

## OBITUARY NOTICES

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### WILHELM AHLWARDT<sup>1</sup>

WITH the death of Professor Wilhelm Ahlwardt on November 2, 1909, at the age of 81 years, Arabic studies have lost another of the chief representatives linking us to an earlier generation.

Born in Greifswald on July 4, 1828, the son of Christian Wilhelm Ahlwardt, who was Professor at the University, he lost his father when only 5 years of age. After a course at the gymnasium there, he studied during 1846-8 at the University of his native town, among others under Kosegarten; from 1848 to the autumn of 1849 he studied at Göttingen under Ewald, and again from 1849 to the autumn of 1850 at Greifswald, where on February 6, 1851, he received the degree of Ph.D.

After this he spent several years studying and copying, in a beautiful hand, MSS. in the libraries at Gotha and Paris. The copies made by him during this period, filling close upon a hundred volumes, will, it is to be hoped, find their way intact into the University Library of his native town.

At Easter, 1856, Ahlwardt received the post of assistant librarian in the University Library of Greifswald; and in this year appeared his first, as far as I know, printed work, *Über Poësie und Poetik der Araber*, dedicated to the University upon its jubilee.

On May 5, 1857, he took up the position of Privatdozent at Greifswald, and on February 11, 1861, he was

<sup>1</sup> His full name was Friedrich Wilhelm, and it is so entered in his own hand in the Album of Professors at Greifswald; but in his published works he used only the second name, and appears with it alone in the catalogue of professors and scholars published in Germany.

appointed Professor of Oriental Languages, which post he held till the time of his death. From February, 1861, to 1865 he was also second librarian at the University Library. During the summer of 1867 and winter of 1867-8 Ahlwardt was on furlough for scientific researches in Paris and Oxford.

On February 22, 1892, he was appointed Privy Councillor (Geheimer Regierungsrat). On his 80th birthday he was decorated with the Prussian Order of the Red Eagle, 2nd Class with oak-leaves, and upon his jubilee as Ph.D. with the same Order, 3rd Class, with the number 50; he had also received the Prussian Order of the Royal Crown, 2nd Class, and the Order of Henry the Lion of the Duchy of Brunswick.

Ahlwardt married in Berlin on July 4, 1861. After losing his wife he had the sorrow of losing his only son, who had entered on a juristic career, at the age of 30 years. The ill-success of his German translation of the *Dīwān* of Rūba, moreover, had made him resolve not to publish any further works; he showed me the manuscript translation of the *Aṣma'īyyāt*, and he had also done a great deal towards the translation of *al-'Aġġāġ*; both works will probably be found among his papers.

I have indicated above that his first book was published in 1856 under the title *Über Poesie und Poetik der Araber*; it showed that the branch of Arabic studies which chiefly interested him was that of poetry. This work was followed in 1859 by *Chalef el-Ahmars Qasside*, which put the literary activity of Joseph von Hammer under a glaring searchlight. In 1860 he edited *El-Fachri, Geschichte der islamischen Reiche*. In 1861 he published *Abū Nowas, Weinlieder*, promising a complete edition of the whole *Dīwān* and also a work on the social conditions under the Chalifate; unfortunately these promises were not fulfilled.

In 1870 appeared *The Dīwāns of the Six Ancient Arabic*

*Poets*, containing the poems of an-Nābīga, 'Antara, Tarafa, Zuhair, and 'Alqama in the recension of al-A'lam, and the poems of Imru'ul-Qais after the recension of as-Sukkari. This is the most frequently cited work of Ahlwardt's. It is a pity that he pursued in it a plan to which he adhered to the end; i.e. rearranging the poems according to the rhymes and omitting the commentaries. The former practice separates poems which belong to the same classes; for though no plan may be apparent in the way the *Dīwāns* of the ancient Arabic poets are arranged, it is certain that there is a reason underlying the arrangement, which it is to be hoped will lead us some day to trace the sources from which the ancient texts were derived. The commentaries, however meagre and poor, are often a very valuable help for understanding the difficult texts of early Arabic poetry. Ahlwardt remedied these defects to some extent by the publication in 1872 of his *Bemerkungen über die Echtheit der alten Arabischen Gedichte*, in which he critically considers the texts published as to their genuineness and completeness.

After this Ahlwardt was for many years prevented from following his favourite studies, having been entrusted with the cataloguing of the Arabic MSS. in the Royal Library, Berlin. The work of these years is embodied in ten stupendous volumes, published between 1887 and 1899. Here he brought together rather more than is desirable, and the work is awkward to use on account of its enormous size. Moreover, in giving the dates of the authors, Ahlwardt not infrequently differs from other authorities, and as he does not quote his own sources, the correctness of his statements cannot be ascertained. As the compiling of this huge catalogue took a long time, he published intermediately several hand-lists:— (1871) *Verzeichniss Arabischer Handschriften* (on poetry, belles-lettres, literary history, and biographies); (1885)

*Verzeichniss Landbergischer Handschriften*; (1887) *Verzeichniss Glaserscher Handschriften*. During this period he published also in autography (1883) the ninth volume of the Chronicle of al-Balāḍuri after an old MS. preserved in the Berlin Library.

Late in life he was again able to turn to his favourite study of poetry, and in 1902–3 appeared his *Sammlungen alter arabischer Dichter*, containing (vol. i) the *Aṣma'īyyāt* after the Vienna MS. and five poems abounding in difficult words, and later (vols. ii and iii) the *Diwāns* of the very difficult *Rağaz* poems of al-'Ağğāğ and Rūba, again without the commentaries, which are absolutely necessary for the understanding of these authors. He intended to make these poems more accessible by the publication of German translations; that of Rūba appeared in 1904, but the interest in it which Ahlwardt had expected was not shown.

Moreover, in the latter part of his life his eyesight began to fail, and he frequently expressed his fear of becoming blind; that, however, his enthusiasm survived till the last is demonstrated by the fact that he had actually announced a course of lectures for the winter term 1909–10. A gathering on the tongue, from which he suffered about a week, took him gently away.

Working from an early age with enthusiasm and conscientiousness, he always aimed at a very high standard of correctness, a model for succeeding generations. Though I am probably the latest friend Ahlwardt made, I am proud to write these few lines in his honour. After making inquiries in several quarters in vain, I received, through the kindness of Professor Hausleiter of Greifswald, some particulars supplementing my own knowledge, for which I thank him here publicly.

Fritz Krenkow.