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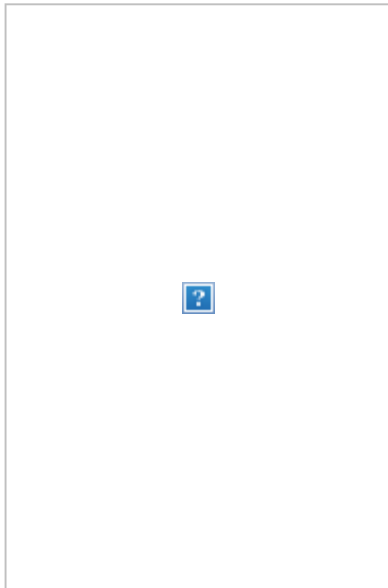
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Tenth anniversary of the 1992 World Congress



Book Reviews



The Poetry of Táhirih
by John S. Hatcher and
Amrollah Hemmat
Publisher: George Ronald

THIS YEAR sees the 150th anniversary of her martyrdom so the publication of *The Poetry of Táhirih* is especially timely. It is easy for us to forget that in addition to her accomplishments as the only female immediate disciple of the Báb, heroic exponent of His message, and early proponent of female emancipation, this remarkable and courageous woman was also a poet of note. Táhirih's work is still appreciated in her native Iran (though her religious affiliation tends not to be mentioned) and more widely among scholars of Persian literature. Nonetheless it is a long time since it was available to the general non-academic reader and the authors and publishers of this new work have therefore done us all a service.

The book starts with information about Táhirih and her life and continues with an essay about the difficulties of translation from one language to another, especially where cultural backgrounds differ. There is always a tension. Or does one stick to the original as much as possible and thereby risk missing the chance of conveying the spirit behind the content? Does one do the spirit justice with a free translation that makes the translator virtually a co-author and annoys the purists and perhaps the countrymen of the original author? English literature contains a number of successful translations of the latter sort, one of the best-known (and best) being Edward Fitzgerald's versions of the work of another Persian writer in *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam*. Not for nothing do the Italians have a saying "translator-traitor"! The essay in question is interesting but marred by a couple of obvious errors of fact in the Western works of art to which it refers.

After the initial essays more than forty of Táhirih's poems are featured. The translation seems to tend to the former school of thought, sticking to the imagery of the originals and setting each in context with an explanatory note while explaining references with extensive notes. The result is very informative though somewhat forbidding. We are not in Fitzgerald country here.

While not the lightest of reads the book will repay study

and it makes a significant contribution to Persian literature and its appreciation in the West, while helping to do justice to the manifold talents Táhirih possessed. Scholars will also appreciate the inclusion of the original texts.

The National Spiritual Assembly has suggested that copies

be presented to appropriate university and college libraries, especially at this time when we are seeking to mark the anniversary of Táhirih's death, and one hopes the Bahá'ís will act upon this idea.



The other book dealt with in this review is a marked contrast. *A Few Minutes a Day* is a work essentially for the parents of primary school age children and will help them deepen and educate those children in the Faith. For each day of the year there is a short prayer or reading for them to learn, an activity to undertake, and a subject for consultation. (The year is set out by the Bahá'í calendar, which should help to reinforce Bahá'í activity for parent and child alike.) It really does take just a few minutes each day but following it out will be a valuable contribution to the child's spiritual development.

A Few Minutes a Day
by Dicy Reaugh Hall
Publisher: George Ronald

Bahá'ís tend to bemoan the lack of suitable literature for children, though when it appears they do not always support the publisher by actually buying it. One hopes that parents will take advantage of the opportunity this book offers, buy it and use it. If they do not perhaps the grand-

Iain S. Palin parents or friends may – it would make an ideal present.

