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The Literature of Persia.

Professor E. G. BROWNE, M.A.

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THE LITERATURE OF PERSIA.

A LECTURE DELIVERED TO THE PERSIA SOCIETY

IN THE

BOTANICAL THEATRE AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, GOWER STREET, W.C.,

BY

PROFESSOR E. G. BROWNE, M.A., M.B., F.B.A., F.R.C.P.,

ON FRIDAY, APRIL 26TH, 1912, AT 5 P.M.

His Excellency the Persian Minister, MIRZA MEHDI KHAN MUSHIR-UL-MULK,

in the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN said: Ladies and Gentlemen,—In opening these proceedings my task is as pleasant as it is simple, for on such occasions the duty of the one who has the pleasure and the honour—as I have on this occasion—of taking the Chair, is to introduce the Lecturer. But does Professor Browne need introduction? Those who are in any way connected with Persia, and who know Persia, know Professor Browne well, and know his works (*hear, hear, and applause*); but even those who know Persia only from books of geography and from newspapers, to them even the name of Professor Browne is most familiar. If you talk of Persia, you think of Professor Browne (hear, hear); if you hear the name of Persia, you think again of Professor Browne. He has spent almost all his life in the study and in the work relating to Persia. When he was a student in London, when he was studying medicine, he devoted most of his leisure time to the study of our language and of our country, and spent most of his time among Persians. Then he travelled in Persia, where he spent his time in various interesting

parts of our country, and among all classes of Persians, with whom he came into contact, and learnt for himself, with his excellent previous knowledge of Persia, and of Persians, whatever is worth knowing about our country.

We have seen the record of his year's stay in Persia in his excellent book, entitled " A Year among the Persians," from which we learn many instructive things about that country, as we do from his book, called " The Literary History of Persia," from which we learn so much about the literature of Persia.

I think it is over twenty years since Professor Browne has been back from Persia, but during this time I think both his heart and his mind have been in Persia and with the Persians, and he has kept himself *au courant* of everything that is going on in that country, and one would think that he was back but yesterday. I do not think I need take up much of your time about him, because we all know of the numerous publications of Professor Browne which come out every year, and I know of very few persons —in fact I know of no one—who has done so much for the cause of Persian literature. He has done yeoman's service in making known most of our classical writers, copies of whose books, unfortunately, owing to circumstances, do not exist in Persia. Professor Browne has devoted time and energy to finding out these books, and making known the name of Persia (*applause*), and he has contributed himself in Persian many commentaries and introductions to these books in a style which can justly arouse the envy of the best Persian prosaist.

I think the best thing I can do now will be, in the short time which we have at our disposal, to let you listen to Professor Browne. But I would only congratulate our Society in having the privilege of having a Lecture on Persian Literature from a person so pre-eminently able to speak on the subject. It is a great pleasure to us Persians to see that such a keen interest is taken in

our literature; and meetings of this nature are well fitted to stimulate and to maintain that interest. I call upon Professor Browne to deliver his lecture. (*Applause.*)

PROFESSOR BROWNE: Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen.—I must, in the first place, discount the very flattering account which our Chairman, the Persian Minister, has been good enough to give you of my attainments and merits. We are old friends, and the Persian poet Sa'dí says, in a very well-known verse:—

> "*Gar hunarí dárí va haftád 'ayb*
> *Dúst na-bínad bi-juz án yak hunar.*"
>
> "If thine ten faults, and but one talent be
> A friend will only that one talent see."

To turn now to the subject of my lecture, the chief difficulty with which I am confronted is the *embarras de richesses* which it presents. I have been engaged for some years in writing a *Literary History of Persia*. I have published two volumes of it, containing in all over a thousand pages, and I have only reached the middle of the thirteenth century of the Christian Era. There remain, therefore, some seven centuries still to be dealt with, and those, perhaps, the most prolific. So it is evidently impossible for me, in the short time at my disposal to-day, to do more than touch upon a few of the most salient features of this fascinating subject.

Now, in addressing this Society, I have to consider, I suppose, three classes of listeners. First of all, there are some amongst you who know Persian well and are directly conversant with Persian literature; and to those, perhaps, I shall be able to say very little that is new. Secondly, there will be some amongst you who know a little Persian—who have, perhaps, read portions of the *Gulistán*, the *Díwán of Háfiz*, the Quatrains of 'Umar Khayyám or other familiar classics in the original, and who would like to know what other Persian books are most worth reading, and what poets or prose-writers little known in this country

are most likely to repay study or to prove worthy of translation into English. And lastly, there are some of you who do not know Persian at all and have not time to learn it, but who would like to know how far they can obtain from European, especially English translations, an adequate idea of the nature and peculiarities of Persian literature. To each of these three classes I shall endeavour to address myself.

Now it is, I think, always desirable in the first instance to get a clear idea of the ground covered by a subject of which one proposes to treat. "Modern," *i.e.*, post-Muhammadan, Persian literature—a literature covering a period of about a thousand years—is what I propose to discuss this afternoon: but I must observe in passing that a comprehensive survey of the literature or literatures of Persia would include more than this. There are three older pre-Muhammadan literatures well worthy of study which belong to Persia, and, though I shall not have time to discuss them to-day, I must at least mention them.

First of all, we have a series of Inscriptions carved on the rocks of Bísutún (Behistún, Bagastâna) and the pillars of Persepolis by order of the Kings of the ancient Achæmenian dynasty, which included such famous monarchs as Cyrus, Darius, Cambyses and Xerxes. These are limited in extent, have all been collected, published and translated, and cover a period of rather more than two centuries (B.C. 550-330). They are official proclamations, and, though, perhaps, hardly to be described as literature, afford valuable indications of the language and style of the period, and are not lacking in a certain impressive dignity.

More or less parallel to this literature, but greater in extent and duration, is the Avestic literature which comprises the sacred books of the Zoroastrians. The earliest portions of this, the *Gáthás*, are generally supposed to owe their origin to Zoroaster himself or to his immediate disciples, and though the date at which Zoroaster flourished is somewhat uncertain, it is

probable that he lived somewhat earlier than the establishment of the Achæmenian dynasty; perhaps between B.C. 700 and 600. It is probable that the language of the Avesta continued to be used, at any rate as a dead language, until a very much later date; most likely until well into the Christian Era.

A third literature, the Pahlawí or "Middle-Persian," arose under the Sásánian dynasty which ruled Persia from the third to the seventh century after Christ (A.D. 227-640), and which was overthrown by the Arabs at the battles of Qádisiyya and Nihávand, when the faith of Zoroaster was overwhelmed by victorious Islám. From that time down to the present day Persia has been essentially a Muhammadan country, deeply imbued, like all Muhammadan countries, with the ideas and language of the Arabs. The invasion of Alexander and his Greeks in the fourth century before Christ hardly produced any permanent effect on Persia, and Hellenism, as Professor Nöldeke observes, scarcely touched the surface of the national life and thought at that period; but the influence of the Arabs, alike from the theological, the ethical and the linguistic points of view, was profound and enduring. In "modern" or post-Muhammadan Persian the number of Arabic words used often equals or even exceeds the number of Persian words, while even the *Sháh-námá* or "Book of Kings," the great epic of Persia, compiled in 60,000 verses by the poet Firdawsí, about A.D. 1,000, though often stated to be free from the Arabic element, contains in fact from 7 to 10 per cent. of Arabic words.

You see, then, through what vicissitudes Persia had already passed when it was conquered by the Arabs and converted to Islám in the seventh century of our era. The Medes, or West Persians, who are mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions going back as far as B.C. 1100, were overthrown by the South Persian dynasty of the Achæmenians in the sixth century before Christ. These, in turn, were overthrown by Alexander and his Greeks in the fourth century before Christ.

These were displaced by the Parthians, probably a Turanian race, and they, in turn, in the third century after Christ by the Sásánians, another South Persian dynasty. The Sásánians succumbed to the Arabs in the seventh century after Christ, and since then Persia has been overrun and subdued in turn by Turks, Mongols, Tartars and Afghans, yet throughout she has kept her national characteristics and genius. I am forbidden by the rules of this Society from talking politics, but this much I may venture to say, that grave as is the crisis through which Persia is now passing, she has, by virtue of that indomitable national spirit, survived crises still more grave, and this fact gives one hope, even when the outlook is as gloomy as it now appears. A nation which has so strong a spirit and so marked an individuality will surely survive misfortunes even more grievous than those which have recently befallen her.

