

BRITISH CONTRIBUTIONS TO PERSIAN STUDIES

ARTHUR J. ARBERRY



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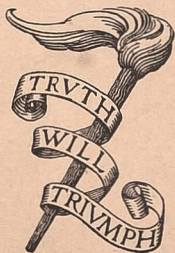
BRITISH CONTRIBUTIONS TO PERSIAN STUDIES

BY

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BRITISH CONTRIBUTIONS TO PERSIAN STUDIES

I. THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM

IRAN's contact with the western world falls naturally into four distinct phases. In the first of these the Iranians, led by their great emperors Darius and Cyrus, sought to carve a mighty dominion extending over the whole of the Near and Middle East but were halted at Marathon, Salamis and Thermopylae and hurled backwards. The second phase begins with Alexander the Great's conquests and extends down to the break-up of the Roman Empire : in this period Iran is either totally subjugated or on the defensive. Arab and Mongol invasions, and the dissolution of Europe during the Middle Ages, caused a break of many centuries in these varied relations. The emergence of the Safavid dynasty, coinciding with the re-establishment of communications between Europe and Asia and the expansion of trade, opened the third phase, during which Iran negotiated on equal terms with the western Powers : this phase may be considered to have come to an end at the fall of the Safavids. After another hiatus, during which Iran suffered under dynastic squabbles and a weak administration, the fourth phase began : and this brings the story down to the present day.

The most momentous turning-point in the history of Iran, however, from the religious, linguistic and cultural standpoint, was the conquest of the country by the Arabs and its conversion to Islam. While it is true that the native genius reasserted itself with amazing rapidity and fertility after the submersion of Iran's political identity, every product of mind and spirit thereafter bears the unmistakable stamp of Muhammad's mission.

This historical fact is recognised by western scholarship, which, for example, uses the term Iranian when referring to the languages and dialects spoken in Iran before the Arab conquest and Persian for the language as it emerged thereafter. A word of exegesis may not be out of place. Persian is an Indo-European language cognate on the one hand with Sanskrit and on the other with the Romance and Teutonic languages and their ancestors. There are some striking examples of this affinity : the Persian for " father ", " mother ", " daughter " is *pidar*, *mādar*, *dukhtar* ; the enclitic verb " to be " in Persian gives the endings *-am*, *-i*, *-ast*, *-im*, *-id*, *-and*. In a general sense the grammatical and syntactical structure of the language is distinctly Indo-European. At the same time the vocabulary is permeated with words of Arabic, that is, Semitic origin. The language spoken in Iran up to the

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seventh century A.D. is scarcely to be recognised as the parent of the language in which Persians have written since the end of the tenth century. Further, the Arabs brought with them their alphabet and obliterated the older forms of Iranian orthography. Modern Persian is moreover indebted to the Arabs for its entire system of prosody. From these few facts of a fundamental character it will be clear to the English reader that the difference between Iranian and Persian (to use the scientific jargon) is rather greater than that between Anglo-Saxon and English. Otherwise, the effect of the Norman Conquest on the spoken and written language of these islands is remarkably like the effect of the Arab Conquest on the spoken and written language of Iran. Just as Latin, through the medium of Norman French, supplies the greater part of the "technical" vocabulary of our tongue, so Arabic performed an equal service to Persian.

With this historical and scientific demarcation in mind it is proposed to confine this present pamphlet to a consideration of Iran and Persian culture during the second of these two great divisions, that is, during the third and fourth of the phases enumerated in our first paragraph. In speaking of the British contribution to Persian studies we shall thus exclude all consideration of the very great volume of work done by British scholars towards elucidating and interpreting the pre-Islamic culture of Iran. That is a field in which classical and hellenistic scholars collaborate with Hebraists and archaeologists : it is a story that merits its own recital.

2. THE FIRST ENGLISH TRADE MISSIONS

The discovery of the Cape route to India and the consequent rapid realisation of Portugal's imperialistic designs led in the year 1508 to Albuquerque's occupation of strong-points on the Persian Gulf. Thus abruptly and ill-omenedly begins the story of modern European relations with Iran. While the Portuguese were naturally more preoccupied with the task of consolidating their position in India, strategic considerations induced them to pursue a vigorous policy along the whole line of their sea-communications : the conquest of Hormuzd, finally achieved in 1515, inaugurated a century of Portuguese paramountcy in Iranian markets. Shah Ismail, the first of the Safavid rulers, indeed welcomed the intrusion of European influence in the Middle East. The Turks at that time of their maximum expansion were threatening their neighbours in Europe and Asia alike, and the astute Iranian monarch and his successors realised the advantages to be derived from a policy of "encirclement" as well as in the economic field that Iran's position offered. After the mediaeval rupture of cent

The First English Trade Missions

economics and politics have never been long divorced in Iran's internal and external affairs.

It was in the reign of Tahmasp that the first Englishman appeared at the Iranian court. Anthony Jenkinson, following in Richard Chancellor's footsteps, in 1557 visited Russia on behalf of the Company of Muscovy and was granted facilities by Ivan the Terrible to proceed as far as Khiva and Bokhara. His ambition being thus fired to go still further afield, in 1561 he obtained the Tsar's leave to take the land route to Qazvin, then capital of the Shah. To his audience with Tahmasp he brought credentials from Queen Elizabeth which, however, though couched in faultless diplomatic terms, failed to achieve his purpose of securing a commercial agreement between the two countries; for the Shah saw fit to question Jenkinson closely on religious rather than economic matters, and being satisfied that the Englishman was an infidel, placed no obstacle in the way of his immediate departure from Iran.

A second mission was sent to Qazvin in 1568: for English traders were by no means disposed to be excluded indefinitely from a market of which they had heard such remarkable accounts. This expedition, conducted by Arthur Edwards and Richard Wills, was more successful and resulted in a commercial treaty allowing English merchants to trade extensively in the Shah's territories. The death of Tahmasp was the occasion for a third mission to be sent by Queen Elizabeth to his successor Muhammad Khuda-bandeh: it had however but mediocre success, more particularly as England was presently engaged in her life-and-death struggle with Spain. The annihilation of the Spanish Armada in 1588 opened the seas to English commerce and ended the necessity of using the land-route to Iran.

Abbas I succeeded to the throne in 1587 and was immediately engaged in coping with internal insubordination and Turkish ambitions. Early in his long reign he received one of the most remarkable visitors ever to seek audience at the Iranian court. Anthony Sherley, a graduate of Oxford, after sundry adventures on the Continent found himself appointed at the instance of the Earl of Essex to lead a deputation proposing the adherence of the Shah to a league of Christian princes aimed at countering the Ottoman peril. Accompanied by his brother Robert and the other members of his suite, he arrived at Qazvin in 1598 and was well received by the soldierly Abbas, to whom he proceeded shortly still further to recommend himself by training a picked army in the art of war as practised in contemporary Europe. The Shah, happy that his prestige as a potential ally of the western Powers should be enhanced, decided in 1599 to send Anthony on a mission to Persia, which, however, ended in ill-success. His brother

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Robert meanwhile continued to enjoy the favour of his royal patron, who married him in 1607 to the daughter of a Circassian chief and the following year dispatched him on another mission to Europe. From this mission there resulted firm diplomatic and commercial relations between England and Iran. Ambassadors to the court of the Grand Sophy continued to look after English trading interests, which had rapidly grown since the foundation in 1599 of the East India Company and the residence of Sir Thomas Roe at the court of the Moghul emperor Jehangir. In 1622 a mixed Iranian and English force expelled the Portuguese from strategic Hormuzd which they had held since 1515.

The death of Shah Abbas I, who in his dotage had turned against his old and faithful follower Robert Sherley, found English interests in a precarious state once more, but a new treaty was negotiated with Shah Safi in 1629. The fortunes of England again suffered an eclipse with the emergence of Holland as a great naval and commercial Power, and the struggle between the two rivals continued until the peace of 1654. But English trade in Iran, as elsewhere, was immediately to be faced with rivalry from a new quarter. The place of Holland was taken by France, and thus began the long and melancholy phase of Anglo-French relations which carries us far beyond the confines of the present chapter.

The foregoing brief and all too sketchy historical review will serve to indicate the political and commercial background against which we shall now endeavour to trace in the rise of Persian studies in Europe and particularly in England.

3. PERSIAN INCUNABULA AND THE BEGINNINGS OF EUROPEAN SCHOLARSHIP

The modern study of Persian culture develops naturally out of a general appreciation of Islamic and especially Arabic civilisation. On this count it might have been supposed that the same situation would have arisen in the historical period just passed under review, when Arabic had long been studied in the West as a key to medical and philosophical treasures. But it is precisely because scholarship in these days largely confined its attention to Arab achievements in medicine and philosophy, and was not interested to the same degree in Arab literature and art, that the step from Arabia to Iran was never taken. After all, though there is certainly much good medicine and philosophy written in the Persian language, it cannot be contested that Arabic is a far richer source of mediaeval knowledge of these two branches of learning.

