

II. *Observations on some extraordinary Anecdotes concerning Alexander; and on the Eastern Origin of several Fictions popular in different Languages of Europe.*
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HAVING employed some time in collecting materials for a work on the subject of Alexander, and in seeking among Eastern manuscripts for information at once original and authentic, I was induced to suspect, however mortifying such a result of laborious research, that with a few exceptions, (and even these very questionable,) whatever anecdotes we might consider historically true in Arabian or Persian accounts of the Macedonian hero, have been borrowed from Greek or Latin authors; whilst all that seemed extravagantly improbable or fabulous, I was willing to pronounce the genuine offspring of Oriental imagination.

To this abundant source, as many ingenious writers on romantic fiction have asserted, (and in some instances proved,) we are indebted for several entertaining and instructive compositions, known among the chief nations of Europe either in their respective languages, or through the more general medium of the Latin. During my inquiries respecting their origin, I have always felt an inclination to regard the first person in whose works those fictions occur as the inventor, although it is possible that he may, without any acknowledgment, have derived them from oral tradition, or from writings not within our reach. Thus, to the Arabian prophet (or one of those who assisted that impostor in composing the *Korán*) may be ascribed, until some earlier claimant appear, the prototype of "Parnell's Hermit." This beautiful story I shall have occasion, after a few pages, to notice more particularly, with several fictions both serious and ludicrous, current among us in European languages only; but of Eastern origin, if we admit as a principle that the first writers to whom they can be traced may claim the honours of invention. Allowing to the Arabs and Persians all due praise for ingenuity in such compositions, for their fascinating romances, and the various proofs which they have given of a fertile, poetical, and brilliant imagination; also for a multiplicity of excellent works on post-Mohammedan



history, the modern geography of Asia, philology, and other subjects; I must confess that they have generally disappointed my hopes when any illustration of classical antiquity was sought from their writers, especially concerning Alexander.

Indeed, so numerous were the memorable actions performed by him within a few years, so extensive his marches, so important his victories, and so extraordinary those circumstances of his life which might be styled "adventures," that the gravest authors, among several who record them, seem occasionally to have blended the tale of fiction with the sober narrative of history. We find also, respecting the conqueror's exploits, many discordant relations, such as might well be expected of events that had occurred in ages long past, and in distant regions; since the accounts of transactions comparatively recent and domestic, frequently perplex us by contradictory statements: not only those who celebrated Alexander soon after the time in which he lived, but his contemporaries, and even his companions, disagree so materially in their reports, that Arrian, having mentioned the authors of some anecdotes concerning him, declares, *ὅτι ἔστιν ὑπὲρ ὅπου πλείονες [ἀνέγραψαν], ἢ ἀξιομφομένους ἐς ἀλλήλους*, "There is not any man whose actions have been described by more writers, or writers differing more one from another."

Hoping to discover among Eastern records such information as might reconcile those conflicting testimonies, illustrate certain obscure points in the classical history of Alexander, and extend at the same time our geographical and antiquarian knowledge, I many years ago examined a considerable number of manuscripts, furnished by different European libraries; and have since, in Persia, enjoyed an opportunity of consulting others little known to our Orientalists. If those researches have not accomplished quite so much as I expected, it will perhaps be shown, on a future occasion, that they have not wholly failed of success. But with respect to that discordance among Greek writers, the words of Arrian above quoted seem almost literally translated by some Eastern authors; who, tracing Alexander from the cradle to the tomb, find it necessary in many parts of his eventful story, to notice the embarrassing variety of accounts. His very pedigree is clouded with uncertainty; and on the subject of his birth we perceive, as in Greek records, much mystery and fable, not without suspicions highly injurious to the character of his mother.² It will be recollected on classical authority, that but few of Alexander's countrymen allowed his claim to a divine father; and many presumed to doubt whether he was in reality the son of Philip.

Thus some *Muselmán* historians flatter him by an imaginary descent from the patriarch Isaac; whilst an honest *Parsi* of *Sírat*, a zealous fire-worshipper, indignant at the evils inflicted on his Persian ancestors by Alexander, relates a tradition respecting the diabolical origin of that conqueror, whom it affirms, in language by no means figurative or equivocal, to have absolutely been a child of Satan. The manuscript mentioning this tradition is quoted at the end of these observations, where, lest the course of reading should be interrupted by too frequent reference, many notes are placed together.³

But it is not my present purpose to remark the early anecdotes of Alexander's life, nor those which from concurrent testimonies of Greek, Roman, and Oriental authors, we may reasonably consider as founded on historic truth. His invasion of Persia, the battle of Arbela, his defeat of Darius, his marriage with Roxana, the Indian expedition, his war with Porus, and return to Persia, his visit to the tomb of Cyrus, his illness at Babylon attributed to poison, his last interview with the Macedonian soldiers, his death, the embalming of his body, its removal to Egypt, and many other facts of minor importance, however misplaced, disfigured, or exaggerated, may be as easily recognised in the Arabic and Persian accounts of Alexander, as this hero's name, which we there find written *Secander* or *Iscander*.⁴

The portions of his history on which I now propose to offer a few observations, are such anecdotes improbable, marvellous, or altogether fabulous, as appear at first glance to be merely Eastern fictions. And these we might divide into various classes; for some are evidently of Mohammedan origin; thus the confusion of Alexander under his surname of *Dhu'l-karnain*, or "Two-horned," with a personage so entitled in the *Korán*, and celebrated because he had encompassed and subdued the world from east to west, from one "horn" or extremity to the other.⁵ But by some he is supposed to have existed in the time of Abraham, and therefore many centuries before Alexander; whilst a few *Muselmán* writers (more scrupulous respecting anachronisms than most of their brethren) deny the identity, but regard one as the other's prototype; and for the surname "Two-horned" bestowed on Alexander, they assign various causes; the least improbable being two curled or twisted locks of hair which in form resembled horns. The classical antiquary will here, perhaps, discover some allusion to the ram's horns of *Ammon*, from whom our hero claimed descent; and may almost suspect that the Eastern writers had seen those Greek medals which represent the spiral horn or lock of hair behind Alexander's ear.⁶