There is still another literature which should be taken into account if we wish to make a complete survey of the intellectual activity of the Persians, I mean the vast and valuable contributions which they made in various branches of knowledge—especially in Grammar, Lexicography, Medicine, Philosophy, Theology, and the like—to Arabic literature. In all these and in many other departments of Arabic literature you will find that a large proportion of the most notable contributors were men of Persian, not Arabian race. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said on one occasion, "If knowledge were in the Pleiades, some of the Persians would reach it"; and this saying, whether or not it be authentic, well illustrates the assiduity and ability of this talented people. From the conquest of Persia by the Arabs in the seventh century until the sack of Baghdád and destruction of the Caliphate by the Mongols in the thirteenth, Arabic was to a large extent not only the sacred language of the Qur'án, but the language of Science, Philosophy, Diplomacy, and even *belles lettres*, and it was not until three centuries after the conquest that a "modern"

or post-Muhammadan Persian literature began to arise. Of those great Persians who, because they wrote almost exclusively in Arabic, are often thought of in the West as Arabs, one of the most notable was Avicenna (Ibn Síná), whose philosophical and medical writings exerted so great an influence on European thought throughout the Middle Ages. All that he has left to us in Persian, his mother-tongue, are a few quatrains, some of which are often ascribed to the later 'Umar Khayyám.

Of this Arabic literature produced by Persians I have not time to speak this afternoon, but, though its amount and importance decline after the fall of the Caliphate in the thirteenth century, even at the present day the most important works on theological and philosophical subjects are almost invariably written in Arabic, so that no one who does not know Arabic can form a fair and comprehensive view of Persian literary activities. But I should like first to allude to the mass of Arabic poetry produced in Persia by Persians—in some cases even by converted Zoroastrians—down to the eleventh or twelfth century of our era, and contained in such anthologies as the *Yatímatu 'd-Dahr* ("The Peerless Pearl of the Age"), the *Dumyatu 'l-Qasr* ("Idol of the Palace"), etc. Much of this poetry is excellent, and—as I have been assured by scholars speaking Arabic as their native language—betrays, so far as idiom is concerned, little trace of foreign origin. But it has peculiarities which stamp it as the work of Persians, and sometimes contains allusions which would be unintelligible to anyone not acquainted with the Persian language. Thus, a certain Persian poet, praising the town of Merv (Marw) in Arabic verse, concludes by saying that "its very name bids thee not to depart from it," alluding to the fact that the letters composing its name, M.R.W., if differently vocalised (as *Ma-raw* instead of *Marw*) signify, in Persian, "Do not go."

With these preliminary remarks on the older

literatures of Persia, I must now pass to that comparatively modern post-Muhammadan literature which is generally referred to when we speak of Persian literature, and which to-day forms the main topic of my discourse. This literature and the language in which it is written arose gradually after the Arab conquest, but was in full being, at any rate, by the middle or end of the ninth century of our era, so that it covers a period of a thousand years down to the present day. During this long period the language has hardly changed at all, and the verses of poets who lived nine hundred or a thousand years ago, though they present some archaic words, forms and constructions, are generally more easily intelligible to the Persian of to-day than are the writings of Shakespeare to the modern Englishman. The Persian language, in short, presents that same quality or stability which has been already noticed as one of the most remarkable attributes of the Persian national character.

One of the oldest verses of this later Persian literature which can be certainly dated as anterior to the year A.D. 875 is cited in a very interesting work, entitled the *Chahár Maqála*, or "Four Discourses," composed about the middle of the twelfth century by Nizámí al-Arúzí of Samarqand, a Court-poet of the Kings of Ghúr.* These "Four Discourses" treat of four classes of men deemed by the writer indispensable to kings, viz., secretaries, poets, astrologers, and physicians, and each discourse, after describing the qualifications necessary to the class of which it treats, is illustrated by a number of anecdotes drawn for the most part from the author's recollections. It is a very valuable book, since amongst much interesting matter it contains the oldest accounts which we possess of Firdawsí, the great epic poet, and 'Umar Khayyám, the

* I published a translation of this book in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* for 1899, and the reprint is still obtainable from that Society and from Messrs. Luzac, 46, Great Russell Street, W.C. The text was published, with critical notes in Persian, by my learned friend Mirzá Muhammad in the Gibb Memorial Series (vol. xi) in 1910.

author of the celebrated Quatrains ; and it is written in a charming and simple style which might well serve as a model of Persian prose. Now I would like to quote this author's definition of poetry, because it is very characteristic and very interesting psychologically. He says (p. 42 of the reprint) :—

"Poetry is that art whereby the poet arranges imaginary propositions and adapts the deductions, with the result that he can make a little thing appear great and a great thing small, or cause good to appear in the garb of evil and evil in the garb of good. By acting on the imagination he excites the faculties of anger and concupiscence in such a way that by his suggestion men's temperaments become affected with exultation or depression ; whereby he conduces to the accomplishment of great things in the order of the world."

This definition, which could only have been framed for a people unusually susceptible to eloquence and the power of rhetoric, is illustrated by the verse in question, which is by an old poet named Hanzala of Bádghís, and of which the text and translation are as follows :—

"*Mihtarí gar bi-kám-i-shír dar-ast,*
Shaw, khatar kun, zi kám-i-shír bi-júy
Yá buzurgí u náz u ní'mat u jáh,
Yá, chu mardán't, marg-i-rú-yá-rúy.

"If lordship lies within the lion's jaws,
Go, risk it, and from those dread portals seize
Such straight-confronting death as men desire,
Or riches, greatness, rank and lasting ease."

This verse was read by a certain Ahmad al-Khujistání, who, being at the time only an ass-herd, was, as he himself relates, so affected by it that he sold his asses, bought a horse, became a soldier, and finally succeeded in making himself the ruler of Níshápúr and the neighbouring parts of Khurásán. He died in or before A.D. 881, after a reign of six years, so that the verse which first prompted his ambition was certainly current as literature in A.D. 875 or earlier.

To the Persian, poetry is a real incentive to action

or endurance, and innumerable instances of this might be given. Many are to be found in the well-known manuals of Persian literature, and I have only time to mention a few instances from modern times where Persians have confronted death with verses on their tongues. Two well-known instances are afforded by the Bábís, that remarkable sect which, arising in A.D. 1844, caused so great a turmoil in Persia during the later days of Muhammad Sháh, and the earlier days of Násíru'd-Dín Sháh, especially in the years 1849-1852, when many of them endured the most cruel martyrdoms. Mírzá Qurbán-'Alí, one of those known as "the Seven Martyrs" recited the following verse when the executioner, missing his neck, hurled his turban to the ground :—

> "*Khushá án 'áshiq-i-sar-mast ki dar pá-yi-Habíb*
> *Sar u dastár na-dánad ki kudám andázad.*"

> "Happy he whom loves intoxication
> So hath overcome that scarce he knows
> Whether at the feet of the Beloved
> It be head or turban which he throws."*

Another Bábí martyr, Sulaymán Khán, one of those who suffered an agonising death in the great martyrdom of 1852, was led to the scaffold with burning wicks inserted in his body. "Why do you not dance?" cried his tormentors, mocking his agonies. "Not for fear of death and not for lack of joy," he replied, and began to recite a well-known ode by the great mystic Shams-i-Tabríz, in which occurs the verse :—

> "*Yak dast jám-i-báda, wa yak dast zulf-i-yár*
> *Raqsi chunin mayána-i-maydán-am árzúst.*"

> "Clasping in one hand the wine-cup, in one hand the Loved One's hair,
> Thus my doom would I envisage, dancing through the market-square."

The two other instances which occur to me belong to the history of the recent revolution, and were communicated to me by Persian friends. The great

* See my translation of the *New History of.....the Báb* (Cambridge, 1893), p. 255.

orator of the Constitutionalists, Maliku 'l-Mutakallimín, just before he was strangled by order of the ex-Sháh in the Bágh-i-Sháh on June 24th, 1908, recited the following verse :—

" Kásh kushúda na-búd chashm-i-man u gúsh-i-man,
K'áfat-i-ján-i-man-ast 'aql-i-man u húsh-i-man ! "

" O would that the eyes and the ears could unopened remain,
For reason and sense of my life proved the curse and the bane ! "

A year later, in July, 1909, the tide had turned, the Constitutionalists were victorious, and the reactionary *mujtahid* Shaykh Fazlu'lláh was condemned to die on the gallows. Just before the noose was placed round his neck he made a short speech, concluding with the following verse :—

" Agar bár-i-girán búdím, raftím,
Wa gar ná-mihrabán búdím, raftím."

" Though heavy burdens on you we did bind, we're going ;
Though we were harsh, ungentle and unkind, we're going."

I doubt if there be any people in the world to whom poetry comes so natural as to the Persians, or whether any poets so truly live in the hearts of their people as the Persian poets. Even the humble and often illiterate muleteer will often beguile the tedium of the road by singing or reciting not merely popular rhymes and ballads, but the classical poetry of Háfiz and other great poets of the past.

