

four—Eastern politics, Literature, hearing good Music, and the Drama. Age and deafness interfered with these enjoyments, but did not affect his cheeriness or interest in mundane affairs. As to his manner of life it was simple and methodical; he was fond of early rising, took regular exercise, but was not a golfer, cared not for cards or billiards, was not an abstainer, but ‘moderate’ in all things. He kept up his classics to the last, and in his 90th year addressed a postcard in Greek to one of his grandsons.

He was buried at Hollingburne, in Kent, where he once lived for many years, and among the multitude of tributes sent was a wreath from the R.A.S., a meeting of which he had attended not many months before his death.

Sir F. Goldsmid married in 1849 Mary, eldest daughter of Lieut.-General Mackenzie Steuart; she died in 1900. He leaves two sons and four daughters: one of the former is a retired officer of the Bengal Staff Corps; one of the latter has proceeded to India, and seems to have inherited her father’s facility for acquiring Eastern languages.

T. H. T.

*February, 1908.*

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ROBERT ATKINSON, LL.D., D.LITT.

MAY an old pupil dedicate a few lines to the memory of one to whom he owes more than he can tell, and whose friendship he has been proud to retain unbroken for nearly 40 years. Professor Atkinson was not himself a member of the Royal Asiatic Society, but more than one of those who have taken an active part in the work of its Council are indebted to him for their early training, and a long list of his pupils could be compiled

from the roll of its members. Year after year, for close on half a century, he sent out young men to the East, not a few of whom have distinguished themselves as scholars or as public servants.

Born in Yorkshire, he was, as Professor Mahaffy aptly puts it, "one of those peculiar men whom Trinity College, Dublin, trains, or acquires, who are specialists in several subjects, and masters in them all." His early education at Liège gave him a grasp of French from which he developed the amazing knowledge of the Romance languages that earned for him his first college professorship. Although an omnivorous reader, he had far more than mere book knowledge, and in all the forms of speech that he studied his command of the colloquial idiom and of pronunciation was remarkable. A Parisian savant has told me that his French was *absolument sans accent*; on his first visit to St. Petersburg he chattered volubly in Russian with a cabman and rescued a party of visitors from the inevitable difficulties that beset new arrivals; and a high authority has informed me that his Chinese pronunciation was irreproachable.

After entering college he worked as a schoolmaster in Kilkenny till he won a scholarship in the year 1862. Thenceforward his academic progress was rapid. He took his B.A. degree in the following year. In 1867 he was elected Professor of the Romance languages, and in 1871 Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology. He became LL.D. in 1869, D.Litt. (*Honoris Causa*) in 1891, and was President of the Royal Irish Academy from 1901 to 1906. Last Autumn failing health compelled him to resign his official connection with the University, and on the 10th of January, 1908, he passed away peacefully in his 69th year.

With the exception of the great editions of the ancient Irish classics published under the auspices of the Royal Irish Academy, most of his work is hidden away in the

journals of learned societies. Only his pupils know his best books. One of the earliest of these was a Mæso-Gothic Grammar. About this, one of his former students, now occupying an honoured post at Cambridge, writes to me in a private letter, "I know nothing like his masterly synopsis of the structure of the language." He had it lithographed for his pupils, but it was never published. He commenced a dictionary of the Ṛg Vēda, in which it was my privilege to take a humble share as assistant, but it was anticipated by Grassmann's. Useful as the latter is, Atkinson's would have been far more scientific, and its abandonment was a calamity for scholarship. He was the only Englishman I ever met who had thoroughly mastered the intricacies of Pāṇini. He knew the Aṣṭādhyāyī (the way Pandits know it in India) off by heart from beginning to end, and any difficult point in Sanskrit grammar he solved at once, without a moment of hesitation, by a quotation of the appropriate *sūtra*. But this study he reserved for advanced students. For us beginners he prepared a manuscript grammar—who of his pupils does not remember its familiar brown-paper cover, worn and ragged by continual use?—full of ingenious labour-saving devices, which gave us an insight into the genius of the language in a way that no other book that I have seen has approached. Nor was his knowledge of Indian languages confined to those of Aryan type. Tamil and Telugu were also taught by him, and his pupils over and over again obtained the highest marks in the Civil Service examinations in these forms of speech. There were, of course, professors of Persian and of the various Semitic languages in the University, and therefore he did not give official instruction in them, but he was familiar with them, and was, I have been told, a most admirable Hebrew scholar, so much so that for many years candidates for the Fellowship examination (the

highest in the University), or even for chairs in Divinity, who felt themselves deficient in that language, came to him for further instruction.

On the thorny question of Celtic philology I dare not dilate. Many of us will remember criticisms on his work in this branch of learning that appeared some years ago in the pages of the *Academy*, and I am not competent to judge of their correctness ; but, it will be remembered, he never answered them, and this, I know, was not because he admitted that he was in the wrong, but because he refused on principle to waste his time in controversy. He was content, he told me, when in my impetuous way I urged him to reply, to leave the sum-total of his work, with its flaws and with its excellences, to be judged by posterity. His interest in Irish was purely linguistic. He cared little for its literature as literature, and in later years this brought him into active collision with the moving spirits of the Gaelic League.

So far I have dealt with him as a master of tongues, but his varied energies were not confined to this side of learning. He had a real love for nature, and was so accomplished a botanist that he was regularly consulted by the University Professor of that science. Only his intimate friends knew his powers as a musician, and have listened with delight to his fine violin-playing, though that was by no means the only instrument of which he was a master. Again, long before *jujitsu* was popularly known in this country, he had acquired it both in theory and in practice ; and on a cold day, in the intervals of his lectures, many a bruise did I receive from him in the course of a lesson in the use of the single-sticks or of the Indian clubs.

But above all he was a student of philology. As a comparative philologist he had from the first thoroughly grasped the principle of law in language, by the enunciation of which Brugmann afterwards made his name, in opposition

to the teaching of Curtius, Schleicher, and the older masters who resorted when in difficulties to theories of "sporadic changes." Many and many a time, long before Brugmann's name was known, did he impress upon us that the existence of an apparent exception but proved the existence of an undiscovered rule, and that it was our business to find that rule out. He used to maintain, and with great justice, that the only way to study comparative philology was to commence with the Romance languages. There, he would say, you can check off your results by the mother Latin; whereas, in the comparative study of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Lithuanian, Slavonic, and so forth, you are only guessing at an *Ur-Sprache*.

His excellence as a teacher can be gathered from the foregoing. It was impossible to study under him without directly acquiring knowledge, and without, at the same time, learning to step ahead for oneself. The loss is still too fresh for me to put into words the personal affection with which he inspired us. Few have been privileged to meet so loyal, so delightful, a friend,—a true friend who never feared to criticize, and whose criticism was always sought for and valued by those that knew him. Although pre-eminently a teacher, he founded no school,—there has been no Elisha worthy to receive his mantle,—but his pupils are scattered over England, India, and the Continent of Europe, and have carried with them the devotion to learning for its own sake, and the habit of sparing no drudgery, however toilsome, in its acquirement, that they gained from Robert Atkinson, and of which he was a bright and distinguished example.

GEORGE A. GRIERSON.