No : Persian culture had to find its own way to the heart of the West.

Persian Incunabula and the Beginnings of European Scholarship

And the way to that heart—alas for occidental materialism !—necessarily lay along the path of commerce. The Sherley brothers during their residence at the court of Abbas doubtless acquired some fluency in the Persian tongue : ¹ the diplomatic notes passing between Qazvin and London called for a high degree of familiarity on the English side with the tortuous niceties of Persian officialese. Nor was this all. The court language of the Moghul Empire was also Persian : the old records of the East India Company contain precious exemplars of Indian competence in the tongue of Firdausi and Omar Khayyám, and bear witness to the ability of the Company's early servants to master its intricacies. If therefore there is little direct evidence, in the shape of published works, establishing the interest taken in this admittedly narrow and unspiritual aspect of Persian studies by Englishmen of the early seventeenth century, the argument by inference is sound enough and the conclusions inescapable.

Meanwhile another factor was at work. The missionary is commonly reputed to follow closely in the wake of the commercial traveller. (In actual fact it was a Persian Jew, Jacob ben Joseph Tawus, who gave Europe its first example of printed Persian, though in a strange dress : he published a Persian version of the Pentateuch in *Hebrew characters* at Constantinople in 1546. But this pioneering effort was not followed up.) If Anthony Jenkinson found his Christian faith a stumbling-block at Tahmasp's court, the liberal spirit of the Moghul Akbar, who dreamed of founding a new world-religion based on syncretism and called it the "divine faith", made possible the attendance at Fatepur of a band of hopeful evangelists including the illustrious St. Francis Xavier. Among the incunabula of Persian printing are Ludovicus de Dieu's editions (Leiden, 1639) of Xavier's *Dastan-i Masih* (Story of Christ) and *Dastan-i San Pedro* (Story of St. Peter), which are but two of several apologetic tracts written in Persian by the Portuguese friar.

De Dieu's publishers, fearing that a public unable to read Persian would leave these two books to be remaindered, invited their editor to prepare a short Grammar of Persian : in the same year, 1639, his *Rudimenta Linguae Persicae*, the earliest European handbook of the Persian language, came from the Officina Elseviriana at Leiden, having as an appendix the first chapter of Genesis transcribed into Persian characters from Jacob ben Joseph's Judaeo-Persian version.

We have already referred to the rise of Holland as a maritime and mercantile Power, and it is to the eternal credit of the Dutch scholars, type-founders and publishers of this period that they blazed a trail of Persian studies for others shortly to follow. Levinus Warner, animadverting

¹ But see E. D. Ross, *Sir Anthony Sherley and his Persian Adventure*, p. xxi, for the view that Anthony knew little Persian.

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severely on the bad Persian of Jacob ben Joseph and St. Francis Xavier, and anxious that Europe should have a better opportunity of sharing his admiration for the true elegance of the language—"ubi Arabicae linguae subtilitatem admiror, & Turcicae extollo majestatem, tum vero Persicae elegantiam exosculor", he writes—published at Leiden a *Proverbiorum et Sententiarum Persicarum Centuria*: this in 1644. In 1651 George Gentius published at Amsterdam the first edition of a Persian literary classic, the *Gulistan* of Sa'di, complete with notes and a Latin translation.

Meanwhile, however, the Oxford scholar John Greaves, whose activities as an Arabist are fully appreciated in Bernard Lewis' companion brochure *British Contributions to Arabic Studies*, not to be outdone by his Dutch colleagues, had been engaged, in the intervals of his travels, with writing a Persian Grammar. His *Elementa Linguae Persicae* saw the light of London in 1649, but he tells us in his preface that the book was ready nine years before but had been held up owing to shortage of type and "more serious cares". The following year he produced an edition of the astronomical tables (*Zij*) of the prince Ulugh Beg: and Thomas Hyde, also a pioneer of Arabic studies, brought out a Latin translation and commentary at Oxford in 1665. It is interesting to find these earliest English orientalists seeking in Persian the same utilitarian virtues which had commended Arabic to mediaeval Europe, and fastening their attention upon its scientific rather than its literary qualities: in marked contrast to their Dutch contemporaries. Yet we must not fail to mention, even in passing, that it was on the basis of Bodleian and Cambridge manuscripts that the first Persian edition of the Gospels was printed, that included in the great London polyglot of 1657.

After Holland and England, the story passes to France, now at the end of the seventeenth century entering the Middle East market. In 1722 Petit de la Croix published at Paris a French translation of the *Zafar-nameh*, Sharaf al-Din Yazdi's biography of Tamerlane; and the following year J. Darby brought out at London an English rendering of the French. Such is the obscure, not to say supposititious, origin of the great school of British historians of Iran.¹ The great Voltaire himself did not disdain to affect Persian studies, witness his "histoire orientale" *Zadig* with its fictitious dedication ascribed to Sa'di. (Iran has incidentally been a happy hunting-ground for all kinds of forgeries and impostures: most celebrated of them all is J. J. Morier's *Adventures of Haji Baba of Ispahan*.)

¹ Captain J. Stevens published in 1715 *The History of Persia*, translating from Spanish the garbled version Pedro Teixeira made (Amberes, 1610) of Mirkhond's *Rauzat al-Safa*: but neither work deserves to be described as a real contribution to Persian studies; and Stevens knew so little of the subject as to proclaim on the title-page of his book that Mirkhond wrote in Arabic.

Persian Scholarship in India

The storming of India by the usurping Nadir Shah stimulated the interest of contemporary European scholars, and a spate of histories followed from the printing presses of France, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and England. Among these it is pertinent to our present purpose to mention *A Journal of Nadir Shah's Transactions in India*, translated by James Fraser from the original, written at Delhi by Mirza Zaman, and published at London in 1742. But it is important to notice that it was India, and not Iran, which formed the focal point of all these studies : and this leads us to make a few general observations on the significance of India as the birthplace of the true modern tradition of Persian scholarship.

4. PERSIAN SCHOLARSHIP IN INDIA

The disordered condition of Iran during the decline and fall of Safavid rule made the country unattractive both to travellers and traders, and there followed in consequence a hiatus in the intimate relations which, as we have seen, had existed between Iran and the western Powers over the two preceding centuries. But meanwhile foreign, especially British and French, interests in India were expanding greatly. The long reign of Aurangzebe (1658-1707), though certainly not lacking in military incidents, was sufficiently tranquil to allow of steady commercial progress. But when his strong hand was removed from the controls, the complicated machinery of the Moghul State soon began to break down : internal insurrections, followed by external aggression, threw India into a condition approaching general chaos. In these circumstances it was not difficult for the East India Company to extend the sphere of its commercial activities to embrace wider and wider territorial suzerainty. Anglo-French rivalry, culminating in the struggle between Dupleix and Clive, concluded with the latter's total triumph. The victory of Plassey in 1757 decided the course of history and opened a phase which only ended with the suppression of the Indian Mutiny and the transfer of British authority in India from the Company to the Crown.

The second half of the eighteenth century thus witnessed the phenomenon of an English trading company being politically responsible for the administration of great and growing territories in a sub-continent where Persian was the *lingua franca* of commerce and diplomacy. It is therefore not surprising that the circumstances produced the men : the men created the tradition. First coming to Persian as a language the knowledge of which was indispensable for the successful conduct of business and affairs, the Company's British servants soon recognised its merits as the vehicle of a rich literature of high merit. To assay and illustrate this transformation from

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a position in which Persian studies were almost totally neglected in the West, to a situation in which Englishmen strenuously competed with each other in perfecting their acquaintance and advertising their admiration of the Persian language, we cannot do better than quote words written by Sir William Jones in 1771 in his *Grammar of the Persian Language* :

"If pains and want be the lot of a scholar, the life of an Orientalist must certainly be attended with peculiar hardships. Gentius, who published a beautiful Persian work called *The Bed of Roses*,¹ with a useful but inelegant translation, lived obscurely in Holland, and died in misery. Hyde, who might have contributed greatly towards the progress of Eastern learning, formed a number of expensive projects with that view, but had not the support and assistance which they deserved and required. The labours of Meninski immortalised and ruined him. . . .

"Since the literature of Asia was so much neglected, and the causes of that neglect were so various, we could not have expected that any slight power would rouse the nations of Europe from their inattention to it ; and they would, perhaps, have persisted in despising it, if they had not been animated by the most powerful incentive that can influence the mind of man : interest was the magic wand which brought them all within one circle ; interest was the charm which gave the languages of the East a real and solid importance. By one of those revolutions, which no human prudence could have foreseen, the Persian language found its way into India ; that rich and celebrated empire, which, by the flourishing state of our commerce, has been the source of incredible wealth to the merchants of Europe. A variety of causes, which need not be mentioned here, gave the English nation a most extensive power in that kingdom : our India Company began to take under their protection the princes of the country, by whose protection they gained their first settlement ; a number of important affairs were to be transacted in peace and war between nations equally jealous of one another, who had not the common instrument of conveying their sentiments ; the servants of the company received letters which they could not read, and were ambitious of gaining titles of which they could not comprehend the meaning ; it was found highly dangerous to employ the natives as interpreters, upon whose fidelity they could not depend ; and it was at last discovered, that they must apply themselves to the study of the Persian language, in which all the letters from the Indian princes were written. A few men of parts and taste, who resided in Bengal, have since amused themselves with the literature of the East, and have spent their leisure in reading the poems and histories of Persia. . . . The languages of Asia will now, perhaps, be studied with uncommon ardour ; they are known to be useful,

¹ See above, p. 10.