Before going further I should, perhaps, answer a question which is often asked ; namely, whether, the Persian language and literature present great difficulties to the student or not ? This question cannot be answered by a simple negative or affirmative. So far as grammar and construction goes the Persian language is, perhaps, one of the easiest in the world, and to one apt at languages a good idea of its structure and mechanism can be imparted in a very short time ; but to understand and appreciate any but the very simplest Persian literature, especially poetry, requires very

prolonged and patient study. A little reflection will render the cause of this obvious. All European literatures represent essentially the same stock of ideas; the thoughts expressed, the images used and the allusions made are very similar in English, French, German, Italian, etc. But directly we begin to study a Muhammadan literature, be it Persian, Arabic, Turkish, or Urdú, we at once come in contact with an entirely new and unfamiliar set of ideas, similes and allusions. Every educated Muslim, for example, is so familiar with the Qur'án that one word cited from a verse contained therein will not only recall the context but all the circumstances connected with the revelation of that passage. One well-known illustration must suffice to indicate what I mean. The poet Firdawsí, incensed against Sultán Mahmúd on account of the inadequacy of the reward given to him for his great epic poem, the *Sháh-náma*, or "Book of Kings," on which he had spent the best years of his life, revenged himself by writing a most scathing satire on his niggardly patron, which he left with one of his friends to be delivered to the monarch after a certain lapse of time when he should be clear of his jurisdiction. He then fled to Tabaristán, the province bordering on the Caspian Sea, and placed himself under the protection of its ruler. When Sultán Mahmúd read the satire he was furious, and sent a message to this prince bidding him surrender the poet to his messengers, failing which he would come with his elephants of war, destroy him and his capital, and transport the very dust of his palace to Ghazna, his own capital. The Prince of Tabaristán, with equal courage and wit, simply wrote on the back of the letter the three letters "A. L. M.," and sent it back. The allusion which was instantly appreciated by Sultán Mahmúd's courtiers, if not by himself, was to the *Súratu'l-Fíl*, or "Chapter of the Elephant" (Surá CV of the Qur'án) which begins with these three letters in the words "*A-lam tara kayfa fa'ala Rabbuka bi-Ashábi'l-Fíl?*" ("Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with the people of the Elephant?").

The circumstances, singularly appropriate to the occasion, to which reference is made in this passage of the Qur'án are familiar to every educated Muhammadan, but how many Europeans who have not specially devoted themselves to these studies know the story of the disastrous attempt made by the Abyssinians in the time of the Prophet's grandfather to destroy Mecca and the sacred shrine of the Arabs, or have ever heard of Abraha al-Ashram and the mysterious birds called *ababíl* who served on that occasion as the messengers of God's vengeance? Yet to one who lacks this knowledge the allusion is incomprehensible.

Nor is a knowledge of the Qur'án and the Muhammadan traditions sufficient. The student of Persian literature must also be familiar with the old Persian legends about Jamshíd; Zahhák or Azhi-dahâka, the Snake-King; Firídún the Blessed; Narímán; Sám; "Golden" Zál, whose life was saved by the great mysterious bird called the Símurgh from his unnatural father; Rustam; Suhráb, and a host of other mythical or semi-mythical kings and heroes of old Írán. Moreover, he must be conversant with the scientific conceptions of the mediæval Persians, the Philosophy and Medicine of Avicenna, the Natural History of Damírí and Qazwíní, the Ptolemaic system of Cosmogony (with the details of which, in my experience, our modern mathematicians and astronomers are strangely unfamiliar), the Mysticism of the Súfís, the Lives of the Saints, and the theories prevalent in the mediæval East as to the influences of the stars, the genesis of minerals and precious stones, and the theories underlying the art of Magic. Some portion of this knowledge is contained in such Arabic books as the *Adabu'l-Kátib*, or Secretary's Manual, of Ibn Qutayba, which aim at giving in small compass a summary of those things which every educated Muhammadan writer ought to know, but nothing less than a pretty extensive reading in all branches of Muhammadan science will enable the student fully to understand and appreciate the

writings of some of the philosophical and mystical poets, and even some of the panegyrists.

In discussing, so far as the short time at my disposal allows, some of the more salient features of Persian literature, it is naturally of the poetry of the Persians that I shall chiefly speak. Of the prose I will only say that three kinds are recognised; first, plain unadorned prose (called *'árí* or *mursal*), such as that of which the Frenchman said he had been talking prose all his life without knowing it; secondly, that which has cadence or metre without rhyme (called *musajja'*); and thirdly, that which has rhyme without metre (called *muqaffa*). You would suppose that where metre and rhyme so co-existed the result would be poetry, but this is not so; a third rather curious condition, arising from theological considerations, is required to constitute poetry, viz., the intention on the part of the writer to produce verse. The reason for this qualification is that most of the Qur'án is written in rhymed prose, and that, owing to the structure of the Arabic language, it not unfrequently drops into metre also, as in the verses (Qur'án, ii, 78-79):—

> "*Thumma aqrartum, wa antum tashhadún,*
> *Thumma antum há'uláʼi taqtulún,*"

which not only has rhyme, but scans in the metre called *Ramal*—

| – ∪ – – | – ∪ – – | – ∪ – ‖
– ∪ – – | – ∪ – – | – ∪ – |

Now the Prophet Muhammad had a horror of poets, against whom one chapter of the Qur'án is directed, and described them as men "Who wander astray in every valley and say the things they do not," and nothing annoyed him more than when his opponents described him, as they were wont to do, as a "mad poet." So it became necessary to frame a definition of poetry which would not apply to any portion of the

Qur'án, and hence the addition of the third requisite, "intention."

At this point I should like to refer briefly to two fallacies concerning Persian literature which I have found widely prevalent. One is that Persian prose is necessarily very ornate and artificial; the other is that there existed a so-called "classical period" of Persian literature which came to an end about A.D. 1500, and that modern Persia has ceased to produce good literature or to display any literary talent or originality.

Now as regards the first of these two opinions, it is true that there exist a great quantity of very turgid and artificial literary compositions, not only books of stories and apologues, like the *Anwár-i-Suhaylí* (which can very well be left unread by those who do not appreciate such bombast), but, what is much worse, some really important historical works like the *Ta'ríkh-i-Wassáf*, which the student of Persian history cannot afford to leave unread, but must needs wade through pages of empty rhetoric in order to arrive at facts of great importance. It is worth noting that this pompous and over-burdened style seems always to have flourished under foreign—especially Turkish, Mongol, and Tartar—influences, and more particularly under the Mongol Ilkháns of Persia about the middle of the fourteenth century, and again a little later under Tímúr (Tamerlane) and his descendants, by whom it was afterwards introduced into India, where it attained a tropical luxuriance. This Indian-Persian literature was chiefly studied by the earlier Persian scholars in this country, and they naturally accepted the standards which they found existing in India, most of which belonged to this florid type. But in Persia itself, both in ancient and modern times, many admirable prose works, remarkable for the simplicity and force of their diction and the concision of their style, have been produced. Of such I would especially mention the *Chahár Maqála* (twelfth century), of which I have already spoken; that admirable satire

of 'Ubayd-i-Zákání (fourteenth century), entitled *Akhláqu'l-Ashráf* ("Ethics of the Aristocracy"); and the charming *Qábús-náma* (eleventh century), of which some account will be found in my *Literary History of Persia* (vol. ii, pp. 276-287), and of which Mr. Edwards, of the British Museum, has promised us a critical text and complete translation, to be published in the Gibb Memorial Series. In the most modern times, since the beginning of the Persian Revolution in 1906, we have seen the evolution of an admirable journalistic style, and the development of an influential and extensive journalistic literature (unhappily now in abeyance, I hope, only for a short while), which, notwithstanding the spiteful and ignorant attacks of certain *tendencieux* sections of the British Press, was, on the whole, in my opinion, deserving of warm praise and admiration both on account of its style and tone. I must also add, before leaving the subject of Persian prose, that a florid and bombastic style of writing, overladen with far-fetched conceits and rhetorical devices, is not confined to Persian and other Eastern literatures, but appears, at certain periods and under certain conditions, in the literatures of most countries. Let anyone who doubts this study the writings of the English Euphuists, or at least read that entertaining and ingenious work, Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1589)in which a parallel will be found to almost every trope and rhetorical device employed by even the most florid Persian writers.

As for the second fallacy to which I referred, viz., that the so-called "classical period" of Persian literature ended about A.D. 1500, and that nothing worth reading has been produced in more modern times, I ascribe this, so far as poetry is concerned, to the fact that, in the ultimate analysis, so many European students derive their ideas of Persian poets from Dawlatsháh, as interpreted by Von Hammer, and that since the poet Jámí, who was a contemporary of Dawlatsháh, is the latest poet of whom he makes

mention, they unconsciously assume that he was the last great Persian poet. This idea I especially desire to combat, and for that reason I shall say more about the quite modern than about the more ancient poetry, especially as you will find very little about it in any European books on this subject. It is true that the flow of poetry in Persia has not been uniform, and that, while it is easy to enumerate a dozen first-class poets who flourished during the turbulent seventy years which intervened between the decay of the Mongol power and the rise of Tamerlane (A.D. 1335-1405), it is hard to mention one of commanding ability during the long and glorious epoch of the Safawí Kings (A.D. 1502-1736), when the best intellects of Persia were occupied with theology rather than poetry. But this dearth of poetry, due to special causes into which I cannot here enter, and compensated by a corresponding activity in the domains of Theology and Philosophy, was of temporary though prolonged duration, and under the present Qájár dynasty there again appeared a number of admirable poets, of whom Qá'áni of Shíráz is the most celebrated, while, as I shall hope to show you, in the most recent times has arisen poetry of a quite new and original type. The remarkable thing is that in Persia the best poetry seems to have been produced in the most turbulent epochs, while eras of prosperity and peace seem to have been relatively poor in poetical talent. Possibly the same phenomenon might be observed nearer home, and might be traced to a general law that material prosperity, ease and luxury are not favourable to that state of emotional tension and intellectual activity in which good poetry thrives best.

