Women's Writing

The later twentieth century saw a huge wave of academic interest in women's writing, which led to the rediscovery of neglected works from a wide range of genres, periods and languages. Many books that were immensely popular and influential in their own day are now studied again, both for their own sake and for what they reveal about the social, political and cultural conditions of their time. A pioneering resource in this area is Orlando: Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present (http://orlando.cambridge.org), which provides entries on authors' lives and writing careers, contextual material, timelines, sets of internal links, and bibliographies. Its editors have made a major contribution to the selection of the works reissued in this series within the Cambridge Library Collection, which focuses on non-fiction publications by women on a wide range of subjects from astronomy to biography, music to political economy, and education to prison reform.

Primitive Civilizations

Edith Simcox (1844–1901) was a prominent British feminist, social critic, trade union activist and prolific writer. She published many articles and essays advocating support for women's right to education, improved working conditions and suffrage. Her scholarly works in philosophy and economic history challenged the dominant male discourse in these subjects, and sought to demonstrate that contemporary capitalism was not the only route to a prosperous society. These volumes, first published in 1897 contain a comparative analysis of the economic history of ancient societies. Simcox discusses and compares aspects of economic history including ownership, industry and commerce, and domestic relations and ownership rights within families in ancient Egypt, Sumeria and China. Through her comparisons, this pioneering volume examines economic effects on the proprietary rights of women, demonstrating that gender-relations and contemporary ideals were not consistent across ancient cultures. Volume 1 contains her discussions of Egypt and Babylonia. For more information on this author, see http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person_id=simced
Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

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PRIMITIVE CIVILIZATIONS

OR

OUTLINES OF THE HISTORY OF OWNERSHIP IN ARCHAIC COMMUNITIES
PRIMITIVE CIVILIZATIONS

OR

OUTLINES OF THE HISTORY OF OWNERSHIP IN ARCHAIC COMMUNITIES

BY

E. J. SIMCOX

AUTHOR OF "NATURAL LAW," ETC

VOLUME I

London
SWAN SONNENSCHIN & CO
NEW YORK: MACMILLAN & CO
1894
To J. H. S.

In correcting these volumes for the press, you will have observed, Sweet Heart, that great part of the wisdom of the Egyptians and the wisdom of the Chaldeans, not to speak of the Chinese or other ancient nations, lay in this: that they thought much of mothers. To whom, then, but you can I dedicate these echoes of world-old humanity, gathered to show by what habits and forbearances the sons of women may live long and gladly, in all regions where heaven gives, earth brings forth, and the waters bear along the fruits of industry?
PREFACE.

The following volumes are not put forward as a substitute for the monographs, which Egyptologists and other specialists still hesitate to produce, because of the gaps alike in their material and their knowledge. The object is rather to enable the economic student to utilize the crumbs that have fallen already from the explorers' table. If, in bringing the fragments together, any acceptable light is cast upon the bearing of original documents, it will be a small return for great obligations.

The comparative scarcity of notes and references must be attributed solely to considerations of space; references to a number of conflicting authorities, without any discussion of the inferences drawn from them, are useless or misleading; and full discussion, with an apparatus of pièces justificatives, has a tendency to produce notes as long as the text, or even (as in the case of some admirable German monographs) considerably longer. In the second volume particularly, where it has sometimes been necessary to condense the history of half a century into three lines, the multiplication of references seemed as much out of place as in any equally condensed School History. In the later chapters, when no authority is quoted, it is because the statements made can be verified in any one of half a dozen accessible books of reference.

All actual citations have been acknowledged, but, as the notes do not profess to supply a bibliography, the references given are sometimes, out of gratitude, to the earliest, and sometimes, for convenience, to the most accessible, instead of always to the last or best version of a text. Contemporaries of Dr. Erman, for instance, hardly need to make the acquaintance of Chabas, whose name, however, cannot be omitted from a list of those to whom the writer's obligations are greatest. Besides the gratitude due to every original recorder of authentic facts and to every cautious and courageous translator of authentic texts, the writer is under the most special and extensive obligations to the works of MM. Brugsch, Maspero, Oppert; of Professors Revillout, Hommel, and Sayce; of Baron von Richthofen and Dr. Legge; and those of
PREFACE.

the late E. Biot and Sir Henry Yule; unhappily the same epithet must be added to the names of Professor Robertson Smith and M. Victor Revillout. The list might be lengthened by the names of Prof. Ramsay, Dr. Glaser, Mr. Logan, Mr. Herbert Giles, M. Eugène Simon, the Rev. C. J. Ball, Prof. Douglas, M. Terrien de Lacouperie, Sir Charles Elton, and so many others, that the reader would tire of the litany, though a word of special acknowledgment may be allowed for the courteous replies to every personal inquiry, accorded by every possessor of special information to whom the writer has applied.

In regard to the orthography of proper names, it is perhaps needful to explain that no system has been followed, except so far as possible to choose the most familiar form, or, where none is familiar, the shortest and least unpronounceable. A uniform and scientific system of transliteration, like that in the Sacred Books of the East, results in a number of unfamiliar forms. And, at the same time, when the reader, who is not interested in the exact value of Egyptian characters, is liable to meet elsewhere with forms differing as widely as Amenophis and Amenhotep, it is convenient to treat them as convertible. In Chinese, the names Chow and Tcheou are equally synonymous, and in general Tch and Ou instead of Ch or W, may be regarded as reminiscences of a French translator.

But, in the present state of Chinese knowledge, it would hardly be useful, for instance, to refer to all the personages mentioned by De Mailla under different names from those used by him.

On matters of more importance, where the best authorities are disagreed, it is inevitable that the writer should sometimes have followed the wrong one, and will sometimes be thought to have done so, while the best lights of the moment are liable to be corrected by future discoveries; and in order not to exceed the limit of two volumes, a certain amount of interesting and relevant material has been omitted, of which well-informed readers may note the absence. With regard to all these points, and to other involuntary oversights and errors, it can only be hoped that they may not be found, upon the whole, to invalidate the general results, elicited as fresh material for economic students.

E. J. S.
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