

## CORNELIUS PETRUS TIELE.

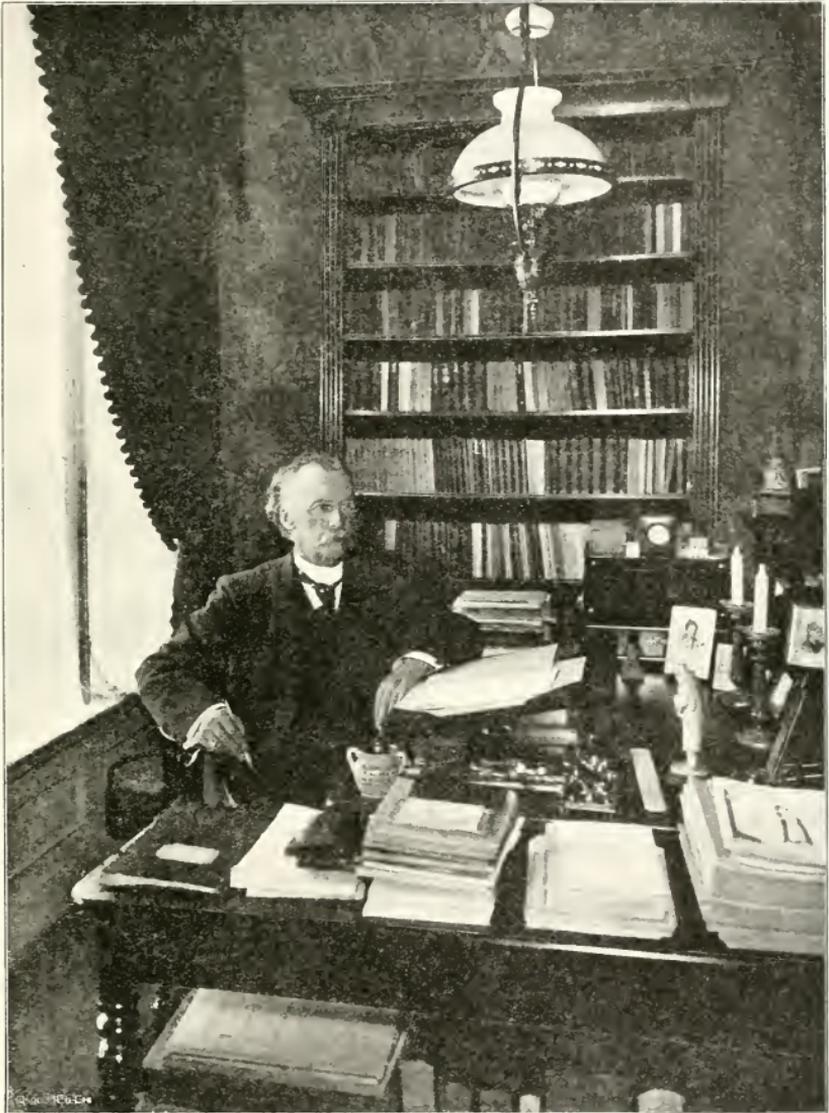
IN COMMEMORATION OF HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY.

BY MORRIS JASTROW, JR.

THERE are few institutions of learning which can boast of so large an array of famous scholars as the venerable University of Leiden. It points with pride to Scaliger, Scholten, Boerhaave, Cobet, Dozy, Kuenen, and many others who were great men as well as great scholars—men who made a permanent impress upon the course of scholarship, without whom the world would be poorer in thought and less advanced in knowledge. Professor Tiele, who celebrates his seventieth birthday on the 16th of December, 1900, belongs to this group. His presence in the Leiden faculty sheds lustre upon the institution, and he stands to-day a living witness to the fact that the University of Leiden continues the traditions of the past. Born in a village on the outskirts of Leiden in 1830, he came to Amsterdam in 1856 to pursue theological, linguistic, and historical studies. Upon graduating, he entered the active ministry and after serving in some smaller places, was called to the charge of a congregation in Rotterdam in 1873. He remained there till 1877, when he was elected to a chair, first of Theology, and then of the History and Philosophy of Religion at the University of Leiden. Since that time he has remained identified with that institution, becoming a most influential member in its council, honored with the rectorship, training a large number of pupils, and unfolding a remarkable literary and scholarly activity.