Now if I had time I should like to say something about a dozen or so of the great Persian poets of different periods, representing the chief types of poetry; for example, Firdawsí and the epic, Anwarí and the panegyric, Nizámí and the romantic, Násir-i-Khusraw and the philosophic, Jalálu'd-Dín Rúmí

and the mystic, Háfiz and the lyric, and so on. But since the time at my disposal is insufficient for so extensive a survey, I must abandon any such attempt at comprehensive treatment, and confine myself to a few points which seem to me the most interesting. And, first of all, I would say that, while we may classify this poetry according to its form (quatrain, *ghazal*, *qit'a*, *qasída*, *mathnawí*, *tarjí'-band*, *tarkíb-band*, *musammat*, etc.), or according to its subject (epic, romantic, lyric, erotic, mystic, panegyric, satiric, etc.), it may practically be divided into two great divisions, one of which, despite, or rather because of, its ingenuities can never be rendered popular in Europe, even by the most skilful translations, and which, like some rare vintage, can only be appreciated by *connoisseurs* who have devoted years to its study. These two divisions I would call, briefly, the artificial and the natural.

Nothing is more remarkable than the divergence of judgment as to the merit and value of certain poets between Europe and Asia. Poets like Anwarí (described in a well-known Persian verse as one of the three "Prophets of Poetry"), and Zahír of Fáryáb (whose poems, according to another celebrated verse, should be stolen even from the Ka'ba, the Holy of Holies of Islám), though highly esteemed in Persia as masters of the craft, are little known and little appreciated in Europe; while 'Umar Khayyám, who is probably now better known and more admired in England and America than any other Persian poet, is, in his own country, placed on a much lower level, and is esteemed more as an astronomer and a mathematician than as a poet. Of course, this is largely due to the fact that he had the good fortune to be translated by FitzGerald, who was himself a poet, but even FitzGerald's skill would not have sufficed to popularize Anwarí and Zahír in Europe. These were poets by profession, artificers in words and sounds, literary craftsmen of consummate skill and ingenuity, and for this very reason they will not bear translation because

their beauty is a beauty of words rather than of thoughts. They were professional poets, earning their livelihood by an appeal, not to public taste but to the desire of the rich and powerful for praise or their fear of satire. Anwarí, the greatest of them all, is wonderfully frank about all this. Driven by poverty and impressed by the sight of a Court-poet, splendidly arrayed and mounted on a beautiful horse, he abandoned the life of study towards which his natural inclination lay, for the profession of poetry. "*Henceforth*," he says, "*I will put a check on my natural disposition, if I see the door of popularity and success open before me; and if no gift is vouchsafed to me, I will, after essaying praise, destroy with words of satire the head of such a patron.*" Yet he despises the profession he has chosen and the sycophancy it entails, "*for*," as he says, "*the whole business of courtiers comes to this: to receive blows and to give abuse.*" "*Poetry*," he says in another place, "*is not bad in itself: my complaint is at the meanness of the poets.*" Yet even Anwarí, when, moved by strong emotion or indignation, he writes naturally and earnestly, produces verse of which the substance, if not the form, can be finely rendered in English. Of his fine poem on the devastations wrought by the savage Ghuzz in Khurásán in A.D. 1154 (a poem sadly appropriate to recent events in the holy city of Mashhad, where in the twentieth century, a barbarous foe has re-enacted the deeds of those barbarians of the twelfth century), there exist two spirited metrical translations in English, the one by Captain William Kirkpatrick, published in 1785, in which the poem first received the name of "The Tears of Khurásán," by which it is now generally known, and the second by the late Professor E. H. Palmer, published in his "Song of the Reed" in 1877. Neither of these translations is very literal, neither preserves the form of the original, and both are somewhat amplified. For the sake of comparison I here give those portions of each which correspond with verses 19-21 of the original.

(*From* KIRKPATRICK'S VERSION.)

" Is there, where Ruin reigns in dreadful state,
Whom Fortune smiles on, or whom joys await ?
'Tis yonder corpse descending to the Tomb :
Is there a spotless female to be found
Where deeds of diabolic lust abound ?—
'Tis yonder infant issuing from the womb !

" The Mosque no more admits the pious race ;
Constrain'd, they yield to beasts the holy place,
A stable now, where dome nor porch is found :
Nor can the savage foe proclaim his reign,
For Khorassania's criers all are slain,
And all her pulpits levelled with the ground !

(*From* PALMER'S VERSION.)

" No man therein is ever seen to smile,
Save at the blow that brings release—and doom !
No maiden lives whom they do not defile,
Except the maid within her mother's womb !
In every town the Mosque and House of prayer—
To give their horses and their cattle room—
Is left all roofless, desolate and bare.
' Prayer for our Tartar rulers' there is none
In all Khurásán, it is true—for where,
Where are the preachers and the pulpits gone ? "

This poem, however, is an exception to Anwarí's usual style, of which, to make use again of a comparison which I have already employed, the writings of the Euphuists, who had the same love of ingenious tropes, similes and rhetorical devices, afford almost the only English parallel. And since we can no longer appreciate or even tolerate the preciousness of the Euphuists, how can we appreciate translations of Anwarí's panegyrics, dedicated in most cases to persons not remarkable for virtue or talent in their own day and entirely forgotten in ours, even though the skill of the Euphuist were employed to produce such an English version as could alone do them justice ? Only let us not forget that this florid artificial style for which we so often blame the Persians flourished also amongst our own countrymen in the spacious days of good Queen Bess !

Let us now turn to the celebrated Quatrains of 'Umar Khayyám, which are rated by most of us so far above, and by most Persians so much below the

poems of Anwarí. Their beauty, such as it is, depends far more on the thought expressed than on the form of expression, and hence, given a skilful translator, it is not impaired by translation. Such a translator was FitzGerald: he was himself a poet; he was imbued with the spirit and admirably reproduced the form of the original, a form sufficiently simple to lend itself to reproduction in English; and, though he took liberties in the way of selection and arrangement, and, above all, in making what is really a series of quite unconnected epigrams look like a continuous and connected poem, he did not, as is sometimes asserted, substitute his own ideas for those of the poet. In form, then, the translation equalled the original if it did not excel it, while the pessimism, hedonism and scepticism by which most of the quatrains are inspired strongly appealed to Europeans of the present generation, who, like 'Umar Khayyám—one of the greatest scientists of his age—have in so many cases discarded Religion for Science only to find that Science is unable to answer any of those great questions concerning the significance of life and the destinies of man which it most imports us to know. Before leaving this subject I should add that 'Umar Khayyám did not invent the quatrain, which is the oldest verse-form added by the Persians to those which they received from the Arabs; that the quatrain is like the epigram, an isolated thing, not a component part of a long poem; and that its subject is not necessarily connected with philosophy or mysticism, but may be autobiographical, personal, or even abusive, as in the following three instances, of which the second is by Humámu'd-Dín of Tabríz, while the first and third are by Majdu'd-Dín Hamgar:—

(On Advancing Age.)

"*In pá-yi marà ki nist parwà-yi-rikáb,*
Na rú-yi rukúb mánd, u na rá'y-i-rikáb!
Zín sán ki bi-tang ámadam az pírí u za'f
Na dast-i-'ínán dáram, u na páy-i-rikáb!"

"This foot of mine no more the stirrup suits;
For me no more are spurs and riding-boots.
Oppressed by aches and age, there now remains
No foot for stirrup and no hand for reins."

(On Parting from a Friend.)

" Widá'-i-yár u divár-am chu bugzarad bi-khayál
Shawad manázil-am az áb-i-dída málámál :
Firáq-rá nafasí chún hazár sál buwad :
Bi-bín ki chún guzarad rúz, u hafta, u mah, u sál ! "

" When the parting from country and friends to my vision appears
The stages I tread are fulfilled with the flood of my tears ;
In parting one moment, one breath, like ten centuries seems :
Then what of the days, and the weeks, and the months and the years ? "

(Abuse of an Enemy.)

