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IV. OBITUARY

Isaline Blew Horner (1896–1981)

Miss I. B. Horner, President of the Pali Text Society since 1959, and an Honorary Fellow of the International Association of Buddhist Studies since its inception, died on 25 April 1981, a few weeks after her 85th birthday. She had suffered a bad fall during the summer of 1980, and the surgical operation which this necessitated confined her to her bed for some time, and thereafter to her armchair where, growing progressively weaker, she showed her determination to see the Pali Text Society's centennial year in.

Miss Horner came up to Newnham College Cambridge in 1914 to read Moral Sciences (Philosophy), and after graduation remained in Cambridge, first as Assistant Librarian of her College and then as Librarian, becoming in due course a Fellow and then an Associate of the College. Throughout her life she remained deeply attached to Newnham, and especially its Library, an extension to which was made possible in 1962 by her generosity.

Her studies in Philosophy led her into the field of Eastern religions and to Buddhism in particular. Her first published work was *Women Under Primitive Buddhism* (1930), which was researched and written while she held the Sarah Smithson Research Fellowship at Newnham College from 1929–31. Her research led to an interest in Pāli, and to a freindship with Lord Chalmers, sometime Governor of Ceylon and at that time Master of Peterhouse. She repaid him for his lessons in Pāli by producing the Index of English terms in his edition and translation of the *Suttanipāta* (*Buddha's Teachings*, 1932). Her second major publication on a Buddhist subject was a study of the arahant, published in 1936 under the title of *The Early Buddhist Theory of Man Perfected*, although she had meanwhile continued the work begun by Woods and Kosambi by publishing Volume III of the commentary upon the *Majjhimanikāya* (*Papañcasūdanī* III, 1933). The last two volumes of the set appeared in 1937 and 1938. From that date on, all her major publications were to be editions or translations of Pāli texts.

In 1946 Miss Horner published an edition of the commentary upon the *Buddhavaṃsa* (*Madhuratthavilāsini*). Like the *Paṇḍasūdanī* volumes, this was an eclectic edition, comprising a selection of the best readings from published oriental editions rather than being a genuine critical edition, but like them it was a meticulous and valuable piece of scholarship, better than anything else available at that time. She had already produced the first of a series of translations of Pāli texts upon which her reputation as a Pāli scholar rests. The first volume of her masterly translation of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* (*Book of the Discipline*, I, 1938) was followed by five more volumes of which the last, the translation of the very difficult and obscure supplementary *Parivāra* volume, appeared in 1966.

When Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids died in 1942, Dr. W. H. D. Rouse succeeded her as President of the Pali Text Society, and Miss Horner became Secretary. Rouse's successor, Dr. W. Stede, died in 1958, and in 1959 Miss Horner became President. While she was Secretary she had produced a three volume translation of the *Majjhimanikāya* (*Middle Length Sayings*, I–III, 1954–59), to replace that made by her mentor Lord Chalmers in the twenties, and she celebrated her election to the Presidency by producing a new translation of the *Milindapañha* (*Milinda's Questions*, I–II, 1963–64), to replace that made by Rhys Davids, the founder of the Society, more than 70 years before. As a consequence of her belief that many of the early translations published by the Society needed to be replaced, she made new translations of the *Vimānavatthu* (*Stories of the Mansions*, 1974), and the *Buddhavaṃsa* and *Cariyāpiṭaka* (*Chronicle of Buddhas and Basket of Conduct*, 1975). Her translations were not only more accurate than the earlier versions, but also combined an intuitive feeling for the meaning with a clear and very reasonable style.

Her last major work was a translation of her own edition of the *Buddhavaṃsa* commentary (*The Clarifier of the Sweet Meaning*, 1978). The Council of the Pali Text Society had decided to celebrate the Society's centennial year in 1981 by publishing translations of those commentaries which were still untranslated, and it was very appropriate that the series should be inaugurated by a work from the President herself. After her death, an incomplete translation of the first volume (nos. 1–25)

of the set of 50 Apocryphal Jātaka stories from Burma was found among her papers. This translation, completed by Professor P. S. Jaini, whose edition of the *Paññāsa Jātaka* formed the basis for the translation, will be published in due course by the Society as a tribute to Miss Horner's memory.