To another class of fictions belong some prolix and insipid romances, mostly Persian, wherein the Macedonian chief performs exploits sufficiently wonderful, but such as might with equal propriety be ascribed to Lancelot du Lac, or Amadis de Gaul, as to Alexander of historical celebrity; for the authors having borrowed a few passages from well-known chronicles, describing him as the son of Philip and the conqueror of *Dará* or Darius, suddenly deviate from the path of true history, and lose themselves in a wilderness of fable and absurdity from which they never return. Such was a manuscript work, filling (though it wanted the conclusion) five huge volumes, of which I had the patience to turn over a considerable part at *Shiráz* and *Isfahán*. In this we read of Alexander's sons *Abraham* and *Feridún*; and the Grecian conqueror devoutly begins his letters (into which he introduces short poetical quotations) with that Arabic form of invocation (a passage from the *Korán*) usually prefixed to the writings of pious Mohammedans.⁷

Manuscripts of a different and very numerous class, which instruct or amuse us in apologues, witty stories, or epigrammatical sentences, often exhibit the name of Alexander, as of many other personages real or fictitious, merely

"To point a moral or adorn a tale."

But I shall here confine my observations to those anecdotes which, however fabulous or improbable they seem, may perhaps be traced to classic authors, or to certain Greek and Latin writers who succeeded them at no considerable interval, though long before the most ancient Oriental record that we can adduce; at least I know not of any older than the ninth century, when *Tabri* (who was born in 838) composed his "Great Chronicle." Many oral traditions now forgotten, and various manuscripts long since destroyed, may, it is true, have existed in the time of *Tabri*; and that numerous remains of *Pahlavi*, or old Persic writings, were preserved by the fire-worshippers who then abounded, we may believe; as *Firdausi*, in the tenth century, declares that such works had contributed to the composition of his heroic poem, the *Sháh Náme*, or "Book of Kings."⁸

Many manuscripts celebrating the early heroes of Persia were translated in the eleventh century from *Pahlavi* into *Deri*, a more modern dialect, by the learned *Pirázán*, as his contemporary *Suhumaddín* informs us in a manuscript work so rare and curious, that it will demand elsewhere some pages of more particular description.

Nizámi, in the twelfth century, boasts that his *Secander Náme*, or "History of Alexander," was partly founded on old Persian authorities; for "I consulted," says he, "the Greek, Hebrew, and *Pahlavi* records."⁹

Between the twelfth century and the eighteenth, that those *Pahlavi* writings were lamentably reduced in number, we cannot doubt; although a fire-worshipper at *Yezd* still possessed some very ancient and valuable about the year 1722, as we learn from one who then saw them, *Hazín* of *Isfahán*;¹⁰ and so lately as 1811 and 1812 I myself examined several, and purchased a few among the *Gabrs* of Persia, with whom, as with the *Parsís* of Bombay and *Súrat*, many still remain. These fire-worshippers likewise possess some compositions in modern Persian, which condemn to eternal punishment the Macedonian hero, not for his invasion of Persia, but for his supposed hostility to the religion of *Zerátusht* or Zoroaster; and his destruction of seven stupendous monuments that had decorated a palace of their great monarch *Jemshíd*; in which we may perhaps discover the royal edifice at Persepolis. But a very accomplished and inquisitive orientalist, Mons. Anquetil du Perron, could not find among the *Parsís* any writings in their ancient dialects that commemorated Alexander: his name does not occur even in the *Bundehesh*, a *Pahlavi* work, although it execrates *Afrasiáb* the Scythian, and *Dhohák* the Arabian tyrant, as enemies of Persia; and from this circumstance Monsieur Anquetil surmises a possibility, that the *Bundehesh* may have been written before the revolutions caused in that country by the conquests of Alexander."

However this may be, I suspect that but few literary works of any kind were composed by Persian authors from the time of Darius's death, until the fourth or fifth century after Christ, when under the descendants of Artaxares (or Artaxerxes) Persia began to recover from the desolation and confusion which had subsisted during the reigns of several Greek princes; also of the Arsacidans or Parthians, who shook off the foreign yoke; and of the early Sassanidans, who overthrew the Parthian dynasty. And if we suppose, what is by no means certain, that in the course of six or seven hundred years after Alexander, some Persians composed histories of their ancient kings; it is probable they related but little respecting the Macedonian chief besides such important though humiliating facts as obstinate tradition and the Greek records would force them to acknowledge; whilst, from religious prejudice, they may have indulged in groundless accusations against the conqueror of Darius for a fancied enmity to magism, accounting at the same

time for a paucity or deficiency of Persian writings, by imputing to him the destruction of many thousand volumes.

But the wonderful accounts of victories which he never gained, expeditions which he never performed, the homage paid to him by kings and queens who never existed, the interviews with which he was honoured by supernatural beings, and similar fables adapted to exalt his glory, cannot justly be ascribed to those who held his memory in abhorrence; nor did the fire-worshippers enjoy sufficient leisure after the storms that had agitated Persia, to collect materials for a genuine history of Alexander, before the fourth or fifth century, when those fables to which I allude were already extant in a Latin work of Julius Valerius, if we place this writer "intra tertium aut quartum Christiani ævi sæculum," adopting the calculation made by an honorary member of this Society, Signor Angelo Mai, whose accurate knowledge of manuscripts, and indefatigable zeal, have been so eminently successful in rescuing from oblivion many precious fragments of ancient literature. To this ingenious critic we are indebted for the publication of an octavo volume, entitled "*Julii Valerii Res Gestæ Alexandri Macedonis*," printed at Milan, 1817, from a manuscript preserved in the Ambrosian library. But as this appears to have been copied or translated from the work of a Greek named Æsopus, the fables which it contains may be considerably older than the date above assigned to Julius Valerius.