" Ay dídan-i-khúk pish-i-dídár-i-tu khúb,
Bá chihra-i-tu púzina ma'shúq-i-qulúb !
Az rúy-i-tú khúy-i-tú basí zishttar-ast :
Bá zishti-vi-khúy-i-tu zahí rúy-i-tu khúb ! "

" Compared to thee, a pig's a pretty sight ;
Beside thy face, an ape's the heart's delight ;
Thy temper's uglier than e'en thy face ;
Compared to it thy face is fair and bright ! "

There are a great many other matters I should like to talk to you about, but I see that my time is running out, and I must therefore pass at once to a question which I am particularly anxious to discuss, namely, the extent to which in English verse-translations of Persian poems it is possible to preserve not only the spirit and sense but also the form of the original. In Persian poetry so much of the beauty depends on the form, on the choice of harmonious, appropriate and alliterative words, and the lilt and rhythm of the lines that no translation which does not endeavour in some measure to reproduce these qualities will convey a true idea of the original. Some of the older translators, like Sir William Jones, were very free in their verse-renderings, and made no attempt to preserve the form and not much to stick closely to the sense. Let me take as an illustration a very well-known ode of Háfiz, beginning :—

" Agar án Turk-i-Shírází bi-dast árad dil-i-márá
Bi-khál-i-Hinduwash bakhsham Samarqand u Bukhárá-rá."

Sir William Jones's translation of this ode is as follows:—

"A Persian Song of Hafiz.

"Sweet maid, if thou would'st charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck enfold;
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarcand.

"Boy, let yon liquid ruby flow,
And bid thy pensive heart be glad,
Whate'er the frowning zealots say:
Tell them, their Eden cannot show
A stream so clear as Rocnabad,
A bower so sweet as Mosellay.

"O! when these fair perfidious maids,
Whose eyes our secret haunts infest,
Their dear destructive charms display;
Each glance my tender breast invades,
And robs my wounded soul of rest,
As Tartars seize their destin'd prey.

"In vain with love our bosoms glow:
Can all our tears, can all our sighs,
New lustre to those charms impart?
Can cheeks, where living roses blow,
Where Nature spreads her richest dyes,
Require the borrow'd gloss of art?

"Speak not of fate:—Ah! change the theme,
And talk of odours, talk of wine,
Talk of the flowers that round us bloom:
'Tis all a cloud, 'tis all a dream;
To love and joy thy thoughts confine,
Nor hope to pierce the sacred gloom.

"Beauty has such resistless power,
That even the chaste Egyptian dame
Sigh'd for the blooming Hebrew boy;
For her how fatal was the hour,
When to the banks of Nilus came
A youth so lovely and so coy!

"But ah! sweet maid, my counsel hear
(Youth should attend when those advise
Whom long experience renders sage):
While musick charms the ravish'd ear;
While sparkling cups delight our eyes,
Be gay; and scorn the frowns of age.

" What cruel answer have I heard !
And yet, by Heaven, I love thee still :
Can aught be cruel from thy lip ?
Yet say, how fell that bitter word
From lips which streams of sweetness fill,
Which nought but drops of honey sip ?

" Go boldly forth, my simple lay,
Whose accents flow with artless ease,
Like orient pearls at random strung :
Thy notes are sweet, the damsels say ;
But O! far sweeter, if they please
The nymph for whom these notes are sung."

Here is another translation of the same ode by that remarkable man Herman Bicknell, who spent some time at Shíráz, as his brother informs us in the Preface prefixed to the posthumous work *Háfiz of Shíráz* (Trübner, 1875), " with the object of clearing up doubtful points, and of becoming personally acquainted with the localities mentioned by the Poet." This rendering is much nearer the original, both in sense and form, than Sir William Jones's, and it imitates the metre though not the rhyme.

" If that Shirázian Turk would deign to take my heart within
his hand,
To make his Indian mole my own, I'd give Bukhára and
Samarqand.
Sáqi, present the wine unspent : in Jannah thou shalt never gaze
On Ruknábádah's water-marge, or on Mosallâ's bloomy ways.
Alas ! that these bold Lúlián, whose blandishments the town embroil,
Should have borne off my heart's content, as do the Turks their trays of spoil.
My Loved One's beauty has no need of an imperfect love like mine :
By paint or powder, mole or streak, can a fair face more brightly shine ?
Of minstrels and of wine discourse ; care little how the skies revolve :
By wisdom no one has solved yet—and shall not this enigma solve.
I, from those daily-growing charms which Joseph once possessed, foresaw
That from the screen of chastity, Love would Zulaikha's footsteps draw.
Thou mockest me, yet pleased am I ! God pardon thee, thy words were meet :

" A bitter answer well becomes those rubies which are sugar-sweet.
O Soul, give ear to my advice! for one who is in youth-time sage,
Deems his own soul of lighter worth than the monition of old age.
Thy lay is versed, thy pearls are pierced, come, Háfiz, sing it
us and please ;
That Heaven upon thy poetry may fling her clustered Pleiades."

It happens that a great many translators have tried their skill on this ode, which, though very well known, is not, in my opinion, by any means the best of Háfiz's poems ; and I propose to lay before you three more English metrical versions.

In 1897 Miss Gertrude Lowthian Bell published a very charming little volume, entitled *Poems from the Divan of Hafiz,* from which (pp. 71-72), I take the third of the five English versions here submitted for your comparison. It is as follows :—

" Oh Turkish maid of Shiraz ! in thy hand
If thou'lt take my heart, for the mole on thy cheek
I would barter Bokhara and Samarkand.
Bring, Cup-bearer, all that is left of thy wine !
In the Garden of Paradise vainly thou'lt seek
The lip of the fountain of Ruknabad
And the bowers of Mosalla where roses twine.

" They have filled the city with blood and broil,
Those soft-voiced Lulis for whom we sigh ;
As Turkish robbers fall on the spoil,
They have robbed and plundered the peace of my heart.
Dowered is my mistress, a beggar am I ;
What shall I bring her ? a beautiful face
Needs nor jewel, nor mole, nor the tiring-maid's art.

" Brave tales of singers and wine relate,
The key to the Hidden 'twere vain to seek ;
No wisdom of ours has unlocked that gate,
And locked to our wisdom it still shall be.
But of Joseph's beauty the lute shall speak ;
And the minstrel knows that Zuleikha came forth,
Love parting the curtain of modesty.

" When thou spokest ill of thy servant 'twas well—
God pardon thee ! for thy words were sweet ;
Not unwelcomed the bitterest answer fell
From lips where the ruby and sugar lay.
But, fair Love, let good counsel direct thy feet ;
For dearer to youth than dear life itself
Are the warnings of one grown wise—and grey !

" The song is sung and the pearl is strung ;
Come hither, oh Hafiz, and sing again !
And the listening Heavens above thee hung
Shall loose o'er thy verse the Pleiades' chain."

The fourth translation is by Mr. Walter Leaf, who, in 1898, published twenty-eight *Versions from Hafiz: an Essay in Persian Metre*. It runs as follows, and aims at representing as closely as possible in English both the metre and rhyme of the original :—

"Ah! if yon Turk of Shiraz land this heart would take to hold in fee,
Bokhara town and Samarcand to that black mole my dower should be.
Ho, Sáqi, pour the wine flask dry; in Eden's bowers we ne'er shall find
Musalla's rosy bed, nor streams of Ruknabad's delightsome lea.
Alack, these saucy Lúlís, dear beguilers that the town embroil,
The wantons tear the heart-strings as the Turks their plunder-banquetry.
On our frail love the Loved One's pure perfection no dependence knows;
Can unguent, powder, paint and patch embellish faces fair, pardie?
Be wine and minstrel all thy theme; beware, not plumb the deeps of fate;
For none hath found, nor e'er shall find by wit, that great enigma's key.
Of that fair favour Joseph wore, to make more fair the day, we know;
For him love bade Zulaikha tear apart her veil of pudency.
Thy words were hard, yet I submit; forgive thee God! Thy words were good;
The tart response beseemeth well the honeyed ruby lips of thee!
Give ear, my life! Perpend my words; for more dear e'en than life itself
To youth, so blessed of Fortune, speaks the sage advice of ancientry.
The ode is made, the pearls are strung; go, Hafiz, sweetly sing thy lay;
With jewels from the Pleiad crown doth Heav'n engem thy minstrelsy."

Lastly I give a translation by myself, published in my *Literary History of Persia*, vol. ii, pp. 27-28 :—

"If that unkindly Shiráz Turk would take my heart within her hand,
I'd give Bukhárá for the mole upon her cheek, or Samarqand!
Sáqi, what wine is left for me pour, for in Heaven thou wilt not see
Musallá's sweet rose-haunted walks, nor Ruknábád's wave-dimpled strand.
Alas! those maids whose wanton ways such turmoil in our city raise,
Have stolen patience from my heart as spoil is siezed by Tartar band.

