

On two Manuscripts of 'Omar Khayyám's Quatrains.
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WE have much pleasure in calling the attention of those to whom the poetry of the Lucretian Khayyám may be a subject of interest to two manuscripts now in the possession of our Honorary Secretary. One of these is peculiarly well worthy the attention of Persian scholars, inasmuch as it contains two books of the Poems of Nazírí (نظیری) a poet whose works are rarely to be met with and of whom consequently very little is at present known^(a). Had the manuscripts come earlier to our possession we should have been glad to have thrown on this almost unknown poet and his works what new light we could have gathered from the perusal of the two books of his poems in Mr. Stokes's manuscript. We are anxious however to lose no time in bringing to the notice of those who may have greater capabilities and more leisure the MSS. now under consideration. Such remarks as a necessarily hasty inspection suggest to us, we here place before our readers.

In the first of these MSS. we find the two books of Nazírí which, as well as the quatrains of 'Omar Khayyám, are on paper and bound together in one volume measuring 5½ inches by 10 and containing 217 leaves.

On the flyleaf is a note in Persian to the effect that the volume was bought at the Nawáb's auction on 29th Rajib 1275 Hijra, and on the first page of the manuscript is the mohur of the unfortunate 'Alí Hussain Khán Thaj ul Umra, the son of Umdut ul Umra and grandson of Wallajah.

(a) Is this 'Nasser Khosrou' of whom D'Herbelot (ed. 1697) writes 'ancien Poète Persien, dont les Vers spirituels and devots, sont souvent citez par les Contemplatifs. Il en a fait de très beaux sur la Retraite and sur la solitude.'—*Ed.*

Of Nazír's works there are here, as we have said, two books "The Kussaid" and "The Díwán." (تصايد و ربوان) The manuscript is in Shikasta and bears evident marks of not having been written by a Persian. If we may express an opinion without going further than the appearance of the writing, we should say that it was written somewhere about the middle of the last century in the North-West. Of the time at which Nazír wrote it is hard without a thorough examination of his poems to speak with certainty. A glance at the headings of some of the Kussaid shews us first an ode in praise of God and the Prophet, next twelve odes to the twelve Imáms (Nazír was a Shiya), and then follows an ode to Abd-ul Muzuffur Jalahl Udín Akbar Patshá, and this is followed by several odes to 'Abd-ul Rahím Khán-i Khán (the Khán of Kháns *i. e.* prime minister) of Akbar. This would lead us to the conclusion that this writer lived about 300 years ago; but there is little doubt that a careful perusal of his writings will easily set this point at rest.

Of the quatrains of 'Omar Khayyám which are bound up with these two books of Nazír's it is to be remarked that the manuscript is incomplete, breaking off at the catch word of the 802nd quatrain. This fact would lead us to join issue with the Calcutta Reviewer who says of 'Omar "every other poet of Persia has written too much, even her noblest sons of genius weary with their prolixity. The language has a fatal facility of rhyme, which makes it easier to write in verse than in prose, and every author heaps volumes on volumes until he buries himself and his reader beneath their weight. Our mathematician is the one solitary exception. He has left fewer lines than Gray." We are however unwilling to differ on so hasty an inspection of this manuscript from the careful reviewer whose opinion we have quoted. The inexcusable failing of oriental copyists,

which leads to constant repetition of a favourite quatrain may and probably will account for much of the great discrepancy which here appears. Concerning the other known MSS. of 'Omar Khayyám, the following will be found in pages VIII and IX of Major Evans Bell's reprint :

" 'Omar has never been popular in his own country, and therefore has been but charily transmitted abroad. The MSS. of his Poems, mutilated beyond the average casualties of oriental transcription, are so rare in the East as scarce to have reached Westward at all, in spite of all that arms and science have brought to us. There is none at the India House, none at the Bibliothèque Impériale of Paris. We know of but one in England, No. 140 of the Ouseley MSS. at the Bodleian, written at Shiraz, A. H. 866 (A. D. 1460). [Garcin de Tassy has a copy of this MS. at Paris.] This contains but 158 Rubáiyát. One in the Asiatic Society's Library of Calcutta, (of which we have a copy) contains (and yet incomplete) 516, though swelled to that by all kinds of repetition and corruption. So Von Hammer speaks of his copy as containing about 200, while Dr. Sprenger catalogues the Lucknow MS. at double that number. The scribes, too, of the Oxford and Calcutta MSS. seem to do their work under a sort of protest ; each beginning with a Tetrastich (whether genuine or not) taken out of its alphabetic order ; the Oxford with one of apology ; the Calcutta with one of execration too stupid for 'Omar's, even had 'Omar been stupid enough to execrate himself." Then, in a note, is the following : " Since this paper was written we have met with a copy of a very rare edition, printed at Calcutta in 1836. This contains 438 Tetrastichs with an appendix containing 54 other not found in some MSS."

The quatrains are also in Shikasta, and, except to one well accustomed to this style of writing, there would be some difficulty in getting through a few of them.