Now some of our most able writers on fiction believe that the fabulous legends respecting Alexander, so long popular in French, English, Italian, and other European languages, have been derived from a Greek romance, composed about the year 1070 by Simeon Seth, under an assumed name, Callisthenes; and that the works attributed to Æsopus and Julius Valerius are but copies or translations of his romance: they are likewise of opinion that he borrowed his materials from the East. As there could not be any chronological difficulty in supposing that a Greek writer of the year 1070 had seen and used a Persian work composed above eighty years before, I once thought it probable that *Firdausi's* "Book of Kings" might have furnished many fables to Simeon Seth. But a very learned Frenchman, the Baron de Sainte Croix, (whose slightest conjecture merits consideration,) is inclined to place the Pseudo-Callisthenes, whoever he may have been, in the tenth century;¹² a circumstance which would render it doubtful whether he had not died before the year 984, when *Firdausi's* Persian romance was dated, according to the oldest and finest copies that I have examined.

Some late researches however, and Signor Mai's arguments concerning Julius Valerius, induce me to suspect that those fabulous anecdotes of Alexander related in the Persian "Book of Kings" were not invented by *Firdausi*, but derived from Eastern traditions or writings, which probably had furnished the same stories many centuries before to Julius Valerius or Æsopus. And it is not impossible (yet I do not believe) that the Greek or Latin writer may have transmitted them to the Persian poet. They wear, it must be owned, an air of fiction which would assign their origin to the East; yet I cannot trace those fables beyond Julius Valerius, unless we regard them as founded on classical anecdotes, distorted or misunderstood.

Thus the sacred oaks (or beeches) of Dodona, that prophesied with human voices (προφητοὶ and μαντικά δένδρα), seem confounded in the Latin and Persian romance with one of those oracles consulted by Alexander, as genuine history informs us; for the "arbores loquaces" of Julius Valerius (iii. 39. 40. &c.) and the male and female "speaking trees" of *Firdausi* revealed to that conqueror the decrees of fate.

Other oracles of ancient celebrity may, perhaps, be discovered in that shrine where Alexander beheld the "majestatis effigiem et fulgore ætherio renitentem,"—the "augustissimum numen" according to Julius Valerius (iii. 68.); also in the edifice described by that writer as most magnificent, "ædem quandam ad speciem Græci operis illic magnificentissimam viseres," with its speaking figure of a dove,¹⁴ and other remarkable objects (iii. 85. 86.); while *Firdausi* appears to have changed Ammon with his ram's-horns into a human body having the head of a wild boar.¹⁵ The temple also of that divinity, with its extraordinary fountain, (noticed by many classical authors,) we find described in the Persian story as a splendid mansion or palace, with its "spring of salt or bitter water."¹⁶

As Alexander's marches were extended by the Grecian orator Æschines,¹⁷ into regions which he never visited (ἐξο τῆς Ἀρκτοῦ), it will not surprise us that the hero should be celebrated in romance for victories not acknowledged by real history. That his death prevented the conquest of many distant countries, the circumnavigation of Arabia and Africa, and the accomplishment of other vast designs, we learn from Arrian and Plutarch. Diodorus also mentions his nautical preparations for most extensive voyages; to which the poet Lucan thus alludes:—

"— Oceano classes inferre parabat
Exteriore mari; non illi flamma, nec undæ,
Nec sterilis Libye, nec Syrticus obstitit Ammon,



Isset in occasus, mundi devexa secutus,
Ambissetque polos, Nilumque a fonte bibisset :
Occurrit suprema dies ; naturaque solum
Hunc potuit finem vesano ponere regi.”²⁵

In the imaginary expeditions which romance-writers assign to Alexander, they only suppose that he had executed some of those great designs ; and Julius Valerius (in the *Pars Fabulosa* of his third book) and *Firdausi* (in his *Sháh Náneh*) seem to confound Alexander with his Admiral Nearchus, when they describe the Ichthyophagi, and the magic island or *yellow fish*, which rose like a mountain from the waves, and sunk with the unfortunate crew of a boat that had approached it.²⁶

Perhaps other circumstances that seem improbable or incredible in the romances above quoted, might be so explained on classical authority ; but my object here is only to state that as those anecdotes, under their present fabulous shape, cannot be found in any work older than the Latin writers, (although he may have derived them from the same sources which contributed to the Persian “Book of Kings,”) we must, after the principle suggested in an early part of these observations, regard Julius Valerius as entitled to the honours of priority, which I once thought *Firdausi* might have claimed with fair pretensions.

On the same principle, however, we must transfer to Eastern authors the praises long usurped by some Europeans as the supposed inventors, or, at least, as the first writers, of various fictions morally instructive or innocently amusing ; besides a class, unfortunately the most numerous, which from their nature must here be but slightly noticed, all hitherto reputed European, or not traced beyond works written in some language of our Western world. The last class of fictions to which I have alluded, comprehends many anecdotes satirical, epigrammatical, and ludicrous, with similar compositions of which the wit is overbalanced by the indecency. This, it must be acknowledged, has been softened by Chaucer and Boccaccio, though retained in its original deformity by Poggius and others, of whose “Facetiae” some may be clearly traced to an Oriental source. That I have not discovered these compositions in any works older than certain Arabic and Persian manuscripts, might appear a sufficient reason for supposing them Asiatic ; but many bear the strongest internal evidence of their foreign origin, and others exhibit, in minute circumstances, such a perfect conformity with fictions of the East, as could not have arisen from mere accident.