"Our Darling's beauty hath, indeed, of our imperfect love no need;
On paint and pigment, patch and line, a lovely face makes no demand.
Of Wine and Minstrel let us speak, nor Fate's dark riddle's answer seek,
Since none hath guessed and none shall guess enigmas none may understand.
That beauty, waxing day by day, of Joseph needs must lead astray—
The fair Zulaykhá from the veils for modest maids' seclusion planned.
Auspicious youths more highly prize the counsels of the old and wise
Than life itself; then take, O Heart, the counsels ready to thy hand!
You spoke me ill: I acquiesced. God pardon you! 'Twas for the best;
Yet scarce such bitter answer suits those rubies sugar-sweet and bland!
Your ode you've sung, your pearls you've strung; come, chant it sweetly, Háfiz mine!
That, as you sing, the sky may fling the Pleiades bejewelled band!"

Of these five verse-translations, Sir William Jones's and Miss Gertrude Bell's will probably be deemed the most pleasing by the majority of English readers, but the former so little resembles the original that it is hardly even a paraphrase, but should rather be described as "a poem after Háfiz," or "reminiscent of Háfiz." Miss Bell's may be regarded as the happy mean, discarding the form but following the sense of the original, though not always very closely. The other three versions are more literal, and both mine and Mr. Leaf's aim at preserving the form as well as the sense; but this method, always something of an experiment, becomes almost impossible in the case of long *qasídas*, when 70, 80, or even a hundred rhymes may be required, and is very difficult in certain metres. Yet I think that no adequate idea of Persian poetry can be conveyed to the English reader unless the form is in some degree preserved, or at least imitated, even if it be found impossible to keep the monorhyme throughout. Although it has been published, I should like to quote a translation by the late Professor F. Falconer, formerly of this (University) College in London, of a

very fine mystical ode from the *Díwán* of Shams-i-Tabríz, from which my colleague and former pupil, Dr. R. A. Nicholson, of Cambridge, has also published several very spirited verse-renderings. The original of Professor Falconer's translation begins :—

> *" Man án rúz búdam ki Asmá na-búd,*
> *Nishán az wujúd-i-Muhammá na-búd.*

The text is printed amongst the extracts at the end of Forbes's *Persian Grammar*, and also the translation made about 1850, which runs as follows :—

> I was ere a name had been named upon earth ;
> Ere one trace yet existed of aught that had birth :
> When the locks of the Loved One streamed forth for a sign,
> And Being was none, save the Presence Divine !
> Named and Name were alike emanations from me,
> Ere aught that was ' I ' yet existed, or ' We ' ;
> Ere the veil of the flesh for Messiah was wrought
> To the Godhead I bowed in prostration of thought.
> I measured intently, I pondered with heed,
> (But, ah ! fruitless my labour) the Cross and its creed.
> To the Pagod I rushed and the Magian's shrine,
> But my eye caught no glimpse of the Glory Divine !
> The reins of research to the Ka'ba I lent,
> Whither, hopefully thronging, the old and young went.
> Qandahár and Herát searched I wistfully through,
> Nor above nor beneath came the Loved One to view.
> I toiled to the summit, wild, pathless and lone,
> Of the globe-girding Qáf, but the 'Anqá had flown !
> The seventh earth I travers'd, the seventh heav'n explored,
> But in neither discern'd I the Court of the Lord.
> I questioned the Pen and the Tablet of Fate,
> But they whispered not where He pavilions His State.
> My vision I strained, but my God-scanning eye
> No trace that to Godhead belongs could descry.
> My glance I bent inwards : within my own breast
> Lo, the vainly sought elsewhere the Godhead confessed !
> In the whirl of its transport my spirit was tossed,
> Till each atom of separate Being I lost,
> And the bright Sun of Tabríz—a madder than he,
> And a wilder, the world hath not seen nor shall see ! "

This translation I regard as admirable, for it closely follows the original in sense, is fluent and spirited,

copies the metre, and only differs in not preserving the monorhyme of the Persian.

I should like to quote and compare many other versified English renderings of the older Persian poets, notably Háfiz (from the versions of Herman Bicknell, Professor E. H. Palmer, Walter Leaf and Miss Gertrude Bell), and Jalálu' d-Dín Rúmí (Sir James Redhouse, Palmer and myself), but I must pass on to some of the modern poets about whom I am particularly anxious to say a few words, because of the prevalent error, to which I have already alluded, that poetry is dead or utterly stagnant in Persia, a delusion which I desire once more most emphatically to repudiate.

I have already mentioned Qá'áni as the greatest and especially the most melodious of modern Persian poets. He flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century, and certainly survived the year 1852, since in one or more of his poems he celebrates the escape of Násíru'd-Dín Sháh from the attempt made by three Bábís to assassinate him in the summer of that year. When I was at Shíráz in the spring of 1888 I had the privilege of occupying the room which he formerly inhabited. The melody of his song is incomparable, and since it is here rather than in the beauty or loftiness of his ideas that his excellence lies (for he was primarily a Court poet, and therefore not overburdened with scruples or consistency) it is very difficult to do justice to him in translation. Here, for example, are five lines constituting the first stanza of a *musammat*, which, when well read by a Persian, is as melodious as the song of the nightingale :—

> " *Banafsha rusta az zamín bi-tarf-i-júybár-há,*
> *Wa yá gusista Húr-i-' In zi zulf-i-kh'ish tár-há ?*
> *Zi sang agar na-dída'i chi-sán jihad sharár-há,*
> *Bi-barg-há-yi lála bin mayán-i-lála-zár-há,*
> *Ki chún sharára mi-jihad zi sang-i-kúhsár-há."*

The prose translation of this (for I do not think anyone has yet attempted a verse-translation) is pretty enough

as a description of spring, but conveys no idea of the verbal beauty of the original :—

" Are those violets sprouting from the earth beside the stream,
Or have the black-eyed Houris (of Paradise) broken off hairs from their tresses ?
If thou hast not seen how the sparks leap from the stone,
Look on the petals of the anemone amidst the beds of anemone,
Which leap like sparks from the rocks of the mountains.

Amongst Qá'áni's *ghazals* or odes there is one beginning :—

" *Yáraki marást rind u buzla-gú, shúkh u dil-rubá, khúb u khush-sirisht,*
Turra-ash 'abír, paykar-ash harír, 'áriz-ash báhar, tal'at-ash bihisht."

which is extraordinarily melodious. Of one verse of this I have essayed a translation which, perhaps, faintly reproduces the form, as well as the sense, of the Persian original. It is :—

" *Khwáham az Khudá dar hama jahán yak qafas zamín, yak nafas zamán,*
Tá bi-kám-i-dil may khuram dar án, bi harif-i-bad, bi nigár-i-zisht."

" This is all I seek from the Lord Sublime—just a speck of earth, just a span of time,
So that I may there drink and make my rhyme, free from weary bores, free from dreary friends. "

Another rather original poem by Qá'áni contains a dialogue between an old man and a child, both of whom stutter frightfully. The child thinks that the old man, who speaks first, is imitating his infirmity, and is very angry and abusive until the old man explains that his stammering is natural, not assumed, whereupon the two are reconciled, the child concluding :—

" *Tift guftá,* " *Khu- Khudá-rá sa-sa-sad bár shu-shukr*
Ki bi-raslam bi-jahán az ma-malál u mi-mihan !
Ma-ma-man ham gu-gu-gung-am mi-mi-misl-i-tu-tu-tú ;
Tu-tu-tu ham gu-gu-gungi mi-mi-misl-i-ma-ma-man ! "

This may be paraphrased as follows :—

" Said the child, ' Ga-ga-God be tha-thanked and pa-praised !
I'm sa-saved from sha-shame and fi-filled with ga-glee ;
For I stut-ut-ut-ter and stammer like you,
While you stat-at-ammer and stutter like me ! "

Some very fine modern poetry of a much more lofty order has been produced by the Bábís and Bahá'ís, of whom so much has lately been heard in circles interested in religious innovations. Of the early Bábís few were more remarkable than the beautiful and talented Qurratu'l-'Ayn ("Coolness of the Eyes"), the heroine and poetess who was put to death at Tihrán with so many of her fellow-believers in the summer of 1852. Amongst the few poems generally ascribed to her is one beginning with the following verse, of which the first half is Arabic, the second Persian:—

Jazabátu shawqika aljamat bi-salásili'l-gham wa'l-balá
Hama 'áshiqan-i shikasta-dil, ki dihand ján bi-rah-i-wilá.

