



E. G. BROWNE

# Edward Granville Browne

## 1862–1926

### I

WITHIN BRITAIN, THE STUDY OF PERSIAN for long lagged well behind that of Hebrew or Aramaic or Syriac or Arabic, even though some of the great English Arabists of the seventeenth century knew a certain amount of Persian and though the publication at the end of the century of Balthasar d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque orientale* (Paris, 1697)—a book which, much reprinted, enlarged, and updated, was to become a standard reference work for over a century—drew attention to the Persian contribution to Islamic civilisation and the role of autocratic rulers and military adventurers in the Persian lands, from Maḥmūd of Ghazna to Chingiz Khan and Tamerlane.

It was really the eighteenth century which was important here. During that century, the British presence in India expanded from the factories of the East India Company along the coasts until, by the end of the century, the Company nominally, but increasingly in practice, the official British military and political power, was radiating from the great ports like Madras and Calcutta into the hinterlands of South India and Bengal. The culture of the Mughal Empire, which had dominated almost all the sub-continent for two centuries until its collapse after the death in 1707 of Awrangzīb, had been primarily a Persian one, and Persian language and literature remained the prime pursuits of the Indo-Muslim ruling classes until the opening of the twentieth century, as attested in Sir Muḥammad Iqbāl's (d. 1938) use of Persian for much of his poetry and for an important philosophical work like his *Asrār-i khudī* 'The Secrets of Self'. Individual Britons had been visiting the courts of the monarchs in Persia itself, at such capitals as Tabriz, Qazvin, and Isfahan, since the sixteenth century, but with diplomatic or commercial interests; now by the late eighteenth

century Britons in India with administrative responsibilities, concerns with land tenure and taxation, etc., needed a much closer contact with Indo-Persian language and culture as it had had developed in the subcontinent. Back in England, the East India Company's college (later to become the public school of Haileybury) provided tuition in Persian for officials who were going to have to wrestle with tax registers, land transactions, and other official documents in Persian. In India itself a class of *munshīs* or native teachers, scribes, and interpreters arose, and government money was used to finance institutions of higher education where Persian was still taught alongside English, whilst academic publications like the *Bibliotheca Indica* series of texts, in which various Persian histories of Muslim power in India figured, were subsidised. The aims and motivations here were thus essentially practical, but an interest in Persian on the purely academic and aesthetic level can be traced back to a figure like that of Sir William Jones (1746–94). Jones regarded himself as above all a reviver of Sanskrit learning, but in 1770 he published, at the behest of King Christian VII of Denmark, a translation into French of Maḥdī Khān's biography of the military conqueror Nādir Shāh Afshār, the *Tārīkh-i Nādirī*; in 1771 a Persian grammar which became a standard one and was frequently reprinted (it guided the first steps in Persian of Edward Fitzgerald), to which Jones appended several paraphrases of Hāfiz's poems; and in 1788 he published an edition of the *Laylī va Majnūn* of the poet Hātif.<sup>1</sup>

In mid-Victorian Britain, few works had—after a slow start—a greater *succès d'estime* than Fitzgerald's translations of the *Rubā' iyyāt* of Umar Khayyām. They contributed very substantially to a popular view of Persian culture and its ethos as essentially hedonistic and self-indulgent, with a concomitant fatalism, influencing many lesser works such as Sir Richard Burton's *The Qasīda, a Lay of the Higher Law* (although its author vehemently denied that his work was a paler *Rubā' iyyāt*). The vogue for such works, extending well into the twentieth century, was gently satirised by H. H. Munro ('Saki') when in 1916 he wrote a story about a hoax perpetrated by an English country clergyman centring on the discovery—allegedly by a nephew serving in the Mesopotamian campaign—of the verses of one Ghurab the hunter which 'breathed a spirit of comfortable, even-tempered satire and philosophy, disclosing a mockery that did not

