

PROCEEDINGS

OF

The Oriental Translation Fund.

SINCE the publication of the preceding Number of this Journal, the Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland has held its fifth General Meeting, at which his Grace the Duke of Richmond, K.G., presided.

The Report of the committee having been subsequently printed and widely circulated, it will be sufficient to give in this place a concise summary of its most important features, as follows:—

After advertng to the honours conferred by his Majesty on Sir Charles Wilkins and Sir Graves Haughton, and explaining the reason why no meeting of the subscribers was held in 1833, the Report goes on to say:—

“During the short period of its existence, the committee has been enabled to publish a considerable number of translations and editions of works in the Oriental languages, and to lay the foundation for a still more extensive activity. In the first four years no less than thirty volumes were produced; and in half that period, since June 1832, fourteen works have been, or are now, ready for delivery, making a total of forty-six volumes; whilst the remaining portions of such as were delivered incomplete, and many other interesting translations, have been undertaken, some of which are now laid upon the table, and others in a state of great forwardness.”

It then adverts to the superior value of the works now selected for publication, and notices those recently published and in course of preparation, in detail. We select a few of the more important, viz.:—

“‘Mirkhond’s History of the early Kings of Persia,’ by Mr. Shea, is an important addition to Oriental historical literature, as it exhibits a connected view of the Oriental version of a period of ancient history which we are accustomed to receive exclusively on classical evidence. To what degree the old traditions preserved by Mirkhond may be founded on truth; how far his accounts agree with the testimony of the contemporary Greek historians; and whether it is likely that any data from the ‘Royal Records’ kept at the ancient Persian court, which are referred to by Ctesias, and were seemingly known to Firdusi, may have found their way into the works of Mirkhond,—these are problems yet deserving the renewed attention of the friends of historical study.”

“The ‘Description of the Burmese Empire,’ translated from the Italian MS. of the Rev. Father Sangermano, by Dr. Tandy, besides its own value, becomes doubly interesting from our recent connexion with that empire.

The Committee cannot here omit to notice the handsome conduct of the possessors of this MS., the Barnabite Fathers at Rome, in transferring it to the Society, and declining any compensation further than a wish to have an Italian translation printed at the same time as the English, and requesting 100 copies for their own library. The sale of the remainder of this Italian edition will in some degree cover the expense incurred by the Institution.

The reception of this work will doubtless be enhanced from its being the first specimen printed under the superintendence of our active and intelligent Branch Committee at Rome.”

“The committee has commenced printing a translation into Latin of the great ‘Arabic Bibliographical Dictionary’ of Haji Khalifah, by Professor Flügel, of Meissen. Two hundred and eighty pages of this work, which is printed at Leipzig under the immediate superintendence of the translator, are laid upon the table; and the committee has every reason to hope that the first volume, of about 500 pages, will be finished before the end of the year. This dictionary was the foundation of the great ‘Bibliothèque Orientale’ of d’Herbelot, and its translation has long been a desideratum amongst the learned of Europe. The original Arabic text which accompanies the translation is founded on a careful collation of the best copies in Germany, Austria, and France; and it cannot fail to prove of the greatest general use in the furtherance of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish literature. In order to place a work of such importance within the comprehension of all scholars, from the eastern Universities of Russia to those most western of Britain, it was thought advisable to give it in a language of the most extensive diffusion.”

“The Committee has great satisfaction in particularly alluding to the translation by M. Dubeux of the great Arabian chronicle of Tabari, an author who is considered by the Mohammedan world as the principal authority for their history during the first three centuries after they quitted the desert, and to whom the judicious Ockley applies the Honourable appellation of the Livy of the Arabs. When completed, the Committee will endeavour to follow up the publication of this work by translations of those of its best continuators, with the view to present to the public a continuous series of original authorities on the history of the Mohammedans.”

The Report then alludes to the appointment of Mr. H. H. Wilson, as Boden Professor of Sanscrit at Oxford, and the consequent advantages likely to be derived in the prosecution of the study of Sanscrit literature in this country, observing :

“The committee has also the satisfaction of announcing to the subscribers, that English versions of several Sanscrit works of high interest and importance have lately been offered to it. For these the committee is indebted to a fulfilment of the early hopes held out by Mr. Horace Hayman Wilson, of Calcutta, whose devotion of his time to the dissemination of this classical language so well enables him to confirm them. His election to the Boden Professorship of Sanscrit, at Oxford, has brought this learned gentleman to his native country; and the committee would eagerly have sought the assistance of his abilities, if he had not at once offered his powerful aid, both in completing tasks commenced in India, and in engaging in new labours.”

A communication which has been received from Señor Gayangoz, of Madrid, in reference to the objects of the Fund, is thus noticed :

“A desideratum which has long been felt by Oriental scholars may at length, it is hoped, be supplied through the means of Mr. Gayangoz, a Spanish gentleman at Madrid, who has kindly offered his services to the committee. The acquirements of this gentleman in Arabic literature offer a key to the important and valuable collection of the Escorial, the Royal library, the library of the Jesuits, of the Academy of History, and of the Archbishop of Toledo. The accomplishment of this important object, the subscribers may rest assured, will be encouraged by the committee, not only in availing itself of the assistance of this gentleman, but in soliciting the Spanish government to enter fully into the views of the subscribers. Whilst no account has ever been given of the last-mentioned libraries, there has been no addition to our information from the first of these great collections since the publication of the extensive but unsatisfactory work of Casiri, who was but indifferently qualified for so important a task. Mr. Gayangoz has discovered two dramatic pieces in Arabic, somewhat resembling our ancient mysteries,—a description of writing hitherto supposed to be unknown to the Semitic races. The committee, however, has preferred drawing his attention to some of the great historical works of the Moors of Spain, in which the libraries

of that country are very rich ; especially to the great chronicle of Al Makari (or Al Mokri), to a History of Grenada by Mohammed Ben Abdallah Ben Said Ben Al Khatib, and to a chronicle entitled ' Al Lamhat al Badriyah fi Daulat al Nasriyah.' ”

The Report mentions that a change in the mode of publishing the works brought out by the committee has been effected, but does not enter into particulars : it announces that Mr. R. Bentley, of New Burlington Street, has been appointed publisher to the Fund.

Fifteen subscribers have been added to the list since the last anniversary.

The receipts for the year 1833 were stated at 1,565*l.* 7*s.* 3*d.*, and the disbursements for the same period at 1486*l.* 19*s.* 8*d.*, leaving a balance of cash in favour of the Fund of 78*l.* 7*s.* 7*d.*, to which must be added 8*l.* 0*s.* 3½*d.* in the hands of the secretary. The receipts from the 1st of January 1834 to the date of the audit, 8th July, were 896*l.* 10*s.* 7*d.*, expenses 692*l.* 14*s.*, leaving a balance in the hands of the treasurer of 203*l.* 16*s.* 7*d.* The assets of the Fund amounted to the estimated value of 5,745*l.* 15*s.* 2½*d.*

Since this meeting was held, Professor Garcin de Tassy's new translation of the romance of Kamrup, from the Hindústáni, has arrived ; and the edition of M. von Klaproth's "Annals of Japan" is shortly expected.

Professor Wilson has announced that a considerable portion of the Vishnu Purana is ready to be put to press ; as also the translation of the Sankhya Karika, made by Mr. Colbrooke, which the professor has edited and accompanied with notes.