

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Bābur-nāma in English* by Annette Susannah Beveridge

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NOTICES OF BOOKS

THE BĀBUR-NĀMA IN ENGLISH. By ANNETTE SUSANNAH BEVERIDGE. 2 vols. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$, lxi + 880 pp. London : Luzac, 1921.

Mrs. Beveridge, having from time to time whetted our appetite with *hors d'œuvre*, now sets before us a noble feast. The appearance of the life-story of this most attractive personality, told by himself, and presented to us in English by the greatest living authority on the man and his time, is an event in the history of Oriental studies in the West ; and the book is such as might have been expected of the translator's ripe scholarship and long devotion to her subject, and is fittingly dedicated to her hero's fame.

The life of Bābur has hitherto been known to English readers chiefly from Leyden and Erskine's *Memoirs of Bābur*, a work which, useful as it has been, is but a translation of a translation. Mrs. Beveridge has gone to the fountain-head, and the result of her labours convinces us that she has, by long and deep study, so identified herself with her model that we have before us his thoughts and his deeds as he expressed and described them, and that we have before us the man as he was.

Her subject is worthy of her devotion. Even from the translations already in our hands, Persian and English, it was recognized that the *Bābur-nāma*, in its simplicity, sincerity, and complete absence of affectation, stood alone among Oriental biographies and histories ; but Mrs. Beveridge gives us a more complete and faithful portrait of the soldier, poet, man of letters, boon companion, and practical philosopher to the study of whose life she has devoted herself, and a very lovable character he is. A king, beset by enemies before he was twelve ; four years later a conqueror almost immediately compelled to relinquish his conquest and reduced to such

misery that he "could not help crying bitterly"; but ordinarily cheerful and even gay under the most severe hardships and the bitterest disappointments; surely none born to a throne ever tasted more of "the hot and the cold of fate". His deep grief for departed friends, his gaiety, enhanced by, but not dependent on wine, his generosity, his patience, the æsthetic sense which could expatiate on the beauties of a scene amid sufferings and privations, the courtesy which invited but never urged a guest to drink, endear the man to us and enable us to appreciate Mirza Haidar's eulogy, quoted by Mrs. Beveridge, "Bābur . . . at a time so provoking, gay, generous, affectionate, simple, and gentle."

Not the least of his merits as an author is his observation, usually so accurate that his remark that Hindūstānis sometimes drop a vowel, saying *khabr* for *khavar* and *Asd* for *Asad*, comes as a surprise. The tendency now is the reverse, and natives of the Panjāb and Hindūstān find so much difficulty in pronouncing two consonants together that they will usually say 'ilam for 'ilm, 'aqal for 'aql, *chasham* for *chashm*, and *shamas* for *shams*, though they will write and point the words correctly. That this intolerance of two "quiescent" consonants together is nothing new is shown by the tendency of Hindi to insert short consonants not found in the corresponding Sanskrit words.

The book is not entirely free from blemishes, mostly typographical. Among these are the occasional misplacement of the letter 'ain and the hamza, as in *t'alīm*, *Yaq'ūb*, and *Qu'rān*; and a few errors of transliteration, such as *saiyār* for *siyar*, *nū-roz* for *naurūz*, *nashka* for *muskha*, *kusht* for *kusht*, and *Qalāt* for *Kalāt*. We must protest, too, against the transliteration *Badāyūnī*. The historian took his territorial name from the town of Budāon, which is so spelt and pronounced, and it would be as reasonable to write the name of a neighbouring town *Āyūnla* as to write *Badāyūn*. *Bī murād*, too, does not mean "against his will", but "without attaining his object"; *hī bāqī* cannot mean "without fear" (*bāk*).

These remarks are made in no spirit of carping criticism, and the slight blemishes noticed in no way diminish the deep debt of gratitude owed by Oriental scholars to Mrs. Beveridge for her careful, exhaustive, and masterly study of one of the most attractive characters in the history of Islām.

W. H.

GEMS OF CHINESE LITERATURE. By HERBERT A. GILES, Hon. LL.D. (Aberdeen), Professor of Chinese in the University of Cambridge. 11 × 8½, xiv + 287 pp. Shanghai : Kelly and Walsh, Ltd., 1922.

This handsome second edition of the "Gems" has been carefully revised, and by many additional translations has been doubled in size and brought down to the present day. Beyond question, these accessories of pearl-powder and carmine have not failed to accentuate the charms of the original edition, albeit these were of unusual attraction. And I do not know really who is most to be congratulated, the translator or the translated. The translator, because with the exception of his *Chinese-English Dictionary*, a monument of massive labour and learning, but naturally devoted only to the student, *Gems of Chinese Literature* will probably of all his works represent him at his best, exhibiting him as a great interpreter and conciliator between the mentalities and ideals of the East and West. While the thin shades of the translated must feel an almost genial breath from the upper world, as their long silent words, though in a strange and unknown tongue, echo once more among the haunts of men. And though in his original preface Professor Giles repeats "that translators are but traitors at the best", the fidelity to the spirit of these originals that he has maintained is as striking in the final accomplishment as it must have been exacting in the process of sympathetic transfer.

All of these specimens are gems of prose, not of poetry. Eighty-eight authors have been illustrated, ranging from the