Persian Scholarship in India

and will soon be found instructive and entertaining ; the valuable manuscripts that enrich our public libraries will be in a few years elegantly printed ; the manners and sentiments of the Eastern nations will be perfectly known ; and the limits of our knowledge will be no less extended than the bounds of our empire."

As we shall now see, Sir William Jones's hopes, based on what he had observed of the "amusements" of a few Englishmen of Bengal, were indeed to be amply realised, though not perhaps so speedily as he may have envisaged. And as Jones himself played no small part in inspiring the labours of those pioneers in India of Persian, as of Sanskrit studies, it will be appropriate to detail here his literary achievements, so far as they concern our present subject.

Jones, as he tells us himself, owed his enthusiasm for Persian to his acquaintance with Baron Reviski, whose chief contribution to Persian scholarship consists in his Latin translation (Vienna, 1771) of sixteen odes of Hafiz. He acknowledges with equal gratitude his debt to Dr. Hunt of Oxford, as well as to General Carnac who placed at his disposal a fine collection of Persian manuscripts. The first fruits of these studies was his Grammar of Persian from which we have just quoted : it ran into many editions. He edited the *Laila Majnun* of Hatifi (Calcutta, 1788), not among the best examples of the poetic genius of Iran. He translated the *Life of Nader Shah* from the Persian by Muhammad Mahdi Khan (London, 1773), furnishing it with excursuses on the history of Persia and of the Persian language. Jones further printed an admirable paraphrase of one of the most admired of the lyrics of Hafiz, of which space will only permit us to cite the opening stanzas :

Sweet maid, if thou wouldst charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck infold ;
That rosy cheek, that lily hand
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bocára'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 bow'r so sweet as Moselláy.

Peerless genius that he was, Jones had too restless a mind to focus his attention on one subject, when so vast a field of equally attractive studies

lay untilled before him : and he presently forsook the sweet delights of Persian poetry for the more austere pleasures of Sanskrit syntax and Hindu law. By the time his *Grammar of the Persian Language* had reached its third edition he had to confess that his "professional duties" had "wholly engaged his attention and induced him not only to abandon Oriental literature, but even to efface, as far as possible, the very traces of it from his memory". It only remains to regret, therefore, the limitations imposed by nature on a single man's capacity for work, which cheated Persian studies of the further services of one who might well have become one of their most distinguished exponents.

Sir William Jones's generation and that immediately succeeding it produced a veritable galaxy of linguistic stars of the first magnitude among the servants of the East India Company in India. Sufficient stress has never yet been laid on the truly remarkable contributions to learning made by a group of Englishmen engaged in looking after the interests of a great and liberal trading organisation in a country where climate and the high incidence of tropical diseases not yet mastered by medicine combined to create an atmosphere highly inimical to the prosecution of scientific studies ; and this, mark it well, largely in the rare intervals of leisure after their arduous official duties had been discharged. In the present sketch we can only touch on one side of these multifarious activities, which ranged over the entire field of linguistics and science : but from what is written here, a fraction, but a representative fraction, of the whole, the reader may assess the magnitude of mankind's indebtedness to that Company and those workers.

With the name of Sir William Jones it is natural to associate that of Sir Charles Wilkins, first Librarian of the East India Company and father of Sanskrit studies. Wilkins of course knew Persian as well, and was instrumental in bringing out the 1806 edition of J. Richardson's massive *Dictionary*. But his most distinctive contribution to Persian studies was also a highly practical one : he designed the *nasta'liq* printing founts used first in F. Balfour's edition (Calcutta, 1781) of the *Forms of Herkern*, and subsequently in many other publications admirable in their time.

While there is no evidence that Warren Hastings was acquainted with Persian, his name nevertheless deserves to be mentioned in this context ; for he put together a fine collection of Persian manuscripts, subsequently purchased by the East India Company, and thus assisted materially in preserving to posterity some of the best and rarest examples of Persian penmanship and miniature painting. Scarcely an Englishman engaged in India at this period failed to render similar service to the cause of Persian studies : most of their collections found their way eventually, either by gift or sale, into one of the great public repositories of Oriental manuscripts in India or

IACOBVS DEI GRATIA REX SCO-
TORSAL, OMNIVM Q INSVARIAM CIR-
cumiacentium: ac Regnorum Potentissimorum Anglie & Hibernie, summo ejusdem
Iehoue. nati Hæres proximus.

Potentissimo Et invictissimo Principi Shaugh Abbas, Persarum, Medorum Parthorum,
Hircanorum, Carmanorum, Margianorum, populorum, cis Et ultra Tigrim Fluvium Et omni-
um intra mare Caspium Et Persicum sinum, nationum atq; gentium Imperatori: Salutem Et
rerum prosperarum felicissimum incrementum

Cum non ita pridem, nobilissimus ille eques Anglus, ANTONIVS SHERLEYVS
Legatione sibi a M. V. commissa pulcherrime functus apud multos Principes, in Aula
etiam Cesarea, sapienter, fortiter, permulta de rebus Persicis perorasset: dici non potuit, quan-
tum splendoris nomini vestro accesserit, cum omnes publice celebrarentur, neq; per varias solitudines
aspeni juga, vel insolita maria cessant virtutis vestre innotam esse. rem Nam cum pluri-
ma apud nos ab historicis commemorantur, bella factaq; egregia, ab Imperatoribus Persicis ter-
ra mariq; gesta, in quibus fortuna maximam partem proprio quodam suo jure expetere vide-
atur: In ista legatione, qua sancta hospitalitatis jura, Et dulcia communis humanitatis
officia inter nos, nostra regna, nostrorum subditos constitui, coli Et constanter conservari
queant, non hoc fortune sed Consilij, non casus sed virtutis certissimum argumentum
esse constat: Nec in re tam plana hallucinari debemus, quin omnipotens Dei summa
providentia ratum esse fateamur: ut fortissimus ille miles SHERLEYVS, nullis vel
parentum illustrium precibus, vel amplissimi patrimonij spe flecti potuit, quo minus dilectis-
sima sua patria derelicta in sinum M.¹ V. Vre scipsum fortunamq; quam conspiceret,
speramus itaq; brevi affuturum tempus cum ex mutuo omnium Principum consensu
infesta gentis Turcice, insignia sacra Et sub pedibus contrita, ludibrio Et risui expo-
nentur. Veruntamen illud nos male habet quod in re tam seria Et tam necessaria de
Anglorum auxilijs nihil promittere, nedum sperare, ausi sumus. Hæres etenim Co-
mitis Essexij qui ad omnes bellicas expeditiones fulminis instar paratus esse solebat,
violenta ac inopinata mors Regni illius incolæ adeo obtupecfecit, ut interna potius
timere

timere, quam externa sperare malint: maxima quippe pars eorum qui Anglorum habent
hodie moderantur, privati odij non solum inter seceant; veruntamen propter unitam
a mercatoribus suis cum Turcis amicitiam, Atene huic nostre Legationi sese opponat.
Quod cum per confidentes nostros exploratum haberemus illico Equitem SHERLEYVM
admonere Et hortari non dubitavimus, ne rema Et M.¹ Vre non profuturum si-
hippi exitroalia inaperet. Qui quidem auctoritati ac consilio nostro acquiescens
exulem si fieri quodammodo passus est, ut posthac cum Cornu illius Imperij ad
nos devoluta fuerit uberiores fructus laborum suorum reportare possit. Nam cum
Regnum Anglie munitissima Classe instructum, ac totius orbis circumnaviga-
tione celebrissimum terrorem maximam genti Ottomanæ incutiat, dubium non est
quin diuino spirante numine ex istis amicitia felicitibus auspicijs, vobis Et nob tuis
eternam gloriam cum sumâ utilitate conjunctam aliquando sinus consequuturi. Magna-
nimam itaq; Equitem SHERLEYVM. M. V. ita commendatum esse volumus;
ut pote hominem omnis generis armorum, Et politice rationis peritissimum: In quo
minus valent verba quam fides manus quam animus, vtrinq; tamen insignibus pre-
clarus. Eri fortitudinem illam que virtutis stirpe stipata mirum sue inâolis speci-
men toties edidit, conservatam Et nutritam fore intellexerimus universo mundo pa-
lam innotescere faciemus, plus virium habuisse benevolentiam ad nos conjungendas,
quam terram Et mare ad nos longissime referandos. Deus Opt. Max. salutem
omnem Et perpetuam vestre concedat Majestati. Datum in Scotia in inclito
nostro Palatio Edinburgi. Anno Mundi 5680 Comen nri IESV
CHRISTI 1601 Regnorum vero nostrorum xxxiiii.