Of this I published, in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* for 1889, the following verse-translation which, I think, fairly reproduces not only the sense but also the rhythm and form of the original:—

"The thralls of yearning love constrain in the bonds of pain and calamity
These broken-hearted lovers of thine to yield their lives in their love for thee.
Though with sword in hand my Darling stand with intent to slay, though I sinless be,
If it pleases Him, this tyrant's whim, I am well content with his tyranny.
As in sleep I lay at the dawn of day that cruel charmer came to me,
And in the grace of His form and face the dawn of the morn I seemed to see.
The musk of Cathay might perfume gain from the scent those fragrant tresses rain,
While His eyes demolish a faith in vain attacked by the pagans of Tartary.
With you, who contemn both love and wine for the hermit's cell and the zealot's shrine
What can I do? For our Faith Divine you hold as a thing of infamy.
The tangled curls of thy darling's hair, and thy saddle and steed are thy only care,
In thy heart the Absolute hath no share, nor the thought of the poor man's poverty.
Sikandar's pomp and display be thine, the Qalandar's habit and way be mine;
That, if it please thee, I resign, while this, though bad, is enough for me.
The country of 'I' and 'We' forsake; thy home in Annihilation make,
Since fearing not this step to take thou shalt gain the highest Felicity."

There is another fine poem by Nabíl in praise of Bahá'u'lláh, to whom, some time subsequently to the Báb's death, most of his followers transferred their allegiance. The first five verses of this poem (which is still unpublished) are as follows, and in my translation of them I have again endeavoured to preserve the metre, rhyme, and rhythm as far as possible.

"*Shab-i-hijr archi tawil shud chu siyáh mú-t, Bahá, Bahá,*
Fa-laka'l-liqá, ki lamám shud bi-burúq-i rú-t, Bahá, Bahá !
Bi-dilam shud az tu isháruti ki dham bi-khalq basháratí
Ki bi-sar rawand, chu gúy-há, hamagi bi-kú-t, Bahá, Bahá !
Zi basháral-am zi chahár sú dil u ján bi-sú-yi tu kard rú ;
Bi-kujá rawad dil u ján agar na dawad bi-sú-t, Bahá, Bahá !
Hama arz Khuld-i-barín shuda, chu bihisht-i-rú-yi-Zamín shuda,
Chu bi-way wazida nasímí az nasimát-i-khú-t, Bahá, Bahá !
Tu'i án Karím ki bi-hazar du jahán dihí-sh bi-yak nazar
Shawad ar bi-shatr-i-tu murtafi' du kaf-i-'adú-t, Bahá, Bahá !"

(Translation.)

"Though the Night of Parting endless seem as Thy night-black hair, Bahá, Bahá,
Yet we meet at last, and the gloom is past in thy lightning's glare, Bahá, Bahá !
To my heart from Thee was a signal shown that I to all men should make known
That they, as the ball to the goal doth fly, should to Thee repair, Bahá, Bahá !
At this my call from the quarters four men's hearts and souls to Thy quarters pour :
What, forsooth, could attract them more than that region fair, Bahá, Bahá ?
The world hath attained the Heaven's worth, and a Paradise is the face of earth
Since at length thereon a breeze hath blown from Thy Nature rare, Bahá, Bahá !
Bountiful art Thou, as all men know : at a glance two worlds Thou would'st e'en bestow
On the suppliant hands of Thy direst foe, if he makes his prayer, Bahá, Bahá !"

I will now give a specimen of quite a different kind of verse, the political lampoon, which, in this form, is of very recent origin, and first appeared in the newspapers which arose in such numbers after the Revolution of 1905-6. The specimen I have chosen appeared on November 20th, 1907, in that admirable weekly paper, the *Súr-i-Isráfíl* ("Trumpet-call of Isráfíl"—the Angel of the Resurrection) which, like

so much else that was beautiful and gallant, has now succumbed to forces which I must not here particularlize or qualify. It is addressed to the ex-Sháh, Muhammad 'Alí Mírzá. The title "Kabláy" by which he is invoked is a common corruption of "Karbalá'í," applied primarily to one who has performed the visitation of the holy shrine of Karbalá near Baghdad, sanctified by the martyrdom of the Imám Husayn in the seventh century of our era. As one who has been to Mecca is called "Hájji," and one who has been to Mashhad is called "Mashhadí," so he who has visited Karbalá is called "Karbalá'í;" but the term, chiefly current amongst the humbler classes, implies often something of derision and even of disrespect. The poem comprises six verses, of which I have translated three in the same slangy and colloquial style as prevails in the original. The Persian text of those three verses is as follows :—

"*Mardúd-i-Khudá, ránda-i-har banda, Á Kabláy !*
Az dalqak-i-ma'rúf-i-numáyanda, Á Kabláy !
Bá shúkhi, u bá maskhara u khanda, Á Kabláy !
Na'z murda guzashtí, u na az zinda, Á Kabláy !
Hastí tu chi yak-pahlú wa yak-danda, Á Kabláy !

Na bím zi kat'-bín, u na jinn-gír, u na rammál,
Na khawf zi darwísh, u na az jizba, na az hál,
Na tars zi takfír, u na az pishtaw-i-Shaphshál !
Mushkil bi-barí gúr sar-i-zinda, Á Kabláy !
Hastí tu chi yak-pahlú wa yak danda, Á Kabláy !

Sad bár na-guftam ki khayál-i-tu muhál-ast,
Tá nimí az in tá'ifa mahbús-i-jawál-ast ;
Záhir shawad Islám dar in qawm muhál-ast !
Hay ! Báz bi-zan harf-i-paraganda, Á Kabláy !
Hastí tu chi yak-pahlú wa yak danda, Á Kabláy !

(Paraphrase.)

"Rejected by men and by God the Forgiving, O Kablay !
You're a wonderful sample of riotous living, O Kablay !
You're a wag, you're a joker, no end to your fun,
Of living and dead you are sparing of none :
Such a limb of the Devil and son of a gun, O Kablay !

"Neither wizard, diviner, nor warlock you fear, O Kablay !
Nor the dervish's prayer, nor the dreams of the seer, O Kablay !
Nor Shapshál's* revolver, nor Mujtahid's rage ;
'Tis hard to believe you will die of old age,
You limb of the Devil and son of a gun, O Kablay !

* A full account of Shapshál, the Russian Jew who played so conspicuous a part amongst the reactionaries surrounding Muhammad 'Alí until his deposition in July 1909, will be found in my *History of the Persian Revolution*.

" Times a hundred I've told you your project will fail, O Kabláy !
Unless you consign half the nation to gaol, O Kabláy !
Can Islám in you and your circle prevail ?
With fresh words of folly your friends you'll regale,
You limb of the Devil and son of a gun, O Kabláy ! "

There are other types of modern Persian poetry about which I should like to speak to you if time allowed, such as the *tasnífs*, or ballads ; the religious poetry, simple and touching, recited in commemoration of the sufferings of the Imáms in the month of Muharram ; the modern patriotic poetry, and the like. There is also the much rarer type of what I may call the apocalyptic poem, of which a remarkable but little-known example is offered by a long *qasída*, entitled *Shumaysa-i-Landaniyya* (" the little Sun of London "), composed by my old teacher (a notable figure in London thirty years ago), Mírzá Muhammad Báqir of Bawánát in Fárs, and published in 1882. The author was talented, eccentric, and, according to his own conviction, inspired ; and this poem, published by W. H. Allen and Co., comprised 366 couplets, all in the same rhyme. The second half of it, beginning at verse 121, contains a foreshadowing of the Anglo-Russian *entente*, very remarkable when we remember the strained relations then existing between the two countries, and how near to war they came two or three years later in connection with the " Panj-dih Incident." I cannot refrain from translating a few couplets of this portion of the poem, numbered to correspond with the verses of the original, avoiding any comment, which might expose me to the charge of breaking the rules of the Society by introducing politics.

(121) " Hark, for the blare of the Russian trumpets arises !
Heed, for the ear is deafened by the roar of their drums !

(122) Wail, for the sound of lamentation increases !
Shake thy chains, for the Male Lion is dead !

(123) Under the array of Cossacks the Plain of Qipcháq
Hath become a sea surging with iron billows.

(124) Back to back and breast to breast, all the Plain
Is sown with an evil seed of feet and heads.

* * * * *

(126) Such an army that, if the stars saw it,
They would say, ' Of these two hosts which is the more countless ? '

* * * * *

(128) From the Polar Regions of the North to the Bridge of Kábul
Is all one arena of clubs and maces, shoulders and chests.

(129) With frowning brows and knotted arms
They neither recoil before China nor reck of Khotan.

(130) O Ass-Lion, or lion-headed Ass,
The Bear will not say that an ass is worse than a lion !

(131) Abandon thy hunting-ground and retire to the street and the house,
For the Wolf, the Tiger and the Leopard are banded together !

* * * * *

(140) Alas ! alas ! These lying promises
Have brought us at length straight to the Gate of Hell !

(141) Alack ! alack ! The morsel is still between the teeth
While comes the sound of digging the grave for the morsel eater !

* * * * *

(152) I gave thee India, that thou mightest thank and praise me :
Thy thanks were sheer ingratitude and thy praise folly.

(153) I bade thee not to join thyself as a bride to Russia,
For the Children of the Bear are their father's heirs.