<sup>1</sup> See on Jones as a Persian scholar, A. J. Arberry's chapter, 'The Founder', in *Oriental Essays. Portraits of Seven Scholars* (London, 1960), pp. 66, 76–8, 81, and Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones. Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 248–9, 291.

trouble to be bitter, a joy in life that was not passionate to the verge of being troublesome'.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the academic provision in Britain for learning and studying Persian, apart from that designed with the practical aim of serving officialdom in India and its dependencies, remained lamentably sparse. Fitzgerald had to seek help on his Persian studies from E. B. Cowell, Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge, and it was to Cowell for Persian again, and E. H. Palmer for Arabic, that the young student at Cambridge, E. G. Browne, had to turn for guidance when beginning the study of the three great Middle Eastern languages whilst he was studying for the Natural Sciences Tripos with a view to taking up the practice of medicine. This interest in the languages and cultures of the Middle East was the beginning of a highly distinguished career as an orientalist for Browne, mainly in academe, but also on the fringes of public life where such questions as the place of Persia in international diplomacy and politics were concerned. Whilst officially holding the Sir Thomas Adams' Chair of Arabic for nearly a quarter of a century (1902–26), he became the uncontested doyen of Persian studies within Britain.

## II

Edward Granville Browne was born on 7 February 1862 at Uley near Dursley in Gloucestershire, the eldest son of Sir Benjamin Chapman Browne, who was for many years head of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne engineering and shipbuilding firm of R. and W. Hawthorn, Leslie and Co.<sup>3</sup> The family background was thus one of affluence, and after his father's death he himself became the possessor of a considerable personal fortune. The young Edward was sent to school at Glenalmond in Perthshire and to Eton College, but did not enjoy the experiences and was glad to leave the

<sup>2</sup> See C. E. Bosworth, 'James Elroy Flecker: Poet, Diplomat, Orientalist', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library, Manchester*, 69 (Spring 1987), pp. 360–1.

<sup>3</sup> Although Browne was almost a founder member of the Academy (see below, p. 86), no appreciation of him appeared in the *Proceedings* after his death in 1926. The following have been drawn upon here for general biographical information and estimates of Browne's work: Sir E. Denison Ross, art. s.v. in *DNB 1922–1930* (London, 1937), pp. 123–4; idem, 'Edward Granville Browne. A Memoir', prefixed to the 3rd edn (London, 1950) of Browne's *A Year Amongst the Persians*; pp. vii–xxii Arberry's chapter on Browne, 'The Persian', in *Oriental Essays*, pp. 160–96; G. Michael Wickens, art. 'Browne, Edward Granville. i. Browne's Life and Academic Career', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 4 (London and New York, 1990), pp. 483–5.

latter at the age of fifteen. Later, in the Introduction to his *A Year Amongst the Persians*, he sharply criticised the dreary and mechanical teaching of languages in the public schools of his time, dominated then by study of the classics. He inveighed against ‘the magnificent contempt for all non-English systems of pronunciation which the ordinary public-school system of teaching Latin and Greek encourages’, and denounced the ‘doctrine of pan-Anglican pronunciation’, often extended also to French and German, as exemplified in two sayings he had often heard, ‘Anyone can understand English if they choose, provided you talk loud enough’, and ‘Always mistrust an Englishman who talks French like a Frenchman’.<sup>4</sup> Browne only discovered his own remarkable gift for learning and enjoying oriental languages after he had left the stultifying atmosphere of Eton, and later in his life, was one of the very few Europeans who could write a correct letter with equal facility in Arabic, Persian, or Turkish, although he never displayed any interest in philology as such.

