

OBITUARY NOTICE

Réné Basset

Our Society lost by the death of Professor René Basset on the 4th January this year one of its distinguished Honorary Members, and the world one of its greatest authorities on the Berber languages of North Africa. An indefatigable worker, it would require much space to enumerate all his works, many of which are scattered in the *Revue Africaine* and other journals. But it is not in his own works that we find all his labours; one needed only to mention that a certain scholar was intending to write upon a certain subject, and I always found him replying immediately, giving references from his valuable notes made during many years of research, and I believe I can assert that he guided many of his pupils to take up work, and we owe many books of the younger generation of French Orientalists to his inspiration.

Among his many writings on the Berber dialects are the following: *Manuel de la Langue Kabyle*, Paris, 1887; *Notes de Lexicographie Berbère*, Paris, 1883-7; *Contes Populaires Berbères*, Paris, 1887; *Nouveaux Contes Berbères*, Paris, 1897; *Le Dialecte de Syonah*, Paris, 1890; *Étude sur le Zenatia*, Paris, 1892; *Mission au Senegal, with a study of the Zenaga Berber dialect and the Hassaniyya Arabic of the Senegal*. Finally he published the materials for the study of the Tuareg language left by Père de Foucauld, of which have appeared *Dictionnaire Abregé Touarègue*, Alger, 1918-20, in two vols, 8vo, comprising 1440 pages, and the *Notes pour servir à un essai de grammaire Touarègue*, Alger, 1920. He was occupied with the publication of the texts (tales, poems, etc.) in Tuareg, left by de Foucauld at the time of his death.

It was rather later in life that he began to publish works in Arabic, among which the "Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite" in the *Patrologia Orientalis* is perhaps the most important. The

first half, containing the first six months of the Coptic year, has been published, comprising 890 pages of text and French translation, and Professor Basset was working on the remainder at the time of his death. I do not know if he was able to complete it, but in a letter shortly before his death he wrote me that he had a considerable amount of proofs to read. Interested in all appertaining to North Africa, he published the Arabic *Futuḥ-al Ḥabasha*, an account of the temporary Muslim conquest of Abyssinia early in the sixteenth century, and he had in hand an edition of the *History of the Sūdān*, dealing principally with the conquest of Nigeria by the Sharīfian Sultān al-Manṣūr. Destined for the use of students at the University of Algiers were his *Textes littéraires*, Alger, 1917, and an edition of the *Bānat Su'ād* of Ka'b ibn Zuhair, Alger, 1910. He was preparing an edition of the poems attributed to Majnūn Beni 'Āmir on the basis of all accessible manuscripts of the Dīwān, for which I collated the rather bad copy in the library of the India Office. The edition was to contain a study of the origin of this poet, who was probably never historical and to whom verses of many other poets are attributed. I fear this work was not advanced sufficiently to be published.

Considering his numerous official duties as Doyen de la Faculté de Lettres, it is amazing with what zeal Professor Basset was working untiringly right to the end, having always in view the widening of our horizon in the knowledge of the people of North Africa in particular.

If Science and our Society have lost one of its foremost scholars, I have lost a kind and ever helpful friend.

F. KRENKOW.