Amantiss. Frater tuus,

JACOVS B



*Magis Sighi Porcarum Legatus iunctissime
Cesari Citeroque Principibus Conflans
munice Amicitie et Auctor et Auditor
EX ORE AD OS
S. Cæ M^{ra} sculptor. Egidius Sadon. D.D.*

7.6

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Anthony Sherley (1565–?1635)



*WILLIAM JONES, ESQ.
F.R.S. &c.*

*Founder & President of the
Asiatic Society
Calcutta.*

*Member of the Society of Antiquaries
and of the Society of Dilettanti
London.*

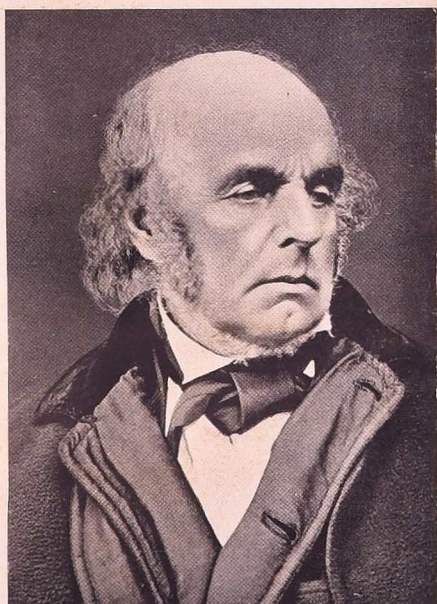
By courtesy of the India Office

Sir William Jones (1746–1794)



By courtesy of the India Office

Sir Charles Wilkins (?1749–1836)



Edward FitzGerald (1809–1883)

Persian Scholarship in India

England. At the beginning of the nineteenth century very few indeed of the standard works of Persian literature had been printed, and beginners and researchers alike perforce were obliged to have recourse to manuscripts : it is therefore no exaggeration to say that but for the discrimination and generosity of those early collectors the task of building up a school of Persian scholarship would have been beyond the possibility of accomplishment.

In 1784 a group of British enthusiasts met together in Calcutta and founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal, with the object of prosecuting an "enquiry into the history and antiquities, arts, sciences and literature of Asia". This Society, which recently received a royal charter, was the parent of all the orientalist societies which now flourish in almost every country. It was destined to play a large part in stimulating and assisting Persian studies : not only its Journal, but still more its *Bibliotheca Indica*, provided the means of publishing innumerable Persian texts and translations which would otherwise have remained in manuscript. The bare list of these publications is in itself most impressive, and we would recommend the curious to consult the Society's published catalogue for further information. When the East India Company founded its College at Hertford in 1806, Persian was a compulsory subject on the curriculum for probationers in the Company's service ; the College at Fort William also prescribed Persian for its students ; Chairs of Persian were instituted at both. Public disputation in Persian was part of the graduating ceremony at Calcutta. Finally, the foundation in 1823 of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland acted as a further stimulus to Persian studies in the Empire's capital, and provided funds for the printing of numerous learned researches into Persian literature and culture.

It would be wearisome to enumerate here the names of all, or even a fraction of all those Englishmen who attained high competence in the Persian language between 1770 and 1840 and made important contributions to Persian studies. Their names run into scores. In making the selection which now follows, regard has been had to the desirability of mentioning representatives of each branch of research, while due emphasis has been laid on the predominating part played in these researches by work on Indian history. It should incidentally be explained that the raw materials for the history of India under the Moghuls are, with the exception of contemporary European sources, almost wholly composed in Persian : this fact accounts for the importance attaching to Persian scholarship as an ancillary to Indian historiography.

We have already mentioned J. Richardson's *Dictionary of Arabic, Persian and English*. Richardson also produced (London, 1774) the first volume of English translations of Hafiz, basing his work on Baron Reviski's publication

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referred to above. Hafiz, Iran's supreme lyric genius, has attracted the admiration of numerous British scholars and writers, as we shall see hereafter : Richardson was merely the founder, with his friend Sir William Jones, of what almost amounts to a national cult.

Francis Gladwin, who had served in the Bengal Army and attracted the attention of Warren Hastings, that admirable judge and inspirer of men, was appointed a professor at the College of Fort William in 1801 : in 1802 he was transferred to Patna where he spent the rest of his life. His productive life commenced with the publication of a translation of the *A'in-i Akbari* (Institutes of Akbar, Calcutta, 1783-6). In 1788 he edited and translated the *Pand-nameh* of Sa'di, translated the *Bayan-i waqi'* of Abd al-Karim Kashmiri, and compiled *A Narrative of Events in Bengal* on the basis of a Persian original. Four years later he displayed his versatility still further by bringing out a Persian translation of Osterwald's *Abridgment of the History of the Bible*. In 1801 he published at London an edition and translation of the *Tuti-nameh* (Tales of a Parrot) of Muhammad Khudavand, and at Calcutta produced *The Persian Moonshee*, a useful reading-book for beginners. Finally, he edited (Calcutta, 1806) and translated (London, 1808) Sa'di's *Gulistan*. Gladwin's work has of course been superseded by the more scientific productions of later scholars ; but the foregoing catalogue indicates the range of his pioneering efforts.

The history of India had already attracted the attention of numerous writers, prominent among them Robert Orme, the East India Company's historiographer, whose *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan* (London, 1763-78) and *Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire* (London, 1782) were much admired in their day : though Orme himself knew no Persian and drew mainly on European sources. But British scholars now set with a will about the task of editing and translating the most important native texts. We have seen that Sir William Jones and Francis Gladwin made their own contributions. Other workers were A. Dow (*History of Hindostan*, London, 1770-72, a translation of *Tarikh-i Firishtah*), J. Scott (*Translation of the Memoirs of Eradut Khan*, London, 1786, and *Ferishta's History of Dekkan*, Shrewsbury, 1794), J. Kerr (*Short Historical Narrative of the Mahrattah State*, London, 1782), J. White (*Institutes, Political and Military*, by Timour, Oxford, 1783) and H. Vansittart (*History of the First Ten Years of Alamgeer*, Calcutta, 1785). All these works were printed before the end of the eighteenth century : the opening quarter of the nineteenth century saw the flood-gates wide open. We cannot do more now than mention the mere names of Sir William Ouseley, Sir John Malcolm (whose *History of Persia*, London, 1815, is still esteemed), D. Price, D. Shea, W. Kirkpatrick, C. Stewart and F. C. Belfour.

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So much for historical texts. The story is equally remarkable where it touches the editing and interpretation of poetry. Credit for being the first European to translate any part of Firdausi's *Shah-nameh*, Iran's great national epic, belongs to Joseph Campion, who published a volume at Calcutta in 1785 and another at London in 1788. An ambitious plan to print the entire text of the poem was conceived by M. Lumsden but only one volume was actually produced (Calcutta, 1811): it remained for Turner Macan to bring out the complete epic in four volumes (Calcutta, 1829). Meanwhile J. Atkinson had published a verse-translation of the Sohrab and Rostam incident (Calcutta, 1814), and the same theme engaged W. T. Robertson (Calcutta, 1829): it subsequently passed into English literature through the genius of Matthew Arnold whose *Sohrab and Rustum* has a grave beauty which is unforgettable. S. Weston also published a volume of *Episodes from the Shah Nameh* in English verse (London, 1815).

The first edition of the *Diwan* of Hafiz came from Upjohn's Calcutta press in 1791. J. Nott published (London, 1787) a selection of the odes translated into English verse; J. H. Hindley brought out a similar volume (London, 1800). The opening passages of Sa'di's *Bustan* had been printed with a Latin translation by J. Uri at Oxford in 1770: the first complete edition was that published at Calcutta in 1828, though selected stories had appeared at Calcutta in 1810.¹ The *Gulistan*, after F. Gladwin's edition and translation, was again edited and translated by J. Dumoulin (Calcutta, 1807); J. Ross (London, 1823) produced a version based on Gentius' text; S. Sullivan in 1774 had published *Select Fables from Gulistan*: all this was pioneering work, and prepared the way for later editors; perhaps not work of surpassing merit, but meritorious nevertheless. In 1836 J. Atkinson translated the *Laila Majnun* of Nizami: in 1844 N. Bland printed the text of the same poet's *Makhzan al-asrar*. Meanwhile Indian workers, following the lead of their British pupils and preceptors, were also laying the foundations of a tradition of scholarship in their own country which has steadily increased in lustre.

The foregoing account of solid achievement will have made dull reading. Though it is only a part of the whole story, it will suffice to indicate the magnitude of the contribution to Persian studies made by these British servants of the East India Company, and to illustrate a record of honest and devoted labours of which their countrymen have every cause to be proud.