As with so many persons who have become in thrall to the East, Browne’s interest in the region was fortuitous and was stimulated by contemporary events in the Levant. He mentions the proximate cause of his interest as the Russo–Turkish War of 1877–8, occurring when he was fifteen or sixteen years old, for it aroused in him a passion for underdogs, small nations and countries, and unpopular, misunderstood causes. Here it was the gallantry of the Ottoman Sultan’s armies in their losing fight with the Tsar’s armies, and he reacted strongly against the prevalent cant in Britain of the anti-Turkish party of the Gladstonian Liberals and their ‘wretched attempts’, as he put it, ‘to confound questions of abstract justice with party politics’. By the end of the war, he wrote, ‘I would have died to save Turkey, and I mourned the fall of Plevna as though it had been a disaster inflicted on my own country’. He even had the idea of a career, via the British army, in the Ottoman army. More level-headed thoughts prevailed, but he began the study of Turkish by buying a grammar and studying it by himself until he found some tuition, being assisted by the friendly interest of Sir James Redhouse, virtually the only Ottoman Turkish scholar in Britain (see below, p. 89), who put him in touch with friends at the Turkish embassy in London.<sup>5</sup>

He disclaimed any interest in engineering, but agreed with his father’s suggestion that he study medicine as a profession, and this he enjoyed, gaining his M.B. Ch.B. and completing his clinical training. Later in life, his continued interest in medicine was to lead to his giving the Fitzpatrick

<sup>4</sup> *A Year Amongst the Persians*, pp. 5–7.

<sup>5</sup> *A Year Amongst the Persians*, pp. 8–11; Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, pp. 161–3.

Lectures before the Royal College of Physicians in 1919–20, these being published as a book, *Arabian Medicine* (London, 1921; French, Persian, and Urdu translations of it have subsequently appeared). He always regarded his medical and hospital experiences as formative for his views on the nobility and indomitability of the human spirit, ones which he was later to transfer to a special empathy with the pantheistic love of humanity expressed in Islamic Sufism. Despite the exacting nature of his medical studies, he continued to take occasional Turkish lessons in London (although his early enthusiasm for all things Turkish began to cool), and as noted above, began the study of Arabic and Persian with Cambridge teachers. In 1884 he tackled the Indian Languages Tripos (involving, essentially, Islamic languages), for which he had also, without much enthusiasm, to study Hindustani; he later showed a positive dislike for things Indian, including the Persian literature produced in the subcontinent.

In 1887, his college, Pembroke, elected him to a Fellowship, which would now enable him to make a long hoped-for visit to Persia and possibly lead to a university lectureship in Persian at the end of it. His experiences in Persia formed the subject of his first book, *A Year Amongst the Persians . . . Impressions as to the Life, Character & Thought of the People of Persia Received During Twelve Months' Residence in That Country in the Years 1887–1888* (London, 1893). It created no great stir at the time, but was reprinted, now by Cambridge University Press, just after Browne's own death in 1926, with a prefatory Memoir by Sir E. Denison Ross (see above, n. 4) and has remained substantially in print ever since, attesting the work's enduring attractiveness and scholarly value.<sup>6</sup> One of Browne's significant roles in the field of the history of religions and their immense variety was as the man who first introduced knowledge of the messianic figure of the Bāb or 'Gateway' (sc. to the 'Hidden Imam' of the Shi'ites) Mīrzā 'Alī Muḥammad of Shiraz (executed in 1850), and his new movement, Babism, and its later offshoot, Baha'ism, to the British scholarly world: in his *Year Amongst the Persians* and in various articles, translations, and historical accounts of the two movements published after his return from Persia. He had been inspired in this through the work of the Comte Arthur de Gobineau, a French diplomat in Tehran who wrote his *Religions et philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (Paris, 1851), the pioneer account in a Western language of the early phases of the Bābī movement in Persia.

<sup>6</sup> For an evaluation of this classic work and a description of the circumstances in which it was written, an article intended to mark the centenary of its publication, see C. Edmund Bosworth, 'E. G. Browne and His *A Year Amongst the Persians*', in *Iran, Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*, 33 (1995), pp. 115–22.

