

II. OBITUARY NOTICE.

Peter Peterson.

While the sense of the loss which we sustained by Bühler's death is still keen, we have to mourn for the loss of yet another member of that band of Sanskrit scholars—the 'Bombay School' one may call them—who have led and directed the most remarkable and fruitful revival of Sanskrit learning in India of our time. Professor Peterson, who died from heart-disease after a very short illness on the 28th of August, was born in 1847 in the Shetland Isles. He was educated at the High School, Edinburgh, and graduated both at Edinburgh and Oxford (Balliol College). His Sanskrit studies began at Edinburgh under Professor Aufrecht, and were continued at Oxford, where he won the Boden Scholarship, under Professors Monier Williams and Max Müller. In 1873 he went to Bombay as Professor of Sanskrit at the Elphinstone College, and continued to hold this appointment for the rest of his life.

Peterson had a wonderful power of quickly grasping the main points of a subject and of seeing its true inwardness. The possession of this faculty, combined with his never-failing tact and good-humour, especially qualified him to conduct the search for Sanskrit MSS., a work which, thanks to the liberality of the Bombay Government, has in the Bombay Circle been prosecuted with such signal benefit to Sanskrit learning. His four masterly Reports will, no doubt, be regarded by scholars generally as his greatest work. They show, what is most essential in dealing with large and heterogeneous collections of documents, an unerring power of discriminating between the more important and the less important, and are, in every way, models of what reports of the kind should be.

As an editor of Sanskrit texts — all contributed to the Bombay Sanskrit Series, with the exception of the *Nyāyabinduṭīkā*, which was printed in the Bibliotheca

Indica — Peterson showed much the same characteristics of mind. There can surely, for instance, be no better introduction to the Kāvya literature than his edition of *Kādambarī*, with its sympathetic preface and its appreciative notes. From these the student will learn how much of the beautiful is common to the poetry of the East and of the West, in spite of the different and sometimes apparently incongruous forms in which it is expressed. In fact, one of Peterson's favourite ideas was that, in spite of difference of form, the spirit of these two classes of literature was much the same. A good instance of this is to be seen in his preface to the edition of Vallabhadeva's *Subhāṣitāvalī*, by Pandit Durgāprasāda and himself, where he gallantly defends Sanskrit romantic poetry from the too sweeping charges of barrenness and futility brought against it by a certain learned Sanskrit scholar. Indeed, no one can have known Peterson, or have studied his introductions to *Kādambarī* or the *Subhāṣitāvalī*, without recognizing that, in many respects, his temperament was poetic rather than scholastic. His great aim was to teach his readers how to appreciate and enjoy the beauties which he certainly appreciated and enjoyed himself: he was not so anxious, as an interpreter, to refrain from cutting Gordian knots occasionally.

Among Peterson's other works may be mentioned editions of the *Hitopadeśa*, of the *Paddhati* of Śārṅgadhara, a Selection of Hymns from the Rig Veda with Translation, and the first two parts of a Handbook to the Study of the Rig Veda.

He contributed frequently to the Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, and was President of that Society at the time of his death. To our Journal he contributed, in 1891 (p. 311), a valuable article on *Pāṇini, Poet and Grammarian: with some remarks on the Age of Classical Sanskrit Poetry*, in which he upheld the view, supported also by Hindu tradition, that the great grammarian and the author of certain verses, quoted in the *Subhāṣitāvalī* of Vallabhadeva, the *Paddhati* of Śārṅgadhara and elsewhere, were one and the same person, and, following the lead given by Bühler in his then recent paper on *Die*

Indischen Inschriften und das Alter der Indischen Kunstpoesie, contended for a much greater antiquity for Sanskrit poetry of the fixed classical form than scholars had been generally inclined to allow.

As a public speaker and as a writer, Peterson was master of a most beautiful English style. He several times acted as Professor of English at Elphinstone College, and as examiner in English for the Bombay University. For the benefit of native students, he compiled a volume of model essays, and published editions, with notes, of Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" and the fourth book of Palgrave's "Golden Treasury." He frequently wrote for the Press—chiefly for the *Times of India*—and seemed to handle all sorts of subjects, political and otherwise, with the same facility and felicity.

All who were privileged to know him with some degree of intimacy will very sadly miss not only the cultured and refined scholar but also the genial and warm-hearted friend.

E. J. RAPSON.

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