We miss here the anonymous preface which heralds in the quatrains in the Calcutta MS. the following translation of which is given in the sixth and seventh pages of Major Bell's valuable reprint: already cited. "It is written in the chronicles of the ancients that this king of the wise, 'Omar Khayyám, died at Naishápúr in the year of the Hijra 517 (A.D. 1123), in science he was unrivalled, the very paragon of his age. Khwájah Nizámi of Samarcand, who was one of his pupils, relates the following story: "I often used to hold conversations with my teacher, 'Omar Khayyám, in a garden; and one day he said to me, 'my tomb shall be in a spot, where the north-wind may scatter roses over it.' I wondered at the words he spoke, but I knew that his were no idle words; years after, when I chanced to re-visit Naishápúr, I went to his final resting-place, and lo! it was just outside a garden, and trees laden with fruit stretched their boughs over the garden-wall, and dropped their flowers upon his tomb, so as the stone was hidden under them."

The Secretary has also shown us a second MS. on paper containing 122 pages, and written lately in Madras. Great credit is due to the scribe, Muḥammad Wazír, for the extreme care and clearness with which he has executed his task—a credit which he is unwilling to bestow on the copyist of the MS. which was his original, for at page 113, after the preface which we have just cited and which he, following the copy from which he has transcribed, places at the end of the quatrains, he has the following:

اما بقیاس ناقص ناقل این حرف و چنان می درآید
 که اگرچه کاتب منقول عنه که اسم خودش محمد حنفی
 الحسنی نوشته بقیاس خط مره هندی نباشد و عرصه
 کتابش از سنه مذکور که سنه نقل حالت پیش از یکصد
 و هشت سال می نماید اکثر رباعیات صراحتاً بر غلط

علاوه بسیاری از رباعیات دیگران چنانچه افضل و غیره که ذکر تخلص هم در بعضی موجود است و از وضع منانیت تلزیم حکیم بالکل بومی ندارد و اکثر رباعیات درج نموده است مگر چونکه نامق اثم را از رباعیات بلاغت آیاتش شوقی پیش از پیش در سر میدارد لهذا نقلش معه خطبه آخرش کانه نموده بر رباعیاتیکه بالکل یا به بعضی تبدل موسوم دیگر شعرایند اسامی شعرایش که از بعضی تذکرات ملاحظه نموده بود بر حاشیه اش نگاشته و بعضی را که با وجود عدم اسلوبش با مغالطه تصحیف بقیاس نیامد معه رباعیات حکیم خالی گذاشت و فی الحقیقه طبع فهم و سلیم که آشنائی از کلام حکیم داشته باشد بداهت می تواند یافت

که این کلام فصاحت تلزیم حکیم است سوائے این بعضی رباعیات متفرقه موسوم اعلم العلام حکیم عمر خیام که بنظر این عامی خاطی در آمده بود نوشته می شود

“ But in my humble opinion the MS. from which I have copied this is by Muḥammad Hunafu-ul-Hussaini, who, by his mode of writing does not appear to be a native of India. This MS. appears to have been written 108 years after the above date [A. D. 1123]. The greater part of the quatrains abound in errors and beyond this many are the quatrains of others, as Ufzl &c., some of which contain even the titular names of the poets who wrote them, and in many the scent and flavour of the learned 'Omar are absent both from the language and the metre. But as I, the humble copyist, was highly desirous to collect his Honour's elegant quatrains, I have taken an exact copy of them as also of the account of his life that was written at the end of the same. With respect to such quatrains as seemed wholly or partly to be the productions of other poets, I have noted on the margin the names of the poets who appeared on reference to some biographical works to be the authors thereof.

As to the quatrains the authors of which I was from clerical or other errors unable to discover, I left them untouched among the poems of the honoured 'Omar, without any of my notes; but it is easy for an intelligent and candid man who has had an intimate acquaintance with the productions of his Honour to decide at once whether or not they are his admirable poems. The following are a few quatrains which appear to me to bear the impress of the mint of 'Omar."

Of this as of the other MSS. we cannot at present give any thing like a particular account. It contains 563 quatrains before we come to the anecdote and comment which we have copied: following the above note are 31 further quatrains.

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February, 1864.

[NOTE by the Editor.] The private reprint by Major Bell mentioned by Mr. Branson consists of fifty copies and appeared at Madras towards the end of 1862. It contains, first, "Rubáiyát of 'Omar Khayyám, the astronomer-poet of Persia, translated into English verse" (London, Quaritch 1859). The translator, Mr. Edward Fitzgerald, already renowned for his version of six of Calderon's dramas^(a), has here, we venture to say, for the first time produced an English metrical version of an Eastern poet worthy at the same time of the poet himself and of the literature to which that poet has been introduced. Here again we find the same purity and vigour of language which have been admiringly dwelt on by Archbishop Trench when dealing with Mr. Fitzgerald's *Calderon*; and the tiresome effect produced by the arrangement of the Persian original, in which the quatrains follow one another without regard to

(a) London 1853. See as to these Archbishop Trench in his *Life's a Dream, &c.* London 1856, pp. 120, 121.