Her minor works included a number of selections and anthologies. In 1948 she produced *Living Thoughts of Gotama Buddha—an Anthology* in collaboration with A. K. Coomaraswamy; she contributed the section on the teaching of the elders to *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*, edited by E. Conze in 1954; *Ten Jātaka stories* appeared in 1957; and *An Anthology of Early Buddhist Poetry* was published in 1963. Besides acting as General Reviser to the *Critical Pāli Dictionary*, she also wrote extensively for periodicals dealing with the study of Buddhism. She was particularly delighted to contribute to volumes published in honour of the many friends she had made in the course of her travels in India, Ceylon and Burma, and whom she enjoyed entertaining, in former years in her house in Notting Hill Gate and more recently in St. John's Woods, whenever they came to London. The figure of 200 publications, which is quoted in the biographical sketch prefixed to the volume of Buddhist studies which her friends offered in her honour in 1974, was presumably supplied by Miss Horner herself, but no list of publications has come to light among her papers, and a complete bibliography awaits the efforts of some future researcher. Although some of her articles were only a few pages long, on some well-studied aspect of Buddhism, her lively style of writing made even the well-known seem new and fresh. Other articles, however, were long and valuable contributions to Pāli or Buddhist studies, drawing attention to something she had come across while editing or translating. Her last article appeared in the special centennial number of the Society's Journal, and comprised an important investigation into the identity of the mysterious *keci* who are sometimes quoted as the authority for some view or other in the Pāli commentaries.

Nevertheless, it is likely that future scholars will judge that Miss Horner's greatest contribution to the academic study of Pāli and Buddhism lay not in her own publications, valuable though they were, but in the efforts which she made to encourage such studies. Not only did she persuade others to make new

editions and translations, to replace works that were out of date or to fill gaps in the Society's lists of publications, but she enthusiastically wrote forewords and introductions to their books, and made indexes and supplied lists of parallel passages based upon her extensive reading of Pāli works. Perhaps more important, she devoted her time, energy and money to the task of putting the Pali Text Society on a sound financial footing. Besides her own generosity, the full extent of which will never be known, her enthusiasm excited the generosity of others, and a steady stream of donations, large and small, helped to support the Society's general activities or to defray the cost of publishing specified works. Previous Presidents had similarly encouraged scholars to edit and translate, but for financial reasons the Society was frequently unable to take advantage of work done on its behalf, and shortage of money caused many problems in the years between the two world wars. Some of the Annual Reports for that period make sorry reading, and manuscripts had sometimes to wait years before they could be printed. Under Miss Horner's leadership, however, with donations and the income from increased sales wisely invested, the Society was able to reprint all publications which merited it or to replace them by new editions or translations where the standard was not satisfactory. Works which for financial reasons had appeared in irregularly sized parts were reprinted in a single volume, and misprints were tacitly corrected, so that the standard of earlier publications was constantly being raised. At the same time the Society was able to increase its range of issues, and thus help to meet the demand for books caused by the growing interest in Buddhism in the West.

Miss Horner's academic prowess was recognised by the award of honorary degrees by the University of Ceylon and the Nava Nālandā Mahāvihāra, but it was a matter of considerable rejoicing for all members of the Pali Text Society when the vast amount of work she had done for the Society was recognized by the award of the Order of the British Empire in the New Year's Honours List for 1980. With her passing goes the last direct link with the founder of the Society, whom she had once met when she was young. Miss Horner *was* the Pali Text Society,

and without her it will never be the same again, but in the form in which she left it it will remain as a living memorial to her scholarship and generosity.

K. R. Norman