¹ This of course without counting J. H. Harington's edition (Calcutta, 1791-5) of Sa'di's *Kulliyat* (collected works).

5. ENGLISH TRANSLATORS OF PERSIAN POETRY

We have gone rather fully into the history of the period covered by the years 1770-1840, because it seemed desirable to assemble the evidence on which we base our claim that the modern school of Persian studies owes almost all its inspiration to the work of a group of British scholars serving British interests in India. It would obviously extend the present brochure far beyond its intended limits to continue our account in anything approaching this detail. For describing work done by British scholars over the last century it will therefore be necessary to observe a high degree of selectivity ; and the reader is asked to bear in mind that what is written in the following pages could be multiplied many times over.

It would of course be inexcusable not to discuss at some length the personality and qualities of the man who has become regarded as the interpreter *par excellence* of Persian poetry in the English language : we mean Edward FitzGerald. It is reported that his *Rubáiyát* has again become a best-seller under the stress of the present war. It should be unnecessary nowadays to call attention once more to the facts, first, that Omar Khayyám was much more admired by his countrymen as a mathematician than as a poet, his verses being ranked in the third or fourth class only ; secondly, that FitzGerald's version is very free indeed, and contains many verses not belonging to Omar, and some not assignable to any Persian original ; and thirdly, that his work when first published was so little regarded that for a while copies of the first edition, now so eagerly sought by collectors, were actually being remaindered at a penny a time. It is always difficult to determine what causes certain books to become a vogue : the admiration and lobbying of Rossetti and Swinburne do not alone explain the extraordinary popularity of the *Rubáiyát*. Yet it is impossible to deny that the poem fully deserves the place it has come to occupy among the most esteemed of English classics. As for its influence on the English language itself, this is sufficiently demonstrated by the number of its phrases which have passed into common usage : the *Rubáiyát* stands possibly third only to the Bible and Shakespeare as a source of unconscious quotation. The frank hedonism, the facile pessimism of FitzGerald's Omar caught the imagination of a public sated with Victorian gravity and created a legend of the Persian attitude to life which dies very hard. Numerous other writers have sought, but vainly, to repeat the miracle of the *Rubáiyát* ; Hafiz, a far greater poet than Omar, has been wooed by Gertrude Bell, by Walter Leaf, by Richard Le Gallienne, but without making a substantial impression on the reading public : Omar, reinterpreted by FitzGerald, stands alone, despite himself and no doubt to his abiding astonishment (if the dead are any more cap-

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able of being astonished), the acclaimed interpreter of Eastern thought to the West.

Edward FitzGerald was born in Suffolk on 31 March 1809 ; took a pass degree at Trinity College, Cambridge ; and spent the greater part of his days living simply in a thatched cottage in his native county. He was an eccentric, and delighted in the company of simple fishermen : but this did not prevent him from collecting paintings by Constable and Lawrence, of enjoying the friendship of Tennyson, Borrow and Thackeray. It was after he had translated the plays of the Spanish poet Calderon that he turned to the study of Persian, having as his teacher E. B. Cowell, Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge, himself a competent Persian scholar. The first fruits of this study was a verse-translation, published in 1856, of Jami's *Salaman and Absal*. Then Cowell called FitzGerald's attention to a manuscript of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám which he had come upon in the Bodleian. Such was the casual origin of a devotion of the living to the long dead which ended in the world being enriched with what is certainly the most celebrated translation ever produced, after the English Bible.

As we have already remarked, the *Rubáiyát* was at first a failure. *Fraser's Magazine* rejected the poem, and Quaritch, who published it anonymously in 1859, was scarcely rewarded for his pains. But Rossetti and Swinburne were among its few purchasers, and Swinburne commended the verses to Meredith. Ten years later a revised edition was produced ; thereafter the poem has never long been out of print, and figures in all anthologies of English verse. Many after FitzGerald have turned Omar into English rhyme, but none save FitzGerald has achieved such measure of inspiration, felicity, publicity, luck, what you will of each or all, as to capture more than a few librarians' pence. The *succès fou* of the *Rubáiyát* is still further shown by the great crowd of FitzGerald's imitators in other countries : the poem belongs truly to world-literature, for versions have appeared in most civilised tongues, from Icelandic to Bengali.¹ There is an Omar Society in the United States. Even Omar's native Iran has now had to do something about the matter, and a fine edition of the quatrains, with illustrations by the artist Darvish, was produced at Tehran in 1934. Truly has Omar's prayer, re-echoed by FitzGerald, been abundantly answered :

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash my Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

¹ Those interested may wish to consult the very painstaking *Bibliography of Printed Editions of the Quatrains of Omar Khayyám in Foreign Languages*, by A. G. Potter, 1923.

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Whither resorting from the vernal Heat
Shall Old Acquaintance Old Acquaintance greet,
Under the Branch that leans above the Wall
To shed his Blossom over head and feet.

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air,
As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

In India, although Persian no longer retained its old prestige as the official language and Macaulay did his best to throw cold Whitehall water on the ardour of the orientalists, it took more than this to damp the enthusiasm of a new generation of scholar-administrators faithful to the traditions of their predecessors. The Bibliotheca Indica added volume after volume of historical texts and translations, interspersed with occasional works of a purely literary character. The Company's Press being closed down, and the Company's patronage of learned publications coming to an end, the Baptist Mission Press of Calcutta almost alone struggled on, surrounded by an ever greater multitude of native presses pouring forth a rising flood of cheap and inaccurate lithographs. Of works on Indian history produced during the nineteenth century pride of place belongs to the eight-volume *History of India as told by its Own Historians* (1866-77), a formidable collection of translated extracts from original Persian sources put together by Sir H. M. Elliot and edited after his death by J. Dowson. It may be mentioned that in this pre- and post-Mutiny period a number of German scholars enjoyed the hospitality of the British authorities and produced useful work in the congenial atmosphere of a liberal administration. Goethe, of whom the egregious Dr. Rosenberg so strongly disapproves, had set the fashion for Persian studies in Germany by his translations of Hafiz and his *West-östliche Diwan*: it is to be regretted that, with rare exceptions, German interest in Iran has remained since in the political field, and personalities such as Wassmuss and Grobba characterise, far more truly than a Goethe or a Sprenger, what lies behind the carefully advertised German enthusiasm for oriental scholarship.

Of works on Persian literature may be mentioned Sir Gore Ouseley's *Biographical Notices of Persian Poets* (London, 1846), admirable of its kind but now obsolete; W. Nassau Lees's edition of the *Wis u Ramin* of Fakhr al-Din Gurgani (Calcutta, 1865) and Jami's *Nafahat al-uns* (biographies of Sufis, Calcutta, 1859); editions of Kashifi's *Anwar-i Suhaili* by J. W. J. Ouseley (Hertford, 1851) and H. S. Jarrett (Cawnpore, 1880), and transla-

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tions by E. B. Eastwick (Hertford, 1854) and A. N. Wollaston (London, 1877) ; renderings of Sa'di's *Bustan* (London, 1879), Nizami's *Sikandar-nameh* (London, 1881) and the *Diwan* of Hafiz (Calcutta, 1891) by H. Wilberforce Clarke ; J. T. Platt's translation of the *Gulistan* of Sa'di (London, 1873) ; F. Falconer's translation of Jami's *Tuhfat al-ahrar* (London, 1848) and *Salaman and Absal* (London, 1850) ; and verse-translations of the same poet's *Yusuf and Zalikha* by R. T. H. Griffith (London, 1882) and A. Rogers (London, 1892).

Grammars of Persian to take the place of Sir William Jones's pioneer work were produced in great numbers ; among them may be mentioned those of Duncan Forbes and J. T. Platts. Several dictionaries, large and small, have also been published in succession to J. Richardson's great tome, among them those by E. H. Palmer and A. N. Wollaston. Essential aids to the learning of Persian thus exist in English in great abundance : and new works continue from time to time to appear.

After this general survey of Persian studies during the latter half of the nineteenth century it is necessary to return to describe the work of a few individual scholars of outstanding eminence.

Sir James Redhouse, better known as a Turkish than as a Persian scholar, was born near London on 30 December 1811. In 1826 he travelled through the Mediterranean to Turkey and there took employment under the Ottoman government. He remained many years in the Turkish service, learning the language thoroughly. In 1854 he was appointed oriental translator to the British Foreign Office and was sent to Paris three years later to assist in the completion of a treaty between Britain and Iran. Shortly afterwards he retired from official duties and spent the remainder of his life in scholarly pursuits. From 1861 to 1864 he was secretary to the Royal Asiatic Society. Though his publications on Turkey and Turkish are his chief titles to fame, he also contributed to Persian studies by publishing in 1874 a translation of Nasir al-Din Shah's European diary, and in 1881 a verse-rendering of the first book of Jalal al-Din Rumi's *Mathnawi-i ma'nawi*. He died on 4 January 1892.