It is well known that Boccaccio, through Chaucer, furnished materials to

Pope for his “January and May ;” and a principal incident of this story (as we learn from a note in the last edition of Warton’s “English Poetry”) occurs among the “Fables of Alphonse” in Caxton’s *Esop*, and was taken from some Latin stories written by one Adolphus in 1315. Above fifty years, however, before that epoch, and before the birth of Boccaccio, died *Jelâd ad dîn*, a celebrated Persian poet ; and this story I have found in the fourth book of his “astonishing” work, the *Masnavi*, from which Sir William Jones has beautifully translated some passages of the sublime introduction.²⁷ *Inatulla*, or *Einaiut oollah*, of *Dehli*, (about the year 1650,) inserted this story in the Collection of Tales translated into English very imperfectly by Colonel Dow, but fully and accurately by that able Orientalist Dr. Jonathan Scott.²⁸

Like the *Masnavi* above mentioned, the compositions of many Eastern moralists often inculcate lessons of wisdom and virtue by examples of licentiousness too plainly described ; yet the anecdotes containing these examples have been adopted in several instances by European writers. The abbot and monk of Boccaccio’s fourth story represent the man who resided at *Heri*, and the hypocrite, whom *Senâi* (a Persian poet and philosopher) exposed in his work entitled *Hadikeh*,²⁹ or “The Garden,” above two hundred years before the Italian novelist undertook his great *Decamerone* ; and the same personages are exhibited to us by *Abid Zâgâni*, who, in the fourteenth century, compiled a volume of Persian jests and satires.³¹ As those compositions circulated among men, (from whose assemblies the women were by Asiatic custom excluded,) their authors, probably, deemed it unnecessary to observe the most scrupulous delicacy ; such an excuse could not be offered for those who copied them in European languages.

I shall here dismiss the subject of Eastern *facetiae*, merely observing that many, with a slight variation in particular circumstances, appear to have found their way into our jest-books from Arabic and Persian works composed before the invention of typography. To ascertain the channel through which they have reached us, would not be an easy task. A few were, perhaps, imported by the crusaders.

Among our finest moral fictions, one is, without doubt, the beautiful story of “Parnell’s Hermit ;” which has been traced, under various forms, up to the “*Gesta Romanorum*,” a work of the fourteenth century.³⁴ I should here have mentioned as a discovery made by myself many years ago, that this story ascended to the seventh century ; but a writer in one of our best periodical publications has lately anticipated me by observing that it was

taken from the *Korán*; I know not of any other who has noticed this circumstance.²⁵ The eighteenth chapter of that extraordinary composition, regarded by pious Mohammedans as sacred, contains the apologue, which is related of Moses and an inspired companion.

Not recollecting any prior authority, I assign to a Persian writer that story of *Santon Barsísá*, which our English "Guardian" (No. 148.) copied, as he says, from the "Turkish Tales;" meaning probably, (for it is not in my power at this moment to ascertain the point,) those which Petit de la Croix translated into French. But the crimes of *Barsísá* were commemorated above five hundred years ago, by *Saadi*, and by *Zacaria of Cazvin*, in works which the note will indicate.²⁶

Of subterraneous treasures revealed by mysterious inscriptions to those only whose pre-eminent sagacity could comprehend their import, several anecdotes (perhaps not altogether fabulous) might be collected from works in different languages. Some of those stories related by Eastern authors three or four hundred years old, bear a very strong resemblance to that fiction which immortalizes the two students of Salamanca, and the Licentiate Pedro Garcias in Le Sage's preface to *Gil Blas*.

A treasure discovered by means of the shadow falling at certain moments from a statue's head or pointed finger, is the subject of one among our nursery tales, which may be traced through various works up to the "*Gesta Romanorum*," or even to William of Malmesbury, regarded by Warton as the first who relates it: but the "pointed finger" was mentioned by *Elm Asim* of *Cláfah* in the eighth century;²⁷ the "golden head" by *Benáketi*, who dates his Persian Chronicle in 1317.²⁸

Very striking features of Oriental imagination may be found in several stories of the "*Gesta Romanorum*," besides those above mentioned; but one must be here noticed which I do not hesitate to derive from an anecdote of Persian history, related by authors who flourished three or four centuries before the composition of that monkish work. It is the story of an Emperor Marcus, his son and daughter, and his grandson, the offspring of incestuous love. This infant his mother placed in a cask, with writings, money, and rich garments, and committed him to the sea. The boy, miraculously saved in a distant country, educated by an abbot, and named Gregory, became a distinguished warrior, defeated the enemies of his mother, who was a widowed princess, and at last became her husband, each ignorant of the relationship subsisting between them. This, after some time, was discovered: he retired to a life of mortification and penance, from which he was

exalted to the popedom; and she renounced the world and died an abbess. Omitting the popedom, penance, and two or three circumstances of little importance, we find this story in the manuscript works of different Eastern authors; more especially *Tabri*, who was born in the ninth century, and *Firdausi*, who dates his heroic poem in the tenth. From them we learn that queen *Humdi*, who had been the wife of her own father, caused her infant son (afterwards named *Daráb*) to be placed in a box or ark, with jewels, money, and writings, and sent adrift on the current of a river. He was saved, became a mighty warrior, was recognised by his mother, who gave him up the crown, and retreated from the world to a place of religious worship.²⁹