Browne seems to have seen in Babism a development of the metaphysical doctrines of the classical Persian Sufis, with Babism as a parallel religious system which redefined the relationship between Man and God and the Cosmos. Browne's successor in the Sir Thomas Adams' Chair of Arabic, R. A. Nicholson, later wrote concerning him that 'These mysterious and fantastic doctrines excited his curiosity, and their appeal to him became irresistible when he saw them inspiring a faith for which its votaries were ready to suffer torture and death'.<sup>7</sup> Browne saw indeed parallels between the birth of what seemed likely—as in fact it did—to develop into a new religion and the early Christianity, when it was a despised and persecuted, largely clandestine faith. He particularly sought out the dwindling followers of the Bāb's successor Mīrzā Yaḥyā, Ṣubḥ-i Azal, whom he regarded as carrying on the original, pristine doctrines of the Bāb, whereas the faith had developed in other directions under Ṣubḥ-i Azal's half-brother Bahā' Allāh and his Baha'i movement. He continued his interest here, with lessening enthusiasm, into later life, for he came to think that the developing internationalist aims of Baha'ism made them too cosmopolitan to be good Persian nationalists, as were required by the Constitutional Revolution and its aftermath, but he did publish his *Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion*, a miscellany of unpublished sources and translations, as late as 1918.<sup>8</sup>

Browne's year in Persia was formative for the whole course of his subsequent life, perhaps the more so because, despite continuous contacts with Persians, he never actually revisited Persia. In Kirman, he sampled opium-smoking as a relief from the pain of ophthalmia, and narrowly escaped becoming an addict. He had achieved a rapport with the Persian people and the culture there far greater than any earlier visitor, not only because of the sympathies for the strands of Persian thought which he arrived with but also because of his excellent command of the language which enabled him to engage in complex philosophical and theological discourse with indigenous scholars, clerics, and dervishes. This last enabled him in large measure to surmount the handicaps of being a foreigner and an infidel, suspected inevitably by the Persians—of all nations, the most prone to conspiracy theories of history and politics—of being either a British spy or a treasure-hunter. In his discussions with Persians, Browne

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Arberry, *Oriental Essays* p. 175.

<sup>8</sup> For this important sector of Browne's work and interests, see Juan Cole, art. 'Browne, Edward Granville. ii. Browne on Babism and Bahaism', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 4, pp. 485–7; there exists a complete book (written from a committed Baha'i perspective) on this topic, H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith* (Oxford, 1970).

was fair and courteous with his hosts, whilst firmly maintaining his viewpoint that there was something of the Divine Truth in all religions. His year in Persia confirmed for him the view that its people deserved better than its selfish and despotic ruler, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh Qājār, and a reactionary, fanatical, and ignorant class of mullas. This subsequently led him, in the first decade or so of the twentieth century, to work for and to publicise in the West the aims and ideals of the Persian Constitutionalists (see below, section IV).

### III

Back in Cambridge, with his university lectureship in Persian safely achieved and then, after 1902, as Professor of Arabic, Browne turned his attention to the field of literature, utilising for Persian the many books he brought back with him from Persia and other literary and linguistic materials collected there. He undertook the onerous task of editing and seeing through the press that life's work of his friend, E. J. W. Gibb, his *History of Ottoman Poetry*, only one volume of which had appeared before its author died, leaving five more to be dealt with. When Gibb's mother, Mrs Jane Gibb, decided to perpetuate his memory by leaving a sum of money for the publication of editions and translations of Turkish, Persian, and Arabic texts, Browne and five other persons established in 1904 the Gibb Memorial Trust. He was the guiding spirit of the Trust up to his own death, by which time it had become firmly established as the premier vehicle in the Western scholarly world for the publication of such works, not normally regarded by publishers as commercial propositions.<sup>9</sup>

But it was above all by the four volumes of what came to be grouped together as *A Literary History of Persia* (London and then Cambridge, 1902–24) that Browne's name was immortalised in the sphere of Persian literary studies. Its genesis was an invitation to write a single-volume work for a series, *The Library of Literary History*, conceived by the publisher T. Fisher Unwin in the opening years of the twentieth century, which came to include works on, for example, the literatures of Scotland, Ireland, Russia, India, the Arabs, the Jews, and so on. Browne seized the opportunity thereby presented, for he wrote in his Preface to what became the first volume, *From the Earliest Times until Firdawsī*:

<sup>9</sup> See on the Gibb Memorial Trust and its work, C. Edmund Bosworth, art. s.v. in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (forthcoming).