E. H. Palmer has been mentioned as a distinguished Arabist by Bernard Lewis : his contributions to Persian studies deserve separate treatment here. Palmer's career is among the most romantic of any British orientalist. Born at Cambridge on 7 August 1840, he was left an orphan in childhood, and after a short schooling, in the intervals of which he learned Romany from gypsies, he went into an office in London and there spent his evenings picking up French and Italian in Soho. At the age of nineteen he developed lung trouble and returned to Cambridge to die, but staged a miraculous recovery. He now began to study oriental languages in his characteristic way. In

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1863 some Fellows of St. John's College "discovered" Palmer and he was elected to a special Scholarship. He only took a third in Classics in 1867, but was meanwhile cataloguing the Arabic, Persian and Turkish manuscripts in King's College Library and publishing a translation of Aziz Nasafi's *Maqsad-i aqsa* under the title *Oriental Mysticism*, which he dedicated in Persian in the most flowery court-style to the French Emperor. In the same year he was elected to a Fellowship at St. John's. Palmer offered himself as a candidate to the Foreign Office for the post of Oriental Secretary at Tehran, and to the India Office for the appointment of Librarian vacant following the retirement of the American Sanskritist FitzEdward Hall: the Foreign Office rejected his application for reasons best known to itself, the India Office preferred to patronise a German, Reinhold Rost. This double official rebuff did not prevent Palmer's being nominated to the Lord Almoner's Professorship of Arabic in 1871: Whitehall's loss was the great gain of Cambridge. Yet the authorities were pleased ten years later to entrust to Palmer a delicate and dangerous mission which took him into the Egyptian desert, there to be shot, pushed over a precipice and mutilated, with other members of his small party, by marauding Bedouins. Thus tragically and all too prematurely ended a career of most extraordinary promise: for Palmer had scarcely reached that maturity of mind and judgment which commonly makes the fifties and sixties the most fruitful period of a scholar's life. A grave in St. Paul's Cathedral was not too great a tribute for the nation to pay to the memory of one of its greatest orientalists.

In addition to his little book on Sufism already mentioned, Palmer prepared a pair of small but serviceable Persian-English and English-Persian dictionaries, the latter edited after his death by G. Le Strange; translated into Persian verse Moore's *Paradise and the Peri*; and published in 1877 *The Song of the Reed*, a volume of poems original and translated, including a number from the Persian. From the last-named book, which takes its title from the opening couplet of Rumi's *Mathnawi-i ma'nawi*, it may be of interest to quote Palmer's version of the first stanzas of Anwari's well-known "palinodia", verses curiously prophetic of his own unhappy fortune:

Ah ! the spheres are incessantly rolling,
And the Archer is shifting his ground,
And the moon is for ever patrolling,
And Jupiter going his round.
The water that tastes to another
Refreshing and cool on the lip,
Is as fire that no efforts can smother
In the cup that I sip.

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The dust that all quiet is lying
When others recline on the ground
Around me in volumes is flying,
Like a desert where whirlwinds abound ;
And Fate, in the ship of my being,
In happiness hurries me past,
But if ever from sorrow I'm fleeing,
It anchors me fast.

The lure and fascination of Persian mysticism is amply attested in the literary output of British orientalists, especially during the last seventy years. E. H. Whinfield, a late contemporary of E. H. Palmer, in addition to producing a new, more faithful but less felicitous version of Omar Khayyám, edited and translated in verse the *Gulshan-i raz* (Mystic Rose Garden) of Shabistari (London, 1880) and, with the assistance of the revered Iranian scholar Mirza Muhammad of Qazvin, edited and translated Jami's *Lawa'ih* (London, 1907). Other translators of Omar have included J. L. Garner (Milwaukee, 1888), J. H. McCarthy (London, 1889), J. Payne (London, 1898), F. York Powell (Oxford, 1901), G. Roe (Edinburgh, 1907), A. Rogers (Ilford, 1910), J. Pollen (London, 1915), O. A. Shrubsole (London, 1920), T. W. Weir (London, 1926) and C. S. Tute (Exeter, 1926). The suitors of Hafiz are also numerous, among them H. Bicknell (London, 1875), J. H. McCarthy (London, 1893), Gertrude Bell (London, 1897), Walter Leaf (London, 1898), Richard Le Gallienne (London, 1905), L. Cranmer-Byng (London, 1901), R. Obbard (Lahore, 1921) and C. K. Streit (New York, 1928).

We have just mentioned the name of Gertrude Lowthian Bell, and must pause for a few minutes to honour the memory of one whose attachment to Iran and all things Persian was too well known to need emphasising. Born on 15 July 1868 in the county of Durham, Gertrude Bell took a first in History at Oxford in 1888. She began learning Persian in 1892, when she accompanied her aunt Lady Lascelles to Tehran ; and in 1896 was working on her translation of Hafiz, which was published the following year. Thereafter she travelled extensively in the Middle East and commenced those activities as historian, archaeologist and explorer which have secured her enduring fame. The story of the rest of her brilliant career, with its record of service of great value to the British cause during and after the last war, when she was Oriental Secretary in Baghdad, belongs more properly to the history of Arabic studies. We shall therefore conclude this all too brief reference to a life of uncommon glamour and usefulness, which closed suddenly at Baghdad in the night of 11-12 July 1926, by quoting her passionately delicate translation of one of the finest of Hafiz' odes :

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The rose has flushed red, the bud has burst,
And drunk with joy is the nightingale—
Hail, Sufis ! lovers of wine, all hail !
For wine is proclaimed to a world athirst.
Like a rock your repentance seemed to you ;
Behold the marvel ! of what avail
Was your rock, for a goblet has cleft it in two !

Bring wine for the king and the slave at the gate !
Alike for all is the banquet spread,
And drunk and sober are warmed and fed.
When the feast is done and the night grows late,
And the second door of the tavern gapes wide,
The low and the mighty must bow the head
'Neath the archway of Life, to meet what . . . outside ?

Except thy road through affliction pass,
None may reach the halting-station of mirth ;
God's treaty : Am I not Lord of the earth ?
Man sealed with a sigh : Ah yes, alas !
Nor with Is nor Is Not let thy mind contend ;
Rest assured all perfection of mortal birth
In the great Is Not at the last shall end.

For Assaf's pomp, and the steeds of the wind,
And the speech of birds, down the wind have fled,
And he that was lord of them all is dead ;
Of his mastery nothing remains behind.
Shoot not thy feathered arrow astray !
A bow-shot's length through the air it has sped,
And then . . . dropped down in the dusty way.

But to thee, oh Hafiz, to thee, oh Tongue
That speaks through the mouth of the slender reed,
What thanks to thee when thy verses speed
From lip to lip, and the song thou hast sung ?

And for elegy what more appropriate verses could be chosen than those
with which Miss Bell concluded her selections from Hafiz ?—

Where are the tidings of union ? that I may arise—
Forth from the dust I will rise up to welcome thee !
My soul, like a homing bird, yearning for Paradise,
Shall arise and soar, from the snares of the world set free.

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When the voice of thy love shall call me to be thy slave,
I shall rise to a greater far than the mastery
Of life and the living, time and the mortal span :
Pour down, oh Lord ! from the clouds of thy guiding grace,
The rain of a mercy that quickeneth on my grave,
Before, like dust that the wind bears from place to place,
I arise and flee beyond the knowledge of man.

It is now time to consider the career and accomplishments of the man universally acknowledged, in Iran as elsewhere, to have been the best-informed, best-read and most sympathetic interpreter of the Persian mind and genius who has ever lived. Edward Granville Browne was born on 7 February 1862 and was intended for a career in engineering, his father's profession : he therefore left Eton at the age of fifteen. But Browne was politically precocious ; these were the days of war between Tzarist Russia and Ottoman Turkey ; the boy's mind was fired with sympathy for the Turkish cause ; and he set about learning Turkish as a preparation for enlisting in the Turkish forces. However, the war came to an end ; and Browne proceeded to Cambridge in 1879 to read medicine. He took his degree and qualified to practise, but at the same time continued his linguistic studies which now included Persian and Arabic. In 1887 Pembroke College elected him to a Fellowship and he set out on his *Wanderjahr* in Iran and enjoyed those experiences which he made memorable in *A Year Among the Persians*. While in Iran Browne interested himself profoundly in the Babi religion, sensing in it, somewhat mistakenly, a vital new cult the origins of which it was his scientific duty to preserve and investigate. To this task he devoted too much of his youthful energies, but it was a poem by a celebrated Babi heroine and martyr, Qurrat al-Ain, which inspired one of his most brilliant verse-translations :

The thralls of yearning love constrain in the bonds of pain and calamity
Those broken-hearted lovers of thine to yield their lives in their zeal 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,

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While His eyes demolish a faith in vain attacked by the pagans of Tartary.
With you, who condemn 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 thine
only care ;

In thy heart the Infinite hath no share, nor the thought of the poor man's
poverty.

