



ROBINSON, SAMUEL

ROBINSON, Samuel (b. Manchester, 23 March 1794; d. Blackbrook Cottage, Wilmslow, Cheshire, 9 December 1884), British scholar of Persian, translator, cotton manufacturer, and educationalist.

Robinson was educated at Manchester New College, which was then situated in the city of York. He followed his father, a cultured man, into the cotton industry. After his marriage to Mary, daughter of John Kennedy of Knocknalling, Kirkcudbrightshire, he moved, in 1825 or thereabouts, to Dukinfield, a village (now a small town) in the county of Cheshire. He retired from his business in 1860, and devoted the rest of his life to scholarship.

From an early age he showed a strong interest in languages and poetry, especially those of Germany and Persia. In 1819, at the age of nineteen, and inspired by Sir William Jones's work, he delivered a critical paper as a *Sketch of the Life and Writings of Ferdousee*, to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester. This was published in the *Transactions* of this society in the same year, and was also printed privately in 1823. Although he did not publish any translations from Persian for almost fifty years, he did not stop studying its language and literature. It was only after his retirement that he had time to polish and publish the results of his labor. Several volumes of poetry selected from the most famous of Persian classical poets were published privately. These volumes were signed only with his initials ('S.R') at the end of each preface. In 1873, he published two volumes on Neẓāmi and Jāmi. His volume on Neẓāmi is heavily indebted to the German translations of Wilhelm Bacher (1850-1913), and includes the *Eqbāl-nāma*, the second book of the *Eskandar-*



nāma of Nezāmi. His version of Jāmi's *Yusof o Zoleykā* owes much to Rosenzweig-Schwannau's German translation. His volume *A Century of Ghazels, or a Hundred Odes, ...from the Diwan of Hafiz* was published in 1875. His translations of Hafez are accurate and couched in a euphonic form of prose-poetry. 1876 saw the publication of a selection of anecdotes from both the *Bustān* and the *Golestān* s of Sa'di. To this was added an appendix which contained an "Extract from the *Mesnavi* of Jelalud-Din Rumi"; as well as a reprint of the earlier *Sketch* on Ferdowsi. The last year of his life was the most productive so far as Persian poetry is concerned. Due to the popularity of his translations and the unavailability of many of his earlier volumes, he included all of the above in a single collection with some additions and revision, again meant for private circulation only. The popularity of this collection, *Persian Poetry for English Readers*, was such that several editions were required within a short time.

Robinson's modesty about his own knowledge of Persian resulted in his shunning the title of 'scholar' (preface to *Persian Poetry*, p. vii), and although he relied heavily on German translations of the Persian poets, he was, nevertheless, a careful and substantial scholar and translator. His method was always to collate his versions with the Persian original in order to improve on their accuracy. He produced his translations in a pleasingly rhythmic prose. His versions from the *Šāh-nāma*, however, seem to be modeled on "the poetry of the Old Testament as it is rendered in the King James Bible" (Davis, I, pp. 446-7). Indeed his other translations have affinities with the prose of the Authorized Version of the Bible. In the introduction to *Persian Poetry for English Readers*, Robinson explains his use of prose as a means by which he can preserve for "his English reader the exact sense of the original, and not only the exact sense, but the peculiar and characteristic flavor—the aroma, so to say— of the Oriental style" (p. xiii).

Robinson also translated several volumes from German authors including Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* (1825). He was very interested in the educational and social movements of the time particularly as they applied to his own locality. Robinson is reputed to have been a conscientious employer, and he wrote a series of letters in order to advance the understanding of his workforce. Despite his dislike of publicity, he lectured regularly on educational and other subjects at Dukinfield village library, which he founded in 1833. He was also a founding member of a British school (a "British" school was a school supported by the Nonconformist British and Foreign Schools' Society) in his



village and an original organizer of the Manchester Statistical Society. He served as the president of Manchester New College (1867-1871). His wife died before him in Italy on 26 August 1858. There were no children from the marriage. His Library was bequeathed to Owens College in Manchester (which was later to become part of Manchester University).

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