. He afterwards entered Coward College for his theological training, graduated in Arts at the University of London, and went to China as a missionary in 1848, under the auspices of the London Missionary Society. His first colleagues in the mission at Shanghai included the well-known names of Medhurst, Lockhart, and Wylie. In the year 1860 Dr. Edkins made several adventurous visits to the Taiping rebel chieftains who had captured Soochow and Nanking, and who loudly professed a kind of Christianity; but he came to the conclusion that no support ought to be given to a movement disfigured by such enormous crimes and atrocities. Next he went on to Peking, which had always been the goal of his ambition, and remained there nearly thirty years, until he

returned once more to Shanghai, where he spent the last fifteen years of his life. In 1880 Dr. Edkins left the London Mission in consequence of some difference of opinion with his colleagues as to methods of work, and came under the ægis of the Inspector-General of Imperial Maritime Customs, for whom he edited a useful series of science textbooks in Chinese, and wrote a number of pamphlets on opium, silk, currency, banknotes, prices in China, and the like, which are mostly enshrined in the yellow books of the Customs Service. Yet his missionary enthusiasm never flagged, and his habit was to rise at daybreak to work at Bible revision before office hours, to attend meetings in the evening, and to preach regularly every Sunday.

Dr. Edkins was one of the founders of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1857. To the first volume of the *Journal* he contributed "A Buddhist Shastra, translated from the Chinese," to the second number a paper on the "Writings of Meh Tsi," and to the next a sketch of "Taoist Mythology in its modern form"—forerunners of a long succession of later articles on the three religions of China. In our own *Journal* he published, among other interesting articles, "The Yih-king as a Book of Divination" and "The Nirvana of the Northern Buddhists." His best book, perhaps, is "Chinese Buddhism," published in 1880 as one of the volumes of *Trübner's Oriental Series*, of which a second edition appeared in 1893. An earlier book, "The Religious Condition of the Chinese" (London, 1859), was enlarged in 1877 under the title of "Religion in China, a brief account of the three religions of the Chinese," to form vol. viii of the *English and Foreign Philosophical Library*. This last has been translated into French by L. de Milloué (*Annales du Musée Guimet*, tom. iv, 1882).

But there is no space for a complete bibliography of Dr. Edkins' work. A few titles may serve to give some idea of the wide scope of his researches:—

- The Jews at K'æ Fung Foo. 1851. 8vo.
- Chinese and Foreign Concord Almanack. 1852. 8vo.
- Grammar of the Shanghai Dialect. 1853. 8vo. 2nd ed. 1868.

- Grammar of the Mandarin Dialect. 1857. 8vo. 2nd ed. 1863.  
 Progressive Lessons in the Chinese Spoken Language. 1862. 8vo.  
 4th ed. 1881. Translated into German by J. Haas.  
 Narrative of a Visit to Nanking. 1863. 8vo.  
 Description of Peking. Supplement to Dr. Williamson's Travels in  
 North China and Manchuria.  
 The Miao-tsi Tribes. Foochow, 1870. 8vo.  
 China's Place in Philology: an attempt to show that the languages  
 of Europe and Asia have a common origin. 1871. 8vo.  
 Introduction to the Study of the Chinese Characters. 1876. 8vo.  
 Catalogue of Chinese Works in the Bodleian Library. 1876. 4to.  
 The Evolution of the Chinese Language, as exemplifying the origin  
 and growth of human speech. 1888. 8vo.  
 The Evolution of the Hebrew Language. 1889. 8vo.  
 Studies in Genesis. (In the press.)

Of the above works the Mandarin Grammar is certainly one of the best grammars of the Chinese language that has ever been compiled. "China's Place in Philology" was probably the book nearest to the author's heart, but the general consensus of opinion is that it hardly suffices to prove his somewhat daring thesis of the common origin of the languages of Europe and Asia. Dr. Edkins was always original. His reading of Chinese literature was most extensive, and the words of the other languages cited in the text were actually taken down from the mouths of Tibetans, Koreans, Manchus, and Mongols, yet the theme was almost too discursive even for his power of concentration. But who will decide such a question? Or that of the origin of human speech by a study of the evolution of the Hebrew and Chinese languages?

A close friendship of some thirty years' standing entitles me to add a word as to the personal charm of Dr. Edkins' manner and character. He was thoroughly simple and earnest, as well as intellectually vigorous to the last. His literary correspondence was worldwide, and his loss will be deeply felt by Sinologues of every country.

S. W. BUSHELL.