

## OBITUARY NOTICES.

---

### MAJOR HENRY GEORGE RAVERTY.

MAJOR RAVERTY died at Grampond Road, between St. Austell and Truro, on October 20th last, at the ripe age of 81. He was of Irish parentage, his grandfather having been an O'Raverty, and his father Peter Raverty of Tyrone and a surgeon in the Navy. Major Raverty was born on May 31st, 1825, and was educated in Cornwall. In 1843 he entered the H.E.I.C.'s service and joined the 3rd Bombay Infantry. He served in the Panjab campaign of 1849-50, and in the campaign against the tribes on the Swat border. He also was in civil employ, and was an Assistant Commissioner in the Panjab. His service in Afghanistan drew his attention to the language of the country, and in 1855 he published a Pushtoo grammar. This was followed in 1860 by his Pushtoo dictionary, of which a second edition appeared in 1867. Major Raverty led a somewhat stormy life, for he was at feud with Professors Blochmann and Dowson as well as with other scholars, but he did good work and is entitled to honourable remembrance. A severe critic, the late Lord Strangford, who did not spare Raverty where he thought he was wrong, yet wrote of him, in a paper in our Journal on the languages of Afghanistan, that the credit undoubtedly belonged to Major Raverty of having been the first student to combine a mastery of vernacular Pushtoo with a thorough knowledge of its literature. Similarly, Colonel Biddulph, in his Essay on Afghan Poetry of the seventeenth century, wrote that Major Raverty might indeed be styled the father of the study of the Afghan language and literature, and that for more than thirty years he devoted himself to placing at the disposal of the public

his unique stores of information. "Raverty's Grammar, Raverty's Dictionary, Raverty's Gulshan-i-Roh will ever be lasting memorials of his conscientious and disinterested labours." One of Raverty's most laborious works was his "Notes on Afghanistan," in which he described three-and-twenty routes in that country. This was published under the authority of the Secretary of State for India in 1880-3, but we believe that it is rarely to be met with, and only in a mutilated condition, for many passages have been smudged by some official censor, after the fashion in which keepers of certain public libraries deal with betting news. What the *Times* calls Major Raverty's trenchant pen did most harm to himself, and it is somewhat sad and singular that three distinguished Orientalists, all of them Anglo-Indians, who died within the last few years, all damaged themselves and their causes by intemperate language. The maxim about "emollit mores" hardly was verified in their cases. But that Raverty was not always wrong in his controversies seems proved by a curious incident recorded in our Journal for 1875. Raverty objected to some remarks by Colonel Yule about him, and the dispute was referred to arbitration. The arbitrators were the very competent men Aloys Sprenger and Arthur Grote, and their verdict was in Raverty's favour. Unfortunately the whole of the award has not been published, but the concluding words were: "The arbitrators are satisfied that Major Raverty was quite unaware of the previous publication (the innuendo was one of plagiarism), and that his position is therefore completely justified."

Major Raverty translated for the Asiatic Society of Bengal the *Ṭabaqāt Nāṣirī* by Minbāj, and furnished very ample and learned notes. He also wrote a most full account of the Indus under the title of "The Mihrān of Sind and its Tributaries," which was published in the J.A.S.B. for 1892.

Major Raverty resided at one time near Ottery St. Mary (Coleridge's birthplace), but latterly he lived in Cornwall. He retired from the Army in 1864, and in the following year married at Falmouth the only daughter of Commander

George Pooley, R.N. His wife survives him, but there are no children. His "History of Herat and Annals of Khurāsān" was completed about a year ago, and it is to be hoped that it may be published. He worked up to the end of his life, and was at his death engaged on the "History of the Afghans," for which he had collected a great quantity of material. It is also understood that he was preparing a translation of the *Tārīkh-i-Alfī*, the famous history of a thousand years which was projected by Akbar. Major Raverty was all through life a poor man, and apparently the only pecuniary reward that he ever received for his studies was a prize of 1,000 rupees for High Proficiency. The *Times* lately published an interesting notice of him, and to this and to Buckland's Dictionary of Indian Biography we have been indebted for some of our facts.

H. B.