The story of our English "Whittington and his Cat," (or of *Ansaldo degli Ormanni*, as an Italian version denominates that lucky adventurer,) I have already proved (in the account of my Travels) to be eight hundred years old, if we may credit a rare manuscript and local tradition, informing us that an island in the Persian Gulf was called *Keis*, or *Keish*, after the Eastern Whittington, who resided there, having brought from India considerable riches.³⁰

An episode in the Italian "*Orlando Furioso*" would seem borrowed from one in *Firdausi's* heroic poem, the Persian "*Book of Kings*." Ruggiero learns from a certain cavalier, (*quel ch' affabil era*), a courteous knight, the titles and armorial bearings that distinguished various chiefs—

Che quivi alzate havean tante bandiere,

as the troops passed in review before them with exalted banners. Thus the Persian romance describes an army encamped: *Suhráb* learns from *Hajir* the names of many illustrious commanders; the peculiar devices and colours of their respective standards and tents—a golden sun, a silver moon, a golden lion, a dragon, elephant, wolf, boar. Such and other figures are, in a subsequent passage, assigned as armorial ensigns to several princes and generals at a review of the Persian army under Cyrus. To whatever age we may assign the origin of heraldry, it is manifest that these distinctions were blazoned by *Firdausi* above one century before the first crusade, and nearly five centuries before the birth of Ariosto.³¹

Here might be noticed some striking coincidences between Oriental anecdotes many hundred years old, and the plots or particular incidents of some dramatic entertainments popular among us; coincidences which would confirm a remark made by Mr. Hole in his excellent work on the Arabian

Tales, "that the wisdom of the East had largely contributed to our farces and jest-books."¹² But I shall not extend these observations to an immoderate length, by noticing more than one instance in confirmation of Mr. Hole's remark. We have seen on our stage the farcical representation of a drunken man conveyed in his sleep to a strange place, and when he awakes, treated with mock ceremony and indulged with real luxuries, until he almost fancies himself another person. This may remind us, in some respects, of one among the Arabian Tales, and of a well-known anecdote concerning the "Old Man of the Mountain," and those whom he infatuated with the delights of his terrestrial paradise.¹³ A third story, which would assign for this incident an Eastern origin, has lately presented itself to me in one of the numerous works, composed above six hundred years ago by *Attâr*; for this Persian poet describes the astonishment of a youth who, having been rendered insensible by a potion of medicated wine, and transported to a magnificent palace, was then sumptuously entertained and gratified by the society of a beautiful princess and her fair nymphs; these replaced him (again intoxicated and asleep) in the spot whence they had brought him, and where he soon awoke to lament his actual situation, doubting his own identity, and uncertain whether another person or himself had been blest with the charming vision.¹⁴ A resemblance to these stories may be found not only in Shakspeare's "Taming of the Shrew," and the farce to which I have before alluded, but also in the "Anatomy of Melancholy," where Burton relates an anecdote of Philip Duke of Burgundy, and a drunken peasant; and in the old song beginning thus,

"Now as fame does report, a young duke keeps a court," &c.

Among the "Fairy Legends of the South of Ireland," so ingeniously related in a little work not long since published under that title, some may remind the Orientalist of a story in *Nakhshabi's* Persian "Tales of a Parrot," where the preternatural or spectral form of a beautiful female, supposed to represent the king of *Tabristân's* life, announces with a strange voice and a most appalling tone of lamentation, that she was on the eve of departure, as that monarch's days had nearly reached their close.¹⁵

It is not, however, my opinion that every coincidence of this kind should be pronounced an imitation of some Eastern prototype; the resemblance between parallel passages (of which different languages furnish a multiplicity) must be, in several instances, regarded as merely accidental, notwithstanding a conformity both in sentiments and expressions. I cannot for a

moment suspect that the well-known epitaph on a celebrated vender of earthenware at Chester¹⁶ was borrowed from a Persian tetrastich, composed in the twelfth century by *Omar Khayâm*, who calls for wine that he may banish care, expecting on a future occasion to be once more in his favourite haunt—a potter's workshop, under the form of some earthen vessel.¹⁷ Thus the epitaph above-mentioned advises the weeping friends of "Catharine Gray" to abate their grief, since, after a "run of years,"

"In some tall pitcher, or broad pan,
She in her shop may be again."

Sufficient reasons have now, I trust, been adduced to show, that until further discoveries among manuscripts, a Latin writer is justified in claiming those fabulous anecdotes of Alexander, which once were regarded (at least by me) as the productions of a Persian poet,—fables that future researches may, nevertheless, prove of Eastern origin; whilst, on the other hand, many fictions, hitherto only known to us as European compositions, are claimed by Arabian and Persian authors. Several proofs might be given, besides the instances above quoted; but I am here induced to close these remarks, from an apprehension that they have already been protracted beyond a reasonable extent.

NOTES.

¹ Arrian. De Exped. Alex. in Proœmio.

² See Plutarch, Justin, Freinshem's "Suppl. in Q. Curtium," &c. and a multitude of Eastern authors, *Nizâmî, Nasrî, Câzi Beizavi, Benâketi, Mirkhond, Khondemîr, Kapehak Khân*, &c.

