

## OBITUARY NOTICES

### Edward G. Browne

Few words are needed to record an event so widely and deeply mourned as the death, on 5th January, in the sixty-fourth year of his age, of Edward Granville Browne, since 1902 Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge; yet in this *Journal* something ought to be said regarding the services, pre-eminent both in number and magnitude, which he rendered not only to scientific Orientalism but to all those with whom through his work as a scholar he was drawn into sympathy, and whom he endeared to himself no less by his extraordinary gifts of mind and character and his profound but always humane learning than by his powerful encouragement of their hopes and his generous devotion to their interests.

Son of the late Sir Benjamin Browne, who belonged to a well-known engineering firm at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, he was at first destined for his father's profession and left Eton, "with little knowledge and less love of Latin and Greek," before he was sixteen. The Russo-Turkish war had just begun; it is a characteristic fact that what decided Browne's future career was his admiration for the bravery shown by the losing side and his disgust with the attempts made in this country "to confound questions of abstract justice with party politics". He started to learn Turkish at once, and on coming up to Cambridge in 1879 divided his time between the study of Medicine and Oriental languages, till, by his election in 1887 to a Fellowship at Pembroke, he was enabled to devote himself entirely to the literature, history, and religion of the East. The first year of his Fellowship he spent in Persia, visiting Teheran, Ispahan, Shíráz, Yezd, and Kirmán, mingling with Persians of every class and sect, and laying the foundations of a knowledge of that country and its people such as no European has ever equalled. On returning to Cambridge he was appointed University Lecturer in

Persian, and fourteen years later succeeded Charles Rieu as Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic. His connexion with the R.A.S. dates from 1889, in which year he contributed to the *Journal* an account of the Bábís, the first of a long series of important articles on Persian literature and literary history; he served on the Council (1902-6 and 1908-12) and in 1922 became Vice-President. He was a Fellow of the British Academy and of the Royal College of Physicians.

Perhaps the most distinctive features of Browne's scholarship are its breadth and unity on the one hand, and its vitality and power on the other. With him, all roads led to Persia, and though a complete bibliography of his writings would fill many pages, almost every book, pamphlet, or article contributes, directly or indirectly, to the development of the great theme which is treated at full length in his monumental *Literary History*. He indicates his point of view in three sentences of an address on the Persian Constitutional Movement (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1918): "There can be no doubt that politically both Greece and Italy profited much from a sympathy largely based on a recognition of what human civilization owed them for their contributions to art and literature. It is my contention that Persia stands in the same category and that her disappearance from the society of independent states would be a misfortune not only to herself but to the whole human race. Unhappily there are a hundred scholars to plead the claims of Greece and Italy for one who can plead the not less cogent cause of Persia." That one, however, was Browne. In order to measure his achievement we must look back to the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century, when he was entering upon the task he had set himself and pursuing it with the youthful energy and ardour which, though depressed during the war, revived afterwards and never failed him till his work was done. At that time I was reading Persian with him for the Indian Languages Tripos, and I well remember my disappointment on coming from Grote and Mommsen to Malcolm and

Markham, while it was a poor consolation to learn that the most comprehensive account of Persian literature then available was contained in the excellent article by Ethé in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Even now the number of critical texts is nothing to boast of, but at that time most of the Persian books that no scholar can do without were inaccessible except in manuscript or in Oriental lithographed editions which as a rule are neither correct nor easy to procure.

In all these directions the study of Persian was not only advanced but radically transformed by Browne; and it is significant that the slowest progress has been on the philological side, where he himself was least interested. Some may be inclined to think that he paid too little attention to the science of language, and in this respect did not quite appreciate the force of the maxim, *المجاز قنطرة الحقيقة*, "the Phenomenal is the bridge to the Real," but such criticism could touch only a few minor details of his work. On the other hand he rendered an enormous service to Persian studies by turning his back on India and bringing them into full and vital connexion with their immediate Semitic environment. From the very first he insisted that linguistic and racial affinities are infinitely less important than the much deeper and more potent influences of literary and religious contact; that "a fruitful investigation of the post-Muhammadan literature and thought of Persia is impossible without a wide acquaintance with Arabic books"; and that no one ignorant of the Arabic language and literature and of the Arabian civilization and culture can ever hope to be "more than a smatterer in Persian". To-day these precepts may seem unnecessary; they are not yet, however, so generally practised that it would be prudent to cease from repeating them, or to refrain from pointing out that *mutatis mutandis* they are applicable to others besides those to whom they were addressed. The Arabist engaged in studying Islamic history, culture, and religion, cannot afford to neglect Persian any more than the Latinist similarly occupied with the Roman Empire