Such are the few and simple facts of a life which is full of notable achievements in the domain of science. The late Max Müller, Tiele, and Albert Réville,—the latter his senior by a few years,—constitute a distinguished trio of exponents of a new

branch of investigation—the historical study of religions. Strange as it may seem, it is only within this century that scientific meth-



PROFESSOR TIELE IN HIS STUDY.  
From his latest, unpublished, photograph.

ods have been applied to the investigation of religious phenomena. The patient gathering of facts and the interpretation of these facts

in the light of the actual course taken by a particular religion—the two chief axioms of the historical method—marked a new departure in scholarly activity which will always be associated with these three men. Early in his career, Tiele foreshadowed his peculiar adaptability for researches within the domain of religious history. In 1864 his first larger publication appeared, dealing with Zoroastrianism.<sup>1</sup> This monograph established his reputation as a scientific worker of the first order. It reveals the thorough learning, the sympathetic spirit, the keen insight into the workings of the religious instinct, and the philosophical grasp which characterise all of Professor Tiele's writings. It also shows the fine literary touch and the graces of a polished style, which make the products of his pen, even through the medium of a translation, delightful reading, quite apart from their intrinsic value. This work was followed five years later by the first part of a more ambitious undertaking on the comparative history of the Egyptian and of the Semitic religions.<sup>2</sup> In 1872 this important achievement was completed. Its recognition as the standard work on the subject was emphasised by the appearance of a French translation in 1882 introduced to the French public by a preface from the pen of Albert Réville, in which the importance of the work is well set forth. Suffice it to say that to-day, after twenty-eight years of incessant researches and vastly enriched material, Tiele's history still retains its position as a profound and suggestive contribution, which in its main points represents the established data of scientific investigation.

Previous, however, to the appearance of this French translation, Tiele's reputation had passed beyond the borders of his native land. In 1876, he published a general manual of the History of Religions down to the domination of the universal religions which in 1877 appeared in an English garb,<sup>3</sup> and in 1880 in a French translation,<sup>4</sup> and a few years later in a German translation. These publications are far from exhausting Tiele's activity during this first part of his career. Numerous articles, dealing either with the method of the historical study of religion or with some special points in one or the other of the many religions which at different times engaged his attention, appeared in the scientific or literary

<sup>1</sup> *De Godsdienst von Zarathustra* (Haarlem, 1864).

<sup>2</sup> French translation by G. Collins under the title *Histoire comparée des anciennes religions de l'Égypte et des peuples Semitiques* (Paris, 1882).

<sup>3</sup> *Outlines of the History of Religion* [Eng. translation, London, 1877].

<sup>4</sup> A second edition was published in 1885.

periodicals of Holland—notably the *Theologische Tijdschrift* and *de Gids*—France and Germany. He found time in the midst of his special studies to make a thorough study of the cuneiform sources for Babylonian and Assyrian history, and produced in 1885<sup>1</sup> by far the best work on the subject and which to-day would merely require some supplemental chapters, embodying the additions to our knowledge of the early history of Babylonia and some modifications in the presentation of the later periods, to be as useful as it was fifteen years ago. It is to be hoped that the distinguished Professor will find the leisure to do this, for among younger scholars there is none who has shown himself to possess the faculty of writing history in the degree which Tiele manifests. Several volumes of sermons and addresses were also published by him between 1870 and 1885, as well as a volume of poetry which passed into a second edition. When a new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was called for, it was to the Leiden professor as the recognised most eminent authority on the subject that the English editors turned for the important article on “Religion”—forming quite a monograph by itself.