Sikandar's pomp and display be thine, the Kalandar'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.

Browne was elected Sir Thomas Adams Professor of Arabic in 1902, and he remained in this post at Cambridge until his death on 5 January 1926 : years stretch between of long and fruitful researches, inspiring teaching rewarded by the admiration and emulation of a series of able pupils, political discussions (he was outspoken in his condemnation of the events of 1907), the affection, given and received, of a group of colleagues at Pembroke whose sympathetic companionship sustained him through days of heavy labours, and rejoiced him through nights of unquenchable talk and laughter, a happy family life clouded at the end by the death of the wife he adored, and, after all, recognition in his lifetime of a pre-eminence that will long remain unchallenged, if indeed it is ever approached. Numerous books and almost countless pamphlets flowed from his facile but discriminating pen : of them all none did more to establish his fame and prove his stature than the four-volume *Literary History of Persia* (1902-24) which, if now dated in some particulars and incomplete in others, remains a massive achievement worthy of its author and of the people of whose literature it treats. A fairly complete bibliography of Browne's prodigious output is printed in R. A. Nicholson's Introduction to the catalogue of Browne's fine collection of Islamic manuscripts which passed after his death into the possession of Cambridge University Library : by studying it the reader cannot fail to be impressed by the energy and versatility of a mind which ranged from politics to religion, from literature to medicine. Here we may mention, in addition to the works already named : *A Traveller's Narrative* (Cambridge, 1891), *New History of the Bab* (Cambridge, 1893), *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (Cambridge, 1918), *Chahar Maqala* of Nizami Arudi (London, 1921), *Abridged History of Tabaristan* (London, 1905), *The Persian Revolution of 1905-*

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1909 (Cambridge, 1910), *Press and Poetry of Modern Persia* (Cambridge, 1918), *Arabian Medicine* (Cambridge, 1921). But above all, Browne stands out as a superb interpreter of Persian poetry. His *Literary History of Persia* abounds with most admirable verse-translations, of which space prevents us from printing here more than two or three specimens.

The first is chosen more as a *tour de force* than for its intrinsic merit : it represents an attempt to capture the archaic flavour of Firdausi's rugged verse by clothing it in the appanage of primitive English prosody :

When on the wael-stow Dara his doom met
From all his House her face Fortune averted.
Him did a son survive, worthy of worship,
Wary and wise in war, Sasan ycleped,
Who, when he saw his sire thus foully smitten,
Saw, too, on Persia's arms Fortune look frowning,
Fled from the foes of Greece, swift and fleet-footed,
Stayed not to stumble on snares of ill fortune.
In distant lands of Ind death overtook him,
Where he in turn a son left to succeed him.

Our second extract consists of a translation of a mystical ode by Ibn-i Yamin in which the poet speaks of the Sufi doctrine of *fana* or the passing-away of the individual personality into the all-embracing reality of God and touches on that theosophical theory of the progress of the soul through all creation which so curiously anticipates the scientific discoveries of Darwin :

From the void of Non-Existence to this dwelling-house of clay
I came, and rose from stone to plant ; but that hath passed away !
Thereafter, through the working of the Spirit's toil and strife,
I gained, but soon abandoned, some lowly form of life :

That too hath passed away !

In a human breast, no longer a mere unheeding brute,
This tiny drop of Being to a pearl I did transmute :

That too hath passed away !

At the Holy Temple next did I forgather with the throng
Of Angels, compassed it about, and gazed upon it long :

That too hath passed away !

Forsaking Ibn-i-Yamin, and from this too soaring free,
I abandoned all beside Him, so that naught was left but HE :

All else hath passed away !

For a third specimen we choose another mystical ode, this time by the peerless Iraqi, a variation on the unchanging theme of God's all-pervading being :

British Contributions to Persian Studies

Cups are those a-flashing with wine,
Or suns through the clouds a-gleaming ?
So clear is the wine and the glass so fine
That the two are one in seeming.
The glass is all and the wine is naught,
Or the glass is naught and the wine is all :
Since the air the rays of the sun hath caught
The light combines with night's dark pall,
For the night hath made a truce with the day,
And thereby is ordered the world's array.
If thou know'st not which is day, which night,
Or which is goblet and which is wine,
By wine and cup divine aright
The Water of Life and its secret sign :
Like night and day thou may'st e'en assume
Certain knowledge and doubt's dark gloom.
If these comparisons clear not up
All these problems low and high,
Seek for the world-reflecting cup
That thou may'st see with reason's eye
That all that is, is He indeed,
Soul and loved one and heart and creed.

Contemporary with Browne, and his lifelong friend, Guy Le Strange was a Persian scholar of uncommon erudition and an unrivalled authority on the geography of the Islamic world. Le Strange began his long career of editor and author by producing, with the collaboration of W. H. D. Haggard, the text and translation of Fath Ali's play *The Vazir of Lankuran* (London, 1882). Other examples of his editorship are the geographical section of Afi's *Nuzhat al-qulub* (London, 1915-19) and, with R. A. Nicholson's assistance, the *Fars-nameh* of Ibn al-Balkhi (London, 1921). His *Lands of the Eastern Caliphate* (London, 1905) remains the chief memorial to his erudition, and is still authoritative. Almost total blindness came upon Le Strange at a comparatively early age, but he struggled grimly against this handicap and continued to work and publish until his death : one of his last products was a translation of the *Relaciones* of Don Juan of Persia (London, 1926).

C. E. Wilson, who died but recently at a great age, was a retiring and elusive personality, but enriched Persian studies with several publications. As long ago as 1883 he produced a translation of the sixth book of Jami's *Baharistan* ; in 1910 he published a two-volume translation and commentary of the second book of Jalal al-Din Rumi's *Mathnawi-i ma'nawi* ; and in 1924 he brought out an excellent translation, with copious annotations, of Nizami's

English Translators of Persian Poetry

epic *Haft paikar*. In his last years he printed a series of valuable lexicographical notes based on meticulous reading of the modern press of Iran.

The Indian tradition in British studies of Persian culture was continued by a number of scholars, notable among them D. C. Phillott, who, besides work of a purely educational character, made a profound study of fariery and falconry as represented in Persian literature, publishing several highly interesting texts and translations. While Sir Thomas Arnold was better known as an Arabist, he also had an admirable knowledge of Persian ; but above all, his work on Persian painting remains an abiding monument to a scholar of rare taste and attainments. As, however, it is not our intention in this little book to attempt to evaluate the British contribution to the study of Persian art, architecture and archaeology—for the subject merits separate treatment—we shall not dwell further on Arnold's accomplishments in this field but shall pass on to speak of the man who, after Browne, did more in his generation than any other, of whatever nationality, to popularise the legacy of Iran and to draw still closer the cultural links between Iran and Britain.

Edward Denison Ross was born on 6 June 1871. He studied oriental languages at Paris and Strasbourg, and in 1895, with the collaboration of N. Elias, produced a translation of the *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, a history of the Moghuls of Central Asia written by a cousin of the Emperor Babur. In 1901 he was appointed Principal of the Calcutta Madrasah and so began a career in India which recalls many of the features made familiar by the example of so many of his predecessors over the preceding century and a half. In addition to his important educational work and numerous learned publications he planned the cataloguing of the fine Khuda Baksh Library at Bankipore and trained a number of Indian scholars in the western methods of bibliography.

Ross returned to England in 1914 to look after oriental art in the British Museum : then made what he always regarded as his greatest contribution to the cause of oriental learning by becoming the first Director and chief creator of the School of Oriental Studies. This post he held concurrently with the Chair of Persian until his retirement in 1937. Even then his public services were not ended ; he represented his country at the Firdausi Milenary in Tehran ; and early in the present war he went to Istanbul as head of the British Information Office, a post of great responsibility which he was uncommonly well fitted to fill, by reason of his fluent Turkish and genial personality. It was at Istanbul that Ross died, on 20 September 1940, and there he is buried beside his wife who pre-deceased him by but a few months.

Sir Denison Ross has left his mark on many diverse branches of research : here we are only concerned with his work in Persian studies. In addition

British Contributions to Persian Studies

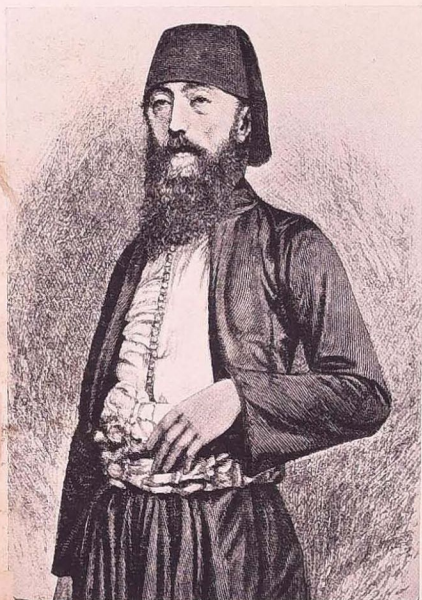
to a number of books of a popular character, he edited several historical and literary texts, including the *Diwan* of Bairam Khan and the *Tarikh* of Fakhr al-Din Mubarakshah. We have already mentioned his book, *Sir Anthony Sherley and his Persian Adventure* : he inspired the work of many colleagues and pupils along the varied lines of his amazingly diverse interests. It is perhaps too early yet to essay a final judgment on the work of Ross as a scholar and a man : but there seems to be general agreement that it is above all as a teacher and a friend of scholars that his name will live in the annals of fame.