For many years I had cherished a desire to write a history of the intellectual and literary achievements of the Persians, somewhat on the lines of that most admirable work, *Green's Short History of the English People* . . . it was the intellectual history of the Persians which I desired to write, and not merely the history of the poets and authors who expressed their thoughts through the medium of the Persian language; the manifestations of the national genius in the fields of Religion, Philosophy, and Science interested me at least as much as those belonging to the domain of Literature in the narrower sense; while the linguistic vehicle through which they sought expression was, from my point of view, indifferent. (pp. vii, viii)

In the Preface to the second volume, *From Firdawsi to Sa'di* (1906), he mourned the fact that he had not been able to give the whole project his undivided attention, for he saw his task as that of the urgent education of purblind Western minds:

For Islám and the Perso-Arabian civilisation of Islám I have the deepest admiration; an admiration which it is especially incumbent on me to confess at a time when these are so much misunderstood and misrepresented by Europeans; who appear to imagine that they themselves have a monopoly of civilisation, and a kind of divine mandate to impose on the whole world not only their own political institutions but their own modes of thought. Year by year, almost, the number of independent Muslim States grows less and less, while such as still remain—Persia, Turkey, Arabia, Morocco and a few others—are ever more and more overshadowed by the menace of European interference. Of course it is in part their own fault, and Asiatic indifference and apathy combine with European 'earth-hunger' and lust of conquest to hasten their disintegration . . . (p. x)

G. M. Wickens has written that *A Literary History of Persia*

fully displays Browne's strengths and weaknesses: broad in scope (and ranging far beyond literature as such), dense with nearly always accurate detail, and based almost entirely on original sources (many of which were at that time accessible only to Browne himself) but also diffuse and at times irrelevant . . . It also abounds in examples of Browne's and his society's prejudices, as well as reflecting some unfortunate Iranian cultural attitudes of the time (volume IV, for example, though packed with valuable material, does scant justice to the literature, art, and general high culture of the whole period 1500–1900).<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, it is still possible to dip into the whole work with great profit, and, moreover, to enjoy reading its attractive and enthusiastic style (the same cannot be said of more recent, less digestible, factually-packed

<sup>10</sup> Wickens, in his *Encyclopaedia Iranica* art. (see above, n. 3), p. 484.

conspicuous of the topic such as that of Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, Dordrecht, 1968). In whole or part, Browne's great work has been translated into Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. Still of great value, and a pleasure to read, are the rich and very numerous examples from Persian literature which Browne translated into prose or verse with great virtuosity; his command of language was such that he is reported to have translated, even into verse, at great speed.

As Wickens noted, the prevalent opinion of his time did not do justice to the achievements, in literature, science, and art, of the Šafawid and Qājār periods (spanning the period 1500–1925), seeing in them a falling-off from the glories and achievements of earlier, classical periods. The present day has witnessed a more sympathetic view of the undoubted glories of these later times, but it should be noted that Browne, despite his great interest in and empathy for classical Persian literature—he edited several very important works of literary biography and criticism, such as the *Tadhkirat al-shu'arā'* of Dawlatshāh (Leiden and London, 1901), the *Lubāb al-albāb* of Muḥammad 'Awfī (with the Persian scholar, his friend Mīrzā Muḥammad Qazwīnī (Leiden and London, 1903–6) and the *Chahār maqāla* of Nizāmī 'Arūḍī Samarqandī (text ed. Qazwīnī, Leiden and London, 1910; Browne's revised translation, London, 1921)—did not praise the classical at the expense of the recent and modern. In the aftermath of the intensely vivid years of the Persian Constitutional Revolution, with its turmoils and its outpourings of nationalist expression in forms ranging from impassioned poetry to ephemeral journalism, he published his large work *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia* (London, 1914). Much of the material for his work in the field of Persian literature rested on lithographed and printed books which he had brought back from his year in Persia and also on his fine collection of 468 manuscripts, three-quarters of which he had himself catalogued before he died, a task completed and seen through the press by R. A. Nicholson (*A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental MSS Belonging to the Late E. G. Browne*, Cambridge, 1932). These manuscripts of his he bequeathed to Cambridge University Library, but he also undertook, during his lifetime, the exacting and time-consuming but necessary chore of cataloguing and describing many other oriental manuscript collections in the University Library and in individual Cambridge colleges.