can dispense with Greek. About 1900 the idea of writing a History of Persia, which Browne had conceived when he was still in his teens, took definite shape. According to the arrangement with his publisher, the complete work was to consist of a single volume of 500 pages, but few of Browne's friends, and certainly none of his pupils, can have been astonished when in 1902 a volume of the stipulated size duly appeared, comprising the Prolegomena to a History of Persian Literature and carrying the work no further than A.D. 1000. As his materials, derived to a great extent from rare and hitherto unstudied manuscripts (of which he acquired a very fine collection for this purpose), accumulated and were gradually digested, fresh enlargements became inevitable. The second volume (1906) deals with the period of three hundred years from Firdausi to Sa'di; the third and fourth, published in a new form by the Cambridge University Press in 1920 and 1924, and entitled respectively *Persian Literature under Tartar Dominion* and *Persian Literature in Modern Times*, bring the History down to the present day. There is no need to praise المثل الأعلى. Browne takes his readers on a voyage of discovery: under his guidance they map out vast regions imperfectly explored or traverse *locus nullius ante trita solo*, and long before the end is reached the most learned of them have found their master. One cannot read without sadness the words in the preface of the final volume (dated June, 1924): "The writing of it has been a pleasure, and the completing of it a source of thankfulness and satisfaction." The pleasure, alas, was dearly bought. A few months afterwards he was overtaken by a grave illness, the result, I believe, of the incessant strain to which he had subjected himself. But in seeking knowledge he never counted the cost, and to him it would have been the greater tragedy to have left his work unfinished.

Although the *Literary History* has been truly described by its author as "the labour of a life-time", it was preceded and accompanied by many other volumes from his pen.

*A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Báb*, the first of several books on Bábism, appeared in 1891, and he was soon recognized as the highest authority on this typically Persian religion, to which in his early days, whilst it was in the making, he had been attracted through personal acquaintance with members of the sect. In *A Year amongst the Persians* (1893) his Persian experiences are related in a manner worthy of Borrow; it is good to know that the Cambridge University Press will shortly bring out a new edition of this delightful book, with a Memoir by Sir E. Denison Ross. *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909* gives an account of the national movement in Persia, the fortunes of which Browne followed with intense sympathy, while *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia* (1914) includes some excellent specimens of patriotic verse. Nearly forty years after taking his M.B. degree, he returned to the subject in his *Arabian Medicine* (1921). The Muḥammadan manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library were catalogued by him in four volumes (1896-1922). His unremitting efforts to provide "a better supply of critically edited Persian texts, especially works of reference of an historical and biographical character", were inaugurated by the publication of Dawlatsháh's *Tadhkiratu 'sh-Shu'ará* (1901) and 'Awfi's *Lubábu 'l-Albáb* (1906); and on the foundation of the E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust he, as one of the original Trustees, took the chief part in its organization and administration, and besides contributing several volumes to the Series induced other scholars, e.g. Mírzá Muḥammad of Qazwín, to edit, translate or study many valuable works by which our knowledge of Persia has been, or—for some of them are still in course of preparation—will be, immensely widened. The Volume of Oriental Studies presented to him on his 60th birthday gave expression to the gratitude felt by his colleagues and pupils in all parts of the world for the unique benefits he had conferred upon them. Browne was a born teacher, though by no means an orthodox one. Impatient of grammar