(154) Mine it was to speak, and thine not greatly to listen :
Alack and alas ! speech was in vain !

(155) I gave thee the East that thou mightest win to my Light:
Thou didst see my Light and prefer Darkness.

* * * * *

(167) A Bear appeared from the side of a mountain,
And with desire of him my Darling swooned.

(168) With all her heart and soul she approached the Bear,
Saying, ' Behold my Beloved and chosen Friend ! '

(169) Oh, what grace and movement and beauty !
Worthy of such a throat is so fat a morsel '

(170) ' I,' said she, ' am the Sugar of India, and my Friend the Milk of Samarqand :
The union of us two will be like sugar in milk.'

(171) This brave creature is the Lion of the South, and that the Bear of the North :
Who is able to withstand the Bear and the Lion ?

(172) Under the signet-ring of this one are the East and the West :
In the pocket of that one are the West and the East.

(173) Wherever the Bear is, there is the abode of fear and savagery :
Wherever the Lion is, there is spinal paralysis !

* * * * *

(175) Humanity has fallen away from the face of the world ;
Brutishness hath again been preferred [by mankind].

* * * * *

(180) What of Cyrus ? For India is in love with Russia ;
The time hath come for them to kiss and embrace, and to cut and carry away !

* * * * *

(204) O Bear ! Take away this Lioness and teach her
That knowledge which is the gift of the Bear !

* * * * *

(210) They shall lead away this Bear and Lioness to a place
Where every bear and lion is but as a cony.

(211) They shall keep them for a while imprisoned in a cage
Till such time as their nature is changed from ferocity to [the softness of] milk."

With this curious prophecy I must end, only reminding you that one of the most admirable objects of this Society is to promote that friendly intercourse with the Persians by which alone, in my opinion, full sympathy with their ideals and comprehension of their literature and thought is possible.

I thank you most sincerely for listening so patiently to this lengthy and rather rambling discourse. (*Applause.*)

Mr. Dillon : Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have been honoured by a request to move a vote of thanks to the Lecturer for the lecture to which we have just listened ; and I think, I am confident, that I am only expressing the view of every person in this Theatre when I say that if Professor Browne has enjoyed his hour, we all have enjoyed it far more than he has. (Applause).

I am singularly badly qualified to move a vote of thanks to Professor Browne, because my knowledge of Persian affairs and Persian literature is exceedingly slight. I may say that whatever little knowledge I have of Persia, or of its history, or of its literature

is derived entirely from the Lecturer. My interest in that country was aroused some years ago by the writings and the speeches of Professor Browne, and my interest to it was attracted because I have all my life thought that one of the greatest outrages against humanity that can be perpetrated is to kill the soul or the civilisation of any nation. (*Hear, hear.*) I am afraid that in these modern days the vast majority, at all events in Western Europe, have set up a false standard for the guidance of their own judgment as to what is really valuable in the civilisation of to-day. We in Western Europe are so handed over to materialism that we seem to think that the amount of manufactures produced and the wealth realised is really the only standard by which you can judge a people, and that a nation like Persia, or many other nations who are no longer warlike, wealthy, or able to defend themselves very well, do not matter; and that it is no loss to mankind if they are wiped out of existence and forgotten. Or what appears to me to be equally unfortunate—if their national pride is so destroyed and their soul so ruined that they cease to have any national characteristics at all, and become mere eating and wealth-producing machines: a fate that is overtaking more than one Eastern nation at present.

That appears to me to be an awful mistake in our modern civilisation; and, therefore, it is that when I learned from Professor Browne that there was a nation with so great a historic past, so great and so well-founded a national pride, and a nation who had contributed so enormously to the spiritual wealth of mankind by its art and by its literature, in the condition that Persia is to-day, all my deepest sympathies were aroused.

Another reason why I joined this Society, and why, I think, we should make every effort we can to extend its numbers, is that to me one of the most fascinating of all problems in these modern days is the effects produced by the collision of West with East. No human

foresight can foretell what the result will be of the impact of our Western materialistic civilisation upon the dreaming East. One thing appears to me clear, that we are only at the beginning of that experience, and that the results may be in the near future very terrible indeed.

Another thing is perfectly plain: that we of the West have inflicted great injustice and injury on many of the Eastern races, and have introduced amongst them ideas and ideals for which we may yet have to pay a very bitter price.

Professor Browne has done in his life work what appears to me to be one of the most useful besides being one of the most intensely interesting things that anybody can devote his life to in these days, and that is to familiarise the English public with the literature and with the thought and with the character of the East. And it appears to me that the loss of the civilisations and of the national souls, as I have described them, of these Eastern people, is an extraordinary, a terrible misfortune. How dreadful is the prospect before us if the whole world should become only another London and another Paris; and yet we are now, with what appears to me appalling rapidity, advancing towards some such condition of things as that.

I confess that my sympathies go out to all these races. My sympathies go out to Morocco and to Egypt, and to all these races (*applause*) who have a historic past, a national self-consciousness, which in my opinion is the necessary seed-bed of great achievement; and though it may appear somewhat of a paradox, I say that my sympathy goes out especially to those countries which still have succeeded in resisting the introduction of railways. (*Laughter.*) I read the other day a most charming Paper based on a lecture delivered, I think, in this very Theatre, on "The Charm of Persia." It was published in *The Nation*, and one of the charms of Persia was that it was a country where

one could still travel without getting into a railway train. I entirely sympathise, and I venture to offer advice—politics are debarred, but I am speaking now entirely in the interests of the Lecturer—I venture to offer my advice to His Excellency, if he can resist it, never to allow a rail to be laid down on Persian soil until you can pay for it out of your own pockets. (*Hear hear.*) You can afford to wait for railways; but if you allow railways to be laid down without paying for them yourselves, your country will pass into the hands of others.

I do not know why I have been honoured by the Secretary and the Committee of the Persia Society by being asked to-day to move this vote of thanks, except that, perhaps, it has been thought that by my race and the experience of my own life I am qualified to sympathise with the Persian people. I do sympathise with them, and I feel exceedingly grateful to Professor Browne for the knowledge, such as it is, which he has given to me of this great people; and with him I cherish the hope—though it is rather difficult to cherish it, in the face of the present state of affairs—that a brighter day is dawning for the Persian people.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have the greatest possible pleasure in proposing that the hearty thanks of this meeting be accorded to Professor Browne. (*Applause.*)

Sir Thomas Barclay: Ladies and Gentlemen, before we disperse we have a further duty to perform which will certainly be a pleasure to you; *i.e.*, to express your thanks to His Excellency Mirza Mehdi Khan for presiding at this meeting. (*Applause.*) All who know His Excellency appreciate him. Some of you, perhaps, had not yet made his acquaintance. Now you have done so I am sure you will join all those who know him already in appreciating not only his knowledge of the English language, which is remarkable, but that which seems to bind England to Persia—that in manner and thought he is like one of ourselves. (*Renewed*

applause.) I hope he will say to Persians that we are somewhat like his countrymen. That it may be so we see in Professor Browne, perfect Englishman as he is at home, amongst Persians is a perfect Persian.

It is hardly enough to have heard Professor Browne's lecture. I feel sure you will be glad to read it. I do not know whether it was possible for any report of it to be taken down *in extenso*; but Professor Browne has been kind enough to promise to revise the Report, and the Honorary Secretary, Mr. Hogg, who is here, will see that every person who has listened to the Lecture will receive a copy. Only there is one thing necessary to enable you to obtain it—you must give your name and address to Mr. Hogg. I do not say correspondence with you will end with that; we hope that you knowing the Society, and he knowing your names and addresses, he and you will be able to increase the number of members ot the Society.

You must not for one moment think that you are not just as welcome whether you are a member of the Society or not. You are always welcome, and we shall hope to see you again ; but, as Chairman of the Society, speaking for the House over which I preside, I cannot refrain from expressing the hope that the number of our members will increase. Therefore, do not consider you are under any obligation to become members though you give your names and addresses to the Secretary.

After announcing the dates and speakers for forthcoming lectures, the speaker concluded as follows :

As regards the teaching of Persian, as Professor Browne is a member of the Council, no doubt he will bring the subject up, and we may be able to extend the influence of this Society by instituting classes to enable those who have heard such admirable translations to read the originals of these translations.

You see, we are trying to do good work. It is not purely altruistic. I think it is in the interest of all

Englishmen to know more of Persia. I dare not and will not say a word about politics, but we cannot help mentioning the geographical situation of Persia, and the interest that our great Empire in the East must necessarily have in the fate of its immediate neighbour. We are concerned, however, to-day, with Persian literature and Professor Browne has placed before you a strong inducement to study it. I hope he has sown the seed in fertile ground.

I must ask you now to pass a hearty vote of thanks to the Chairman, Mirza Mehdi Khan, for having kindly presided at this meeting, and done so admirably.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen, for having so kindly responded. The proceedings are terminated.

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