Browne's work in promoting Persian studies was thus crucial for their subsequent development in twentieth-century Britain; thanks to his works—in the detailed bibliography of his works compiled by Nicholson and prefixed to the above-mentioned *Catalogue* of Browne's manuscripts, Nicholson enumerated fifty-five major published items—people at last

realised that Arabic was not the be-all and end-all of Islamic studies, although the struggle against a purely Arabocentric view of Islam was to be a lengthy one and is by no means concluded even now.

#### IV

Any appreciation of Browne and his influence must take into account his enthusiasm for communicating his subject to others and his assistance to many students, including Persians and other émigrés. His statutory duties as professor were minimal, but he regularly taught the Islamic languages to candidates for such government organs as the Levant Consular Service and the British administrations in Egypt, the Sudan, and India, and several persons later notable in official and other capacities such as Sir Reader Bullard, Minister and then Ambassador in Tehran during the critical Second World War years, and Sir Ronald Storrs, amongst other things Oriental Secretary in Cairo during the First World War, passed through Browne's hands here. A less mainstream figure amongst these was the poet James Elroy Flecker, who in his short adult life had a brief career in the Levant Consular Service at Constantinople, Smyrna, and Beirut and who drew on the knowledge of Turkish, Arabic, and Persian literature learnt during the Cambridge course for several of his poems and for his poetic drama *Hassan*.<sup>11</sup> Whether the ensemble of such courses—they would now be described as crash courses—in a multiplicity of languages (Levant Consular Service candidates had, in addition to the three main Islamic languages, at the same time to learn Russian and such practical topics as Ottoman law) was the best training for future administrators and diplomats, is another question (in the light of a long life in official service, Sir Reader Bullard later held that they were emphatically not<sup>12</sup>). Becoming in middle age, as his father's heir, a rich man, Browne gave much help to indigent students and others from the East, his natural generosity and enthusiasm for ostensible underdogs leading, as his friend Denison Ross remarked, to his helping at times the distinctly bogus and undeserving.

This same breadth of spirit and a penchant for minority causes led

<sup>11</sup> See Bosworth, 'James Elroy Flecker: Poet, Diplomat, Orientalist', pp. 363–4.

<sup>12</sup> *Letters from Tehran. A British Ambassador in World War II Persia*, ed. E. C. Hodgkin (London and New York, 1991), pp. 254–5; see also his *The Camels Must Go. An Autobiography* (London, 1961), pp. 46–8. In this last place, Bullard wrote that 'As a teacher in the narrow sense he [sc. Browne] was a joke, but this mattered little in the light of the erudition which fountained from him in amusing and stimulating corruscations.'