³ See an abridgment of the *Shâhnâmeh*, preserved among the Oriental manuscripts in the British Museum. (Hyde: Royal: 16. B. xiv.) It was made, at the desire of an English gentleman, by a *Parâi* of *Sârât*, who undertook to reduce into prose the sixty-five thousand couplets of *Firdausi's* great heroic poem, as I have already observed in the second volume of my "Travels," (p. 541.) where this Ms. is more particularly described. The *Parâi* in his account of Alexander, as on some other occasions, considerably deviates from the work which he professed to abridge. The tradition declaring that conqueror to be actually a son of *Eblis*, or the Devil, is thus mentioned in his story of the Princess *Nâhid* (نَاهِد) the Olympias of classic writers:

گویند که ابله من در آنجا در خواب با او صحبت میکرد و همان ساعت از ابلهس او بارور شد
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⁸ *Secander* اسکندر, or *Iscander* اسکندر

⁹ "Arabice *Dhul-karnain*, id est Bicornis, accipitur communiter pro *الإسكندر* *Alexandro*, nempe Macedone." See Maracci's notes or "Refutationes" in Alcoranum, (vol. ii. p. 426.) "The Jews will ask thee concerning *Dhu'l-karnain*; answer, I will rehearse unto you an account of him." So were translated by Sale the Arabic words which first mention this two-horned personage in the *Korân*:

ويسلونك عن ذي القرنين قل سأتلو عليكم منه ذكراً

They occur in the eighteenth chapter, and verse 85, according to Maracci's numeration, or 82, if we adopt Hinckelmann's.

⁶ For the horns of Jupiter Ammon which Alexander affected to wear, see a passage quoted by Athenæus from Ephippus, who says, *ὡς Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ τὰς ἰερὰς ἐσθῆτας ἐφόρει ἐν τοῖς δειπνοῖς* *ὅτε μὲν τῶν Ἀρμενίων πορφύρεα καὶ περισχιδεῖ καὶ κέρατα, καθάπερ ὁ θεός* (Deipn. lib. xii.) and the words of Clemens Alexandrinus (Cohort. ad Gent.) "Ἐβούλετο Ἀλέξανδρος Ἀρμενίων νύξιν εἶναι δοκεῖν, καὶ κερασφόρος ἀναπαύεσθαι πρὸς τὴν ἀγαλμασποικίαν, τὸ καλὸν ἀνθρώπων ἡβρίσαι σπειδὴν κέρατι. Among the finest medals representing Alexander's head with Ammon's horn, may be reckoned that of which Dr. Vincent has given a beautiful engraving in the second edition of his "Nearchus." It is of silver, and once belonged to Lord Winchelsea's Collection; but now forms part of the Bodleian treasures at Oxford. In Dr. Clarke's work on the "Tomb of Alexander" is a spirited engraving of the hero's head with a ram's horn, from a silver coin of Lysimachus. See also the horned heads in different editions of Q. Curtius—Janson's, Snakenburg's, &c.; in Schlager's "Commentatio de Numo Alexandri;" in Eckhel "De Doctrina Numorum veterum;" in the Atlas to Chaussard's French translation of Arrian, where plates viii. and ix. illustrate the opinions of Winkelmann, Barthelemy, Le Blond, Visconti, and other antiquaries on the "Monumens du Portrait d'Alexandre:" many likewise are preserved in cabinets, of which descriptions have been published.

⁷ *بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم* "In the name of God! the element, the merciful!"

⁸ The *Tarikh Kebir* كبير تاريخ or "Great Chronicle" of *Tabri* طبري—and the *Sháh Námeh* شاه نامه or "Book of Kings" by *Firdausi*, فردوسی

⁹ He describes these records as "Jewish, Christian, and Persian."

يهودي و نصراني و يهلوي

By the term *Nasráni*, or "Christian," he probably means Greek and Latin. The Jews in their Rabbinical Hebrew works often mention אלכסנדרוס, *Aleksandrus*.

¹⁰ *Muhammed Ali Házín* محمد علي حزين, born at *Ispahán* in 1691, fled into India from the tyranny of *Nádír Sháh*, and concluded at *Dekli* in 1741 a volume of highly interesting memoirs.

¹¹ It is, he thinks, a surprising circumstance that this manuscript "ne fasse mention ni d'Alexandre ni de Mahomet. Ce silence prouveroit-il que l'original du *Boundechesch*," &c. See *Zendavesta*, tom. ii. p. 338. In the same page we read that "Alexandre brule en Enfer pour

avoir condamné au feu les *Noska*," the books, or different portions that formed the sacred *Avesta*, and for the "Sept ouvrages merveilleux faits par *Djemschid* dans un de ses palais, et détruits par Alexandre." See tom. i. part. 2. Notices p. xxxvi.

¹² "Cependant je pense que l'original du faux Callisthène, qui me paroît remonter au dixième siècle, n'est pas venu jusqu'à nous, et que l'ouvrage dont il est ici question ne peut en être qu'une espèce de traduction, peu fidèle, interpolée ou amplifiée en beaucoup d'endroits. Cette conjecture est fondée sur le style de cet ouvrage et la mention des Turcs qui se trouve à la fin."—*Examen Critique des anciens Historiens d'Alexandre le Grand*. 2^{de} édition, 1804. p. 165.

¹³ *Julius Valerius* and *Firdausi* agree in describing the trees as male and female; the male speaking by day, the female by night; when a fragrant odour was emitted from the leaves, as the Persian poet says—

بشپ ماده كويا و بوبا شود

چو روشن شود نر كويا شود

The oracle was delivered in a loud voice, "which proceeded from the leaves of that lofty tree,"

كه آمد از برک درخت بلند

and terrified even Alexander. The votaries of Jupiter at *Dodona* were not so alarmed,—

"Who hear from rustling oaks thy dark decrees,
And catch the fates *low whispered* in the breeze."

But for these "low whispers" we have only the authority of Pope's *Iliad* (Book xvi. l. 290), as they are not mentioned in Homer's. According to different copies of the *Shahnámeh*, these trees are styled (in the heads of the chapter describing them) *درخت سخن كويا* and *درخت سخن كو* "speaking trees." One manuscript confounds them with the *درخت واق* or speaking trees that grew in an island called *Wák*.

¹⁴ Of the *πτεναι* or "doves," that frequently appear in ancient oracles, see Herodotus (ii.), Pausanias (vii.), &c. &c.