6. CONCLUSION

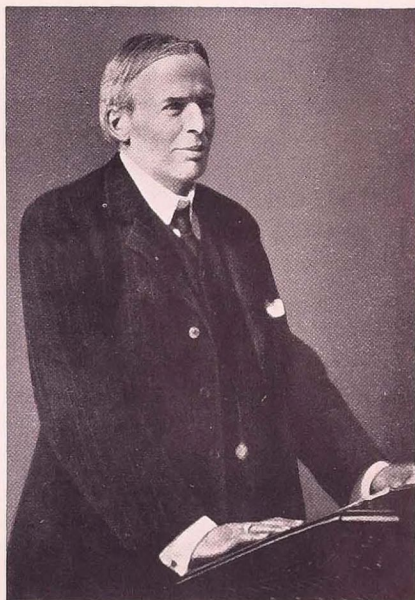
We have now brought our story of the British contribution to Persian studies down to the present day. There have been certain omissions in this story, some unimportant, some more serious. Many names have been passed over, not because we rated their significance lightly, but because there was not room for all on a canvas which is already sufficiently crowded. We have already stated our reasons for excluding certain closely cognate subjects altogether, such as art and archaeology : for like cause we have not attempted to touch on the considerable travel-literature, old and new, for there is clearly a book to be written on this subject alone. If these exceptions and omissions are borne in mind, however, it may perhaps be allowed that the narrative as it stands represents a fair and fairly balanced account of what the scholars of one nation have done to make known to the world the historical, literary and cultural achievements of another people far sundered by geography but having many characteristics and many ideals in common.

We have not spoken of the contributions to Persian studies made by living scholars : their labours are not yet completed, and therefore it is not possible to write of them with the measured detachment required for forming a final judgment. Of the work of such as R. A. Nicholson, Sir Percy Sykes, C. A. Storey, it will be for another generation to appraise and applaud its high quality with that discrimination which comes only with time : for our part we can certainly discern in their achievements the equal of what any preceding age has produced, and be gratefully conscious that the high and proud tradition of British scholarship is being handed on through them preserved and enhanced, richly to bear fruit in the days to come.

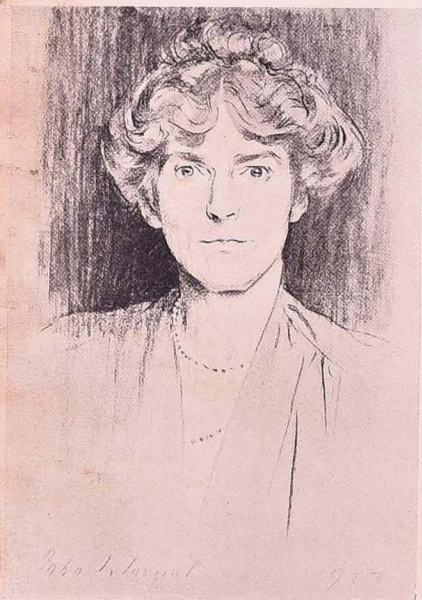
As we look back over the whole story it is possible to distinguish two particular features characteristic of these contributions of British scholars : these are their devotion to history and to poetry. Their attachment to historical studies is readily comprehensible, for the British are celebrated for their love of the past, and it is only one step from loving the past of one's own people to honouring the traditions of another. As for the second



Edward H. Palmer (1840-1882)

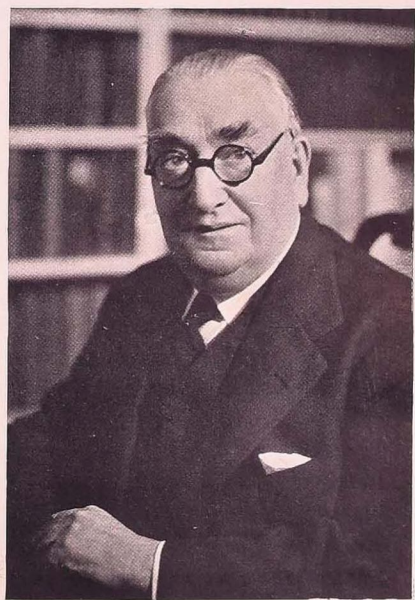


Edward G. Browne (1862-1926)



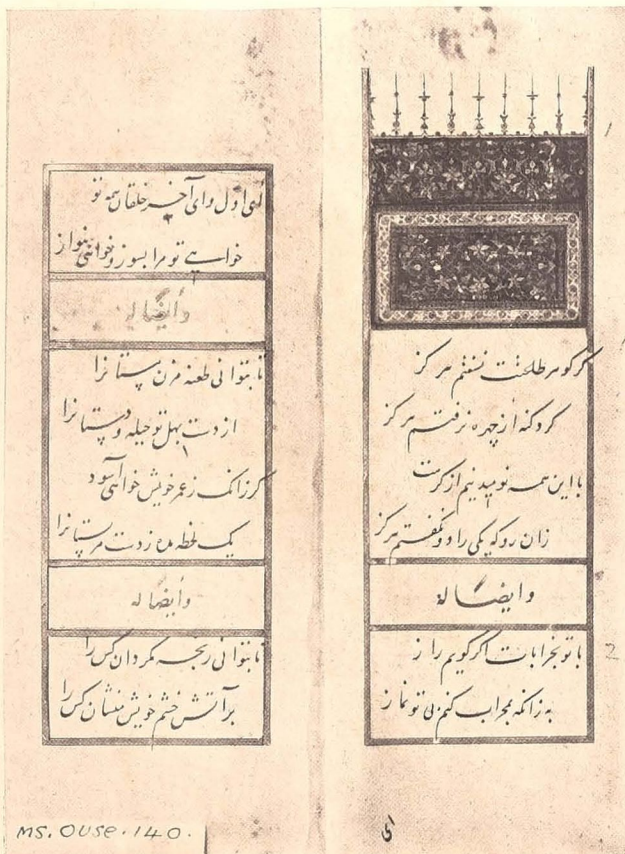
*By courtesy of Sir Maurice Bell, Bt. &
Messrs. Ernest Benn, Ltd.*

Gertrude Bell (1868-1926)

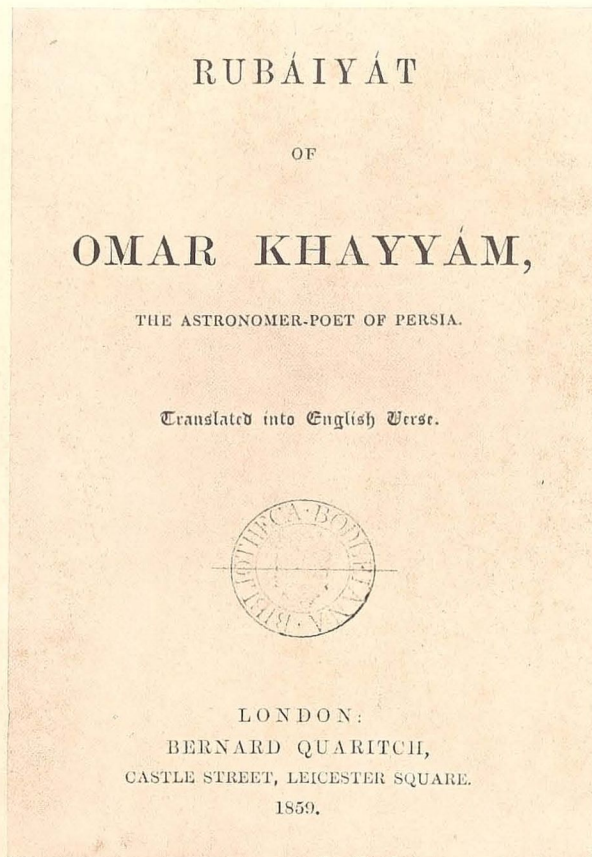


Elliott & Fry

Sir Denison Ross (1871-1940)



First two pages of the Bodleian MS. of Omar Khayyám which Edward FitzGerald used when making his famous translation



Title page of the very rare first edition of FitzGerald's translation of Omar Khayyám

Appendix

feature, this also is after all but natural, seeing that English literature is rich in lyric, and it is the Persian lyric that has so powerfully attracted the admiration of British readers ; while the element of mysticism inseparably associated with Hafiz, Iraqi, Jami, even Omