

Henry Beveridge

DIED 8TH NOVEMBER, 1929

It seems a curious chance that the father of Henry Beveridge, of the Indian Civil Service, should have written a history of British India, and one wonders whether this had any influence on the young Henry Beveridge, born on 9th February, 1837, in his choice of a career. At any rate, after he had completed his education at Glasgow University and Queen's College, Belfast, he had intended to obtain a nomination to the Indian Civil Service, but it happened that at this juncture the system of nomination by the East India Company was withdrawn and appointments to the Indian Civil Service were henceforward thrown open to public competition. In the third of these examinations, which was held in 1857, Henry Beveridge headed the list and on reaching Calcutta, via the Cape, he was posted to Bengal, where he served in various districts down to 1893.

Henry Beveridge had inherited from both his father and his mother a taste for literature and a gift for writing, but I do not find any trace of his appearing as a man of letters until 1876, when he published *The District of Bakarganj (in Eastern Bengal): Its History and Statistics*. From 1884 onwards he was constantly engaged in the intervals of his public duties in writing historical articles which were published in the *Calcutta Review* or in the *Journal* of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Among these contributions may be specially mentioned his account of the trial of the Maharaja Nanda Kumar, which he described as a judicial murder, thus controverting Sir James Stevens, who had upheld the action of Impey and Warren Hastings. These articles were afterwards reprinted in pamphlet form in Calcutta in 1886. His earliest contribution to the subject which afterwards engrossed all his attention, namely the India of the Delhi Moghuls, was an article published in the *JASB.* in 1887 on the "Mother of Jahángír". He also contributed a number of articles

to the *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, including an interesting discussion on whether the Koh-i-Nur was the diamond which the Emperor Bābur received from his son Humāyūn after the battle of Panipat and then returned to his son as a present. The latest article I have traced is one on 'Azīz Koka contributed to this *Journal* in 1921. But it is by his translations, from the Persian, of three important historical works that Beveridge will be best remembered, and of these far the most important is his literal rendering of the *Akbarnāma* of Abu-l-Fazl, the monumental and all too flowery history of the great Emperor Akbar, written by his famous minister. It required almost as much of patience as of scholarship to turn this masterpiece of Persian rhetoric into readable English, but Henry Beveridge never shirked his task and every hyperbole of Abu-l-Fazl's finds its counterpart in the English translation. I cannot refrain from quoting one example from the introduction. "He rends the garments of contumacy which wraps the faces of debts, but draws the mantle of forgiveness over the heads of transgressions; the splendour of power streams from the brow of his benevolence; the lightning of benignity draws lambent lights from the fires of his wrath. His fury melts adamant boldness; his dread turns to water the courage of the iron-souled; the shrinking of the age is the impress of the wrinkling of his brows; its expansion the reflex of his nature's blossoming." This great work, by which he laid under a permanent obligation all students of Indian history, occupied upwards of fourteen years.

After his retirement in 1893 Henry Beveridge settled in Haslemere, where he and his devoted wife and companion, Annette Susanna Beveridge, gave themselves up to the study of Moghul history and both were spared to carry on their work in England for thirty-five years.

Although the researches of Mr. and Mrs. Beveridge lay within the same period of Indian history (and of course their interests and study were almost identical) the works which Mrs. Beveridge published were totally independent of those

of her husband and it fell to her lot to do for the Emperor Babur, whose memoirs she translated from the Turki into English, what her husband had done for Babur's grandson.

In 1899 Henry Beveridge re-visited India in search of historical manuscripts which might throw light on the Moghul period, but this expedition does not seem to have led to any important discovery.

Most of those who have been engaged in the study of Indian history have become familiar with the characteristic hand-writings of these two scholars who never spared themselves any pains to assist others in the elucidation of difficult problems; and their letters were always characterized by a great enthusiasm for their subject. Nor did this enthusiasm wane with old age, and as long as Mr. and Mrs. Henry Beveridge were well enough to receive visitors in the home they had latterly shared with their son, Sir William Beveridge, on Campden Hill, they were prepared to discuss, in spite of speaking trumpets and slips of paper, as eagerly as ever those topics to which they had devoted their long and useful lives.

E. DENISON ROSS.

A. S. BEVERIDGE

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- (d) "Notes on the MSS. of the Turki text of Bābar's Memoirs." *JRAS.*, 1900, etc.
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H. BEVERIDGE

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 3. *Annual Address to the Asiatic Society of Bengal . . .* Calcutta, 1891.
 4. *The Akbarnāma of Abu-l-Faḡl.* Translated from the Persian by H. Beveridge. (Bibliotheca Indica.) Calcutta, 1897-1910.
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- (b) "The Mother of Jahāngīr," *JASB.*, lvi, 1887, pt. i, No. iii, p. 164.
- (c) "The Administration of Justice in Bengal," *Calcutta Review*, vol. lxxxvii, 1888, pp. 322-44; vol. xc, 1890, pp. 253-70.
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H. BEVERIDGE, Advocate

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