¹⁵ *Firdausi*'s words are *تنش مردم و سرش همچون كراز* or according to some copies of the *Shahnámeh* *تن مردم و سرسان كراز*

¹⁶ The *چشمه آب شور* corresponds to the extraordinary *πηγή* or fountain, mentioned by Arrian in his account of the Hammonian Temple, (De Exp. Alex. iii. 4.) The surrounding soil produced fossil salt, *Γίγνεται δὲ καὶ ἅλς αἰσθητοῦ ἐν τῇ χώρῃ τούτῳ ὁρκατοί*, (ib.) This was the "Fountain of the Sun," (*ὀνομαζομένη ἡλίου κρήνη*) mentioned by Diodorus Siculus, (xvii.)

¹⁷ *Æschines* contra Ctesiphontem.

¹⁸ *Lucan*. Pharsal. lib. x. vs. 36 et seq.

¹⁹ See the "Ichthyophagi" and "Island of Nosala," in the Indian History of Arrian, (ch. 31.) who mentions the loss or disappearance of those sent by Nearchus in a small vessel to that island, and some fables concerning it. According to Captain Blair, (quoted by Dr. Vincent in his Nearchus, p. 290. 2nd edit.) *Ashtola* might be supposed the *Nosala* of Arrian, or the en-

chanted island. From a sketch which I made in 1811, the form of Ashtola is delineated in Plate vi. of my "Travels." Strabo mentions the island reputed fatal to those who should approach it, (lib. xv.) also the immense whales that terrified Nearchus's sailors, but disappeared when a loud noise was made with trumpets and voices. (See also Arrian. Hist. Ind. 31.) *Firdausi* having described the Ichthyophagi, those "whose food consisted wholly of fish,"

زماهي بريشان همه خوردني

confounds the "enchanted island" with one of those immense whales noticed by Arrian and Strabo, which rose as a "mountain from the water" کوهي برآمد از آب—and the thirty men sent in a boat to explore it, by order of *Secander* or Alexander,

برآن کشتي اندر نشستند سي

represent those whom Nearchus sent in a thirty-oared vessel to examine the "enchanted island," as Arrian informs us, *Néarchos δὲ πέμψει κύβηα πρὸς τὴν νῆσον τροχόστροφον*, &c. (Hist. Ind. 31.) The "yellow fish" (ماهي زرد) of *Firdausi* may remind us of Ariosto's immense whale seen by Astolfo near the Indian coast, and mistaken for an island—

Che ella sia una isoletta ci credemo;

and on this monster was Astolfo carried through the waves, with Alcina the fair enchantress;

La Balena a l'ufficio diligente

Nuotando se n'ando per l'onde salse.

Orlando Furioso, cant. vi.

Here Alcina exercises her magic power on fishes of every kind, the most rare and wonderful;

Di tutti i pesci sorti differenti,

which she calls forth from the water and displays to Astolfo. This seems but an amplification of the adventures related by *Firdausi* in a chapter entitled

رسيدن اسکندر بدريا و ديدن ماهي زرد و عجایبها ديگر

"Alexander's arrival at the sea, and his beholding the yellow fish and other wonderful objects." A Spanish romance of the thirteenth century, and an old German poem, (as we learn from Dr. Southey's notes to "Madoc,") mention Alexander's going down into the sea (inclosed in a case or box made of glass) to examine the living wonders of the deep, and see how the small fishes lived among the great. To a learned member of the Royal Society of Literature, the Rev. Mr. Payne, I am indebted for the Welch words and a literal translation of *Taliesin's* poem *Rhyfeddodau Alexander*, or "The Wonders of Alexander," in which we read of that hero's descent "beneath the ocean's depth, among the fishy tribes." It is also noticed by the ingenious author of "Celtic Researches," the Rev. Mr. Davies, (p. 196.)

²⁰ See the Ms. *Masnavi* (مثنوي) of the great *Maulavi*, *Jelâl ad'din Rûmî* (جلال الدین رومی); that "astonishing" work, as it is styled by Sir William Jones, who, in his Discourse on "The Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus," (Asiat. Researches, vol. iii.) has translated the opening verses:—

"Hark how you reed in sadly pleasing tales,
Departed bliss and present wo bewails," &c.

&c. بشنو از ني چون حکایت میکند

²¹ The *Bahâr-e-Dânesh* (بهار دانش), the "Spring or Garden of Knowledge," by *Enaiyatullah* (عنایت الله), as translated by Dow, appeared in 1768 (two small volumes): Dr. Scott's translation (three volumes) in 1799. Having examined the Persian text in three different manuscripts, I do not hesitate to pronounce decidedly in favour of Dr. Scott's translation. It is true, that the copy used by Colonel Dow may have differed, in some of the tales, from other manuscripts.

²² See in the Ms. *Hadikeh* (حدیقه) of *Hakim Senâi* (حکیم سنای) the story beginning

آن شنیدی که بد بشهر هری

²³ See the Ms. *Mulana Abid Zagâni* مولانا عبید زاکانی of *Herzliyat* (هرزلیات). For the Muhammedan "Tartuffe," or hypocritical *Zâhid* (زاهد) of the story, as related in *Senâi's* work above-quoted, *Abid Zagâni* substitutes a "poet," and thus contrives for himself an opportunity of adding much point to the original, by the witty application of an Arabic sentence rendered appropriate by that change, expressing the licence peculiarly allowed to poets:—

یحیوز لشاعر و ما لا یحیوز لقبه

²⁴ Through the Divine Dialogues of Dr. Henry More, Howell's Letters, Sir Percy Herbert's Conceptions, the Contes Dévots of Legrand, Les Vies des Pères, the Sermones de Tempore of a German monk, &c.

