

## OBITUARY NOTICES

### Professor W. E. Soothill

On 13th May of this year there passed away William Edward Soothill, M.A. (Oxon.), Hon. M.A. (Cambridge), F.R.G.S., etc., Missionary of the Methodist Church in China 1882–1911, President of the Shansi Imperial University 1907–11, Director of Religious Work of the Y.M.C.A (London) 1914–18, Professor of Chinese Language and Literature, Oxford University, 1920–1935. Born in 1861, he was articled to a firm of Halifax solicitors, but preferred the career of missionary, and in 1882 went out to China and started work at Wenchow. He acquired a profound knowledge of Chinese language and literature, and during his residence in the country gave proof of extraordinary energy and organizing ability. He founded a hospital, a training college, and schools, established about 200 preaching stations, and translated the New Testament into Wenchowese, which he furnished with a Romanized alphabet. In 1907 he was asked by Dr. Timothy Richard, the great missionary educator (whose life he afterwards wrote), to succeed Dr. Moir Duncan as Principal of the Shansi Imperial University, which had been founded after the Boxer revolt. In 1926, when in Peking with the Boxer Indemnity Commission under Lord Willingdon's chairmanship, a dinner in his honour was given by the then Principal of the Shansi University (a Chinese), and he was told that 60 per cent of the civil officials of the province were old pupils of his.

In 1911 when Shansi University was handed entirely to Chinese presidency and control, at the request of Lord William Cecil he accepted an invitation to work for the Central University at Hankow. He came home via Japan and America and by 1914 had collected a large sum, conditional on its being augmented from the Boxer Indemnity Fund; the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George, was in favour of this, but prevented from carrying the proposal into effect

by the outbreak of the Great War; ultimately, in 1929, a certain proportion of the money was set aside for educational purposes in China. During the War he acted as religious director at the National Headquarters of the Y.M.C.A., and a house at Leytonstone having been assigned this Society by the War Office for the entertainment of Chinese interpreters on leave from the Forces in France, he and Mrs. Soothill acted as hosts to these men. During this period his health for a time gave way and, as his medical advisers forbade him to resume work in China, he accepted in 1920 the poorly paid Chinese Professorship in Oxford. In 1928 he gave a course of lectures on Chinese literature as Visiting Professor at Columbia University, New York.

His literary work was copious and varied. His first publication was *Students' Pocket Chinese Dictionary*, 1898 (fourteenth edition, 1934). The next, an account of his work, *A Mission in China*, in the American edition *A Typical Mission in China*, 1906. His translation of the *Analects of Confucius* was published in Japan while he was residing in Shansi. Lectures given by him in 1912 at a Summer School in Oxford appeared in book form with the title *The Three Religions of China*, now in its third edition. Later series of lectures were published with the titles *China and the West* and *China and Great Britain*. His interest in Buddhism was shown in his translation of *The Lotus of the Wonderful Law*, and the work which occupied the closing years of his life, and is now in the press, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, in which D. Hodous, of Hertford Seminary, Conn., U.S.A., co-operates. What was intended to be his *magnum opus*, on *Chinese Foundations of Kingship and Priesthood* with special reference to Astronomy, was just completed on the Good Friday before his death, and the MS. is now in the hands of an expert. *A Dictionary of the Grass Script*, China's running hand, was left unfinished.

His wife, authoress of *A Passport to China*, predeceased him by over four years. His daughter, Lady Hosie, is well

known as an authoress on Chinese subjects, and has lectured to the Royal Asiatic Society.

Among the honours which he received was the Order of the Red Button, given by the Chinese Government for his work in Shansi, and very rarely accorded to Europeans, and the Military Order of the Red Tiger, given by the same for his services to the Chinese interpreters.

D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.

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### Ignazio Guidi

By the death of Ignazio Guidi in his ninety-first year, on 18th April last, the Society loses its oldest Honorary Member, that distinction, one of a vast number, having been conferred on him in 1898. Born in 1844, in 1876 he was put in charge of instruction in Hebrew and the Semitic dialects in the University of Rome, was nominated Professor Extraordinary in 1878 and Ordinary in 1885, when his duties were extended to the teaching of the languages and history of Abyssinia. In 1914 he was made Senator, and in 1919 in consequence of an age-limit retired from his professorial duties.

The reputation which he acquired during the years 1870 and 1880 won him the friendship of the leading European Semitists, such as H. L. Fleischer, Th. Nöldeke, and M. J. de Goeje, who in 1876 secured his co-operation in the monumental edition of Tabari's Chronicle. His output to the end of his life continued to be immense and of the highest quality, being chiefly divided between the literature of Islam, of the Christian East, and of Abyssinia; besides editions of texts, and monographs on an extraordinary variety of themes, he found time to organize the compilation of indices to the twenty-one volumes of the *Aghani* and the four volumes of *Khizanat al-Adab*, and to compose an Amharic-Italian Lexicon with a voluminous Supplement. For a fuller account of his services reference may be made to the memoir by G. Levi Della Vida in *Oriente Moderno*, xv, 5 (May, 1935).

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