and syntax, he would plunge the beginner into a Persian book—say, the *Bústán* or the *Díwán* of Hafiz—which he read and translated with disconcerting speed, only pausing to take up some point of interest that would start him upon a fascinating digression, lasting as often as not to the end of the hour. Those who came to his lecture-room, hoping to find a short cut to success in examinations, soon learned that such a thing was not in Browne's philosophy; at first they might be out of their depth, but if he saw that they desired knowledge for its own sake, he would spare no trouble to imbue them with his scholarship and inspire them with his enthusiasm for Oriental literature. How well the time he spent on teaching—two or three hours daily during Term—was laid out, all his pupils can testify; his care for them was almost paternal; they admired him as a scholar and loved him as a friend never too busy to aid them with wise counsel or exert his influence on their behalf. They may be trusted to carry on the torch; and (not to speak of the past) it is safe to prophesy that many of the younger men whom he trained for research will make their mark in the studies to which his life was devoted. In his relations with Orientals he was singularly happy, and nowhere was the news of his death received with more heartfelt sorrow than by his numerous friends in Persia, India, Turkey and Egypt. To them he owed a great deal of his intimate knowledge of the East; for, speaking and writing Persian, Arabic, and Turkish, he won their confidence and affection easily. As regards his political and personal services to Persia and Persians, I may quote the following extracts from an address given at Teheran on 17th January, 1926, by 'Ísá K. Şadiq, a former Lecturer in Persian at Cambridge. The full text is printed in the journal *Mihan* (equivalent to *La Patrie*), 6th of Rajab, A.H. 1344.

A ce moment là (1906) on tâchait de faire croire en Europe qu'il y avait en Perse non pas une révolution nationale mais une insurrection locale, suivie de désordres et d'anarchie.

Le feu Professeur par des articles, des brochures, et des conférences essayait d'aneantir l'effet des propagandes anti-persanes qui se faisaient dans le monde occidental. C'est dans ce but qu'il a fait former le Comité Persan, "the Persia Committee," composé des membres éminents de la chambre des Lords et de la chambre des Communes, comité qui pendant plusieurs années et à des moments critiques et difficiles de 1908 à 1912 a influencé d'une façon très sensible l'opinion publique en Angleterre et en Europe . . . En parlant des services que notre regretté Ami a rendus à la cause nationale persane, je n'ai pas voulu parler des aides matérielles et morales qu'il a apportées aux réfugiés persans victimes de la tyrannie étrangère, qui avaient pris le chemin de l'Europe pour échapper au sort funeste qui les attendait dans leur patrie même. Le château de Firwood près de Cambridge où vivait Browne était un asile pour tous les Persans qui se rendaient en Angleterre, et l'hospitalité qu'il réservait à nos compatriotes était sans limites et sans bornes. . . . Browne vivra toujours dans nos coeurs, et la Perse gardera de lui le souvenir ineffaçable, le souvenir précieux et cher d'un grand et noble Ami qui a tout fait pour réduire ses souffrances et la faire aimer.

Towards the end he had his own heavy burden, from which not even the devotion of his wife, who shared all his interests, could relieve him. Her death last summer was an unexpected and terrible blow, and under it he slowly sank. He leaves two sons, the elder a scholar of Pembroke, the younger at Eton.

Enough has been said to show that Browne was one of the greatest Orientalists whom this or any other country has produced. Concerning his quaint and kindly humour, his quick but seldom rash enthusiasms, his engaging but unconquerable prejudices, his eloquent table-talk, his habits, tastes, recreations—in a word, his personality—there is much to say, but it cannot be said here. I will only add what must have struck almost every one acquainted with him, that

simply through being himself he conveyed an uplifting sense of the goodness and nobility of human nature.

چونک قصهٔ حالِ پیر اینجا رسید  
 پیر و حالش روی در پرده کشید  
 پیر دامن را زگفت و گو فشاند  
 نیم گفته در دهان ما بماند

R. A. N.

### Agnes Smith Lewis

On Friday, 26th March, of this year Mrs. A. S. Lewis passed away after many years' illness, which had commenced before, but was rendered more acute by the death of her twin sister, Mrs. M. D. Gibson, who had been associated with her in most of her enterprises. Born in 1843, the daughter of Mr. John Smith, of Irvine, Ayrshire, she travelled in Egypt, the Holy Land, Greece, and Cyprus before her marriage, and took advantages of the opportunities which these journeys afforded to acquire Arabic and Modern Greek. In 1887 she married S. S. Lewis, Fellow of Corpus Christi, Cambridge, a distinguished archæologist; after his death in 1891 she planned a journey to Mount Sinai, where she made in the Convent her most important discovery. This was the palimpsest MS. of the Old Syriac text of the Gospels, of which she entrusted the editing to three eminent Syriac scholars, Messrs. Bensly, Burkitt, and Rendel Harris; a second edition with improved readings and supplements based on further study of the palimpsest was published by her in 1910. Considerable fragments of a Syriac recension of the Gospels which was clearly earlier than the Peshitta had been discovered by W. Cureton and published by him in 1858; from the careful examination of the Lewisian MS. made by A. Merx in