²⁵ See an article "On the Liberty of Prophecy," by "Gulchin," in the Classical Journal, No. liii. (March, 1823) p. 64.

²⁶ The story of *Barsisâ* (برصیصا) is related by *Saadi* (سعدی) in his fifth (prose) *Risâleh* (رساله) or *Majlis* (مجلس), and by *Zacariâ Cazvini* (زکریا قزوینی) in his Ms. work entitled *Ajâib al-Makhlûcât* (عجایب المخلوقات) or "Wonders of Creation." See the *Favâ'id al-Shu'arâ* (فضائل مکاید الشیطان) or "Chapter on the Deceptions practised by Satan."

²⁷ See "Observations on some Medals and Gems bearing Inscriptions in the Pahlavi, or ancient Persic character," a little work which I published in 1801, and which gives (p. 12.) an anecdote extracted from the Ms. Chronicle of *Ebn Asim* of *Cûfah*.

²⁸ The *Tarikh* (تاریخ) or Chronicle of *Benâketi* (بناکتی) is entitled *Bahr al-Ansâb* (بحر الانساب) or "The Ocean of Genealogies."

²⁹ D'Herbelôt, in his *Bibliothèque Orientale*, gives an outline of this story, (art. *Homai*), which he appears to have chiefly taken from the *Lubb at'touarikh* (لب التواریخ), and some other epitomes of Persian history; but the *Tarikh Guzideh*, he says, does not mention this queen:—"Le Tarikh Cozideh ou Montekheb ne fait aucune mention de cette reine dans la dynastie des Caianides." I find, however, that my two copies of the *Guzideh* commemorate queen *Humâi* (همای) in an article from which the *Lubb at'touarikh* appears to have borrowed

whole sentences. D'Herbelot strangely expresses by *Cozideh* (as above) or by *Khosideh* (as under the article *Tarikh*) that word which the Persians write كزیده and pronounce *Guzideh*, signifying "chosen," or "select." *Muntekheb* (منتخب) used in the same sense is a title given to the Arabic and Turkish translations of the *Guzideh*. (See Bibl. Orient. in *Tarikh Khosideh*.)

³⁰ "Travels in Various Countries of the East, more particularly Persia," vol. i. p. 170.

³¹ See the "Orlando Furioso" (canto x. 75.), and in *Firdausi's Shâh Nâmeh*, the story of *Suhrâb* (سهراب) and *Hajir* (هجر), and *Cai-Khusrau's* (کیخسرو) or *Cyrus's* Review of his Troops.

³² See "Remarks on the Arabian Nights' Entertainments," p. 245.

³³ About the year 1090, *Hassan Sabbâh* (حسن صباح) founded a dynasty in the north of Persia, which continued during seven or eight generations. The castle of *Hassan Sabbâh* was called, from its lofty situation, *Almawt* الموت (from آلموت) or "the Eagle's Nest;" it stood between *Cazvin* and *Gilan*. Here one of those princes, entitled *Sheikh al Jebâl* (شیخ الجبال), the "Chief (or Elder) of the Mountains," trained several young men who were ready to risk their lives in assassinating his enemies. Marco Polo, Haiton the Armenian, and other writers, have mentioned those *assassins*, and furnished our excellent Purchas with the following information:—"In the north-east parts of Persia there was an old man named *Aloaddin*, a Mahumetan, (as all those parts then were,) which had inclosed a goodly valley, situate between two hills, and furnished it with all varietie which nature and art could yeeld, as fruits, pictures, rills of milke, wine, honny, water, palaces, and beautifull damosells richly attired, and called it *Paradise*; to which was no passage but by an impregnable castle. And daily preaching the pleasures of this *Paradise* to the youths which hee kept in his court, sometimes he would minister a sleepe drinke to some of them, and thus convey them thither; where, being entertained with these pleasures four or five dayes, they supposed themselves rapt into *Paradise*. And then being againe cast into a trance by the said drinke, he caused them to be carried forth, and after would examine them of what they had scene, and by this delusion would make them resolute for any enterprize which he should appoint them, as to murder any prince his enemy; for they feared not death in hope of their Mahumeticall *Paradise*." (Pilgrimage, p. 428. 3rd edit. 1617.)

³⁴ See the *hekâyet* (حکایت) or story beginning with this line—

خسروی که افاق در فرمایش بود

in the *Muntek al'teir* (منتطف الطیر) or "Eloquence of the Birds," by *Ferid ad'din Attâr* (فرید الدین عطار), who dates it (according to one of my copies) in 1177.

³⁵ See the Ms. *Tûti Nâmeh* (طوطی نامه) the "Parrot-book," or "Tales of a Parrot," by *Nakhshabi* (نخشبی), a writer so named from *Nakhshab*, a city of *Turkestan*, called also *Karshi* (قرشی). When the female figure had repeated her cry, *man miravam* (من میروم), "I am going," she declares herself to be the صورت حیات پادشاه طبرستان "form or representation of the king of *Tabristân's* life." This is the second story in *Nakhshabi's* work,

work, according to my copies; but it is not given by Mr. Gerrans, who translated part of the *Tûti Nâmeh* (octavo, 1792). The Persian text, much altered and abridged by *Muhammed Kadery*, was published with an English translation at Calcutta, and reprinted in London, octavo, 1801. He has given, however, in this abridgment, but thirty-five tales; the original contains fifty-two.

³⁶ "Beneath this stone lies Catharine Gray," &c.

³⁷ Among the hundred and fifty-eight *Rebâ'iyât* (رباعیات) or tetrastichs, composed by *Omar Khâyâm* (عمر خیام). See particularly that (No. 111.) which ends در کار که کوزه کران کوزه شویم. See also Nos. 9. 66. 68. 79. 89. 103. 138. and 146.