It is characteristic of the unabated activity of the man that at a time when most scholars begin to look forward to some years of rest from arduous labors, Tiele undertook two tasks of vast dimensions,—the one the preparation of an extensive work on the *History of Religion in Ancient Times Down to the Days of Alexander the Great*, the second the acceptance of the invitation of the Trustees of the Gifford Lecture Fund to come to Edinburgh and deliver two courses of lectures on the *Elements of the Science of Religion*. The first volume of the large history of religion appeared in 1893,<sup>2</sup> the second a few years later. His first course of Gifford Lectures was delivered in 1896, the second in 1897. On both occasions he was greeted by large and enthusiastic audiences, and it is generally admitted that the two volumes embodying these lectures<sup>3</sup> constitute one of the very best of the Gifford publications. In these two publications Professor Tiele sums up in a measure the results of his life's work, the history affording him an opportunity to supplement his earlier publications by embodying the results of recent researches, while in the Gifford lectures he enunciates and elab-

<sup>1</sup> *Babylonisch-Assyrische Geschichte* (Gotha, 1885).

<sup>2</sup> A German translation by G. Gebrich under the title *Geschichte der Religion im Alterthum bis auf Alexander den Grossen* (Gotha, 1895).

<sup>3</sup> *Elements of the Science of Religion*. Vol. I., Morphological. Vol. II., Ontological. (Edinburgh, 1897-1899.)

orates the general principles which are to serve as a guide in the study of religion, and likewise expresses his own mature views on some of the fundamental problems involved in the study.<sup>1</sup> These Gifford lectures thus have a permanent value, and whatever the results of further special researches may be, Tiele's latest publication will retain its place as an introductory manual, indispensable to any student of the history of religion.

When he began his career, the field of investigation which he chose had not yet found recognition in the University curriculum. As a result of his labors and those of the small band of co-workers, there are at least three countries in which provision has been made for the study,—at the four universities of Holland, in Paris, and in a number of American universities,—notably Chicago and Cornell,—while in England the establishing of the Hibbert and Gifford Lectures is an outcome of the enlarged interest in the historical study of religions, through the quiet but effective labors of such men as Cornelius Petrus Tiele. No wonder then that scholars in all parts of the world are uniting to do him homage on his approaching seventieth birthday. His splendid career forms an inspiration to younger men, and no less attractive than Tiele the scholar, is Tiele the man. A charming personality, made additionally attractive by innate modesty and extreme kindness of disposition, he is the natural center of any circle which he enters. Beloved by "town and gown," his beautiful house in Leiden, presided over by Madame Tiele—herself a rare hostess—is a gathering place for the best that the city holds. At the International Oriental Congresses, he is singled out by the choice of his colleagues for special honors. His students become his loving disciples who regard their master as their firmest friend. Occupying, besides his chair at the University, the superintendence of the preparation for the ministry of the young men belonging to the "Remonstrant" section of the Protestant Church—which corresponds in a measure to the advanced Unitarian Church of England and America,—he has exerted a profound influence on the religious thought in his own country. Deeply interested in all that concerns Holland, his voice has often been uplifted to promote national ideals. His services to science and to education have been recognised by his sovereign, who on the occasion of her throne-ascension in 1899 capped the precious decorations bestowed upon him by granting him the rank of "Chevalier" of the Orange-Nassau order,—the highest honor in her gift for a scholar.

<sup>1</sup> See a review by the writer in *The New World* (1899, pp. 378-382).

A man of broad scholarship will generally be found to be a man of broad interests. Professor Tiele therefore counts among his friends, artists, litterateurs, statesmen, as well as the scholars in all professions, and not only in his own country, but in France, Great Britain, Germany, and Italy. He has received honorary degrees from the Universities of Bologna, Dublin, and Edinburgh, and learned societies in all parts of the world have conferred honorary membership upon him. Full of honors, he stands at the threshold of three score and ten with unabated vigor of mind and body. He may be seen any fine morning riding through the streets of Leiden on horseback, and presenting the appearance of a man in the fifties. A year ago he contemplated accepting an invitation from the American Committee for Lectures on the History of Religions to deliver courses of lectures in the prominent cities of the United States, and he declined merely on the score that he could not afford to take leave of absence for three months from his teaching duties. Young at seventy, he is full of plans for the future which in the interest of science it is earnestly hoped that he will be enabled to carry out.