him in earlier life to adopt a pro-Boer stance during the Boer War, and he had a longstanding sympathy for Irish Home Rule. The detestation of Imperial Russia, its autocracy, and its expansionist policies in Eastern Europe and Asia which had roused him as a schoolboy (see above, section II), spilled over later into a view that Russia was a maleficent influence in Persia, a supporter of Qājār despotism against the Persian Constitutionalists. From the time of the Revolution of 1905 onwards, his pen was untiring in the cause of the Constitutionalists: more because they were nationalists who, he believed, could alone drag Persia out of its slough of corruption, inefficiency, and arbitrary government, than because they were democrats—which many of the Constitutionalists, including some elements from the predominantly conservative class of the Shī'ite mullas, were emphatically not. He produced his *A Short Account of Recent Events in Persia* (Cambridge, 1909) and *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909* (Cambridge, 1910) largely on the basis of reports from a former student working in the British Legation in Tehran and on information from Sayyid Ḥasan Taqīzāda and others of the Persian Constitutionalists who had escaped to England and elsewhere after the bombardment in 1908 of the Tehran Majlis or Parliament by Muḥammad 'Alī Shāh Qājār and his Russian Cossack Brigade.<sup>13</sup>

Browne was also one of the two founders, with the Liberal MP H. F. B. Lynch as Chairman and himself as Vice-Chairman, of the 'Persia Committee', which included several members of both Houses of Parliament in London and which put forward the cause of Persian nationalism and the leaving alone of Persia to work out its own destiny unhampered by any foreign powers. The Committee included members of all political parties, including a fair sprinkling of Unionist MPs, and in December 1908 the Unionist peer Lord Lamington, a close friend of the former Viceroy of India Lord Curzon, became its President; but Radical Liberal members of the House of Commons very much dominated it.<sup>14</sup> Its *bête noire* was the unfortunate Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, whose policy was to reach an understanding with Russia and to strengthen the *Entente Cordiale* with France in face of the growing menace from the Central Powers, above all, from Wilhelmine Germany. The 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention, which divided some two-thirds of Persia into Russian and British

<sup>13</sup> For Browne's activity here, see Kamran Ekbal, art. 'Browne, Edward Granville. iii. Browne and the Persian Constitutional Movement', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 4, pp. 487–8.

<sup>14</sup> See for the formation of the Committee and its subsequent activities, Mansour Bonakdarian, 'The Persia Committee and the Constitutional Revolution in Iran', in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 18 (1991), pp. 186–207.

spheres of influence, particularly incensed Browne and those who thought like him.

Browne's activity here did credit to his heart rather than to his head, and it has certainly brought him lasting renown in Persia as one of that country's staunchest friends in the West. But he does not seem to have been aware of, or chose not to notice, the menacing European diplomatic, political, and military scene within which Grey, a humane and thoughtful man, had to work with decreasing time at his disposal (we now know that Wilhelm II's military and naval advisers were urging immediate war against the only partly prepared *Entente* members as early as December 1912). Grey did, in fact, on several occasions urge the Russian government to moderate and restrain its provocative interventions in Persian internal affairs. In August 1914 Browne opposed Britain's entry into the Great War, and was one of the signatories of a manifesto drawn up by members of Oxford and Cambridge Universities, but had rapidly to change his attitude; as Sir Reader Bullard has written, his criticisms of Sir Edward Grey and his policies 'rested largely on the assumption that war with Germany was "unthinkable", and when the war came it shattered his peace of mind'.<sup>15</sup> It has been said that Browne's views here had within them something of the arbitrary and cranky, and that anyone less rich and privileged might have had cause to have been more circumspect.<sup>16</sup> It certainly cost him a deserved public recognition and influence and possibly also honours which he could reasonably have expected in the normal course of events. He became a Fellow of the newly-founded British Academy in 1903, a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1911, and Vice-President of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1921, but that was about it.

Nevertheless, the verdict expressed at the outset still stands: Browne was an outstanding scholar, and if not their onlie begetter, he was the man who endeavoured to make humanistic Persian studies a part of general culture in twentieth-century Britain.

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<sup>15</sup> *The Camels Must Go*, p. 49, who also comments in this connection that 'An American book on Persia, written in the 1950s, automatically applies to the convention of 1907 the epithet "infamous", but neither the author of that book nor anyone else I ever met has been able to suggest what other policy that was within Britain's power at the time would have been better for Persia, or even as good.'

<sup>16</sup> Wickens, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* p. 484.