



BINYON, (ROBERT) LAURENCE

BINYON, (ROBERT) LAURENCE (1869-1943), prolific English poet, translator, art historian and critic, notably of Oriental art. Binyon was born in Lancaster into a Quaker family, and educated at Trinity College, Oxford. He married in 1904 and had three daughters. From 1913 to 1933 he was in charge of the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, ultimately being appointed Keeper (1932-33) of the special section of Oriental prints and paintings that he had created. A pioneer in the study of the Oriental arts, especially those of the Far East, Binyon edited a series entitled *The Artist's Library* (8 vols., London, 1899-1903). During 1933-4 he was the Charles Eliot Norton Professor (of Poetry) at Harvard, where he delivered a series of lectures, "The spirit of man in Asian art" (published at Cambridge, Mass., 1935; repr. New York, 1965), which did much to spread appreciation of Oriental art and poetry in America. Binyon was also well known as a poet, and among his translations that of Dante's *Divine Comedy* (London, 1933-43) was particularly well received. He was made a Companion of Honour in 1932, and awarded several honorary degrees.

During 1936-38 Binyon served as vice president of the newly established Iran Society in London. His paper "Iranian Miniature Paintings," in *Proceedings of the Iran Society* (Vol. 1, pt. 2, London, 1937), offers stimulating insights, as do many of his other works, notably *Persian Painting of the Sixteenth Century: Emperors and Princes of the House of Timur* (London, 1930, signed L. B.); *The Poems of Nezami* (with the reproduction of a manuscript in the British Museum, London, 1928); and his introduction to J. V. S. Wilkinson's *The Shah-*



Namah of Firdausi...With 24 Illustrations from a Fifteenth-Century Persian Manuscript in the Possession of the Royal Asiatic Society (London, 1931). Binyon's most substantial work on Persian painting, which has become a standard reference book, is his collaboration with J. V. S. Wilkinson and Basil Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting, Including a Critical and Descriptive Catalogue of the Miniatures Exhibited at Burlington House, January-March, 1931* (London, 1933).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(additional to that given in the text):

Laurence Binyon, *The Court Painters of the Grand Moguls... With Historical Introduction and Notes by T. W. Arnold*, London, 1921; *Guide to an Exhibition of Indian and Persian Paintings and Illuminated MSS.; With Specimens of the Art of Eastern Turkestan, Tibet, Burma and Siam*, London, 1922. *Dictionary of National Biography 1941-1950*, London, 1959, pp. 79-81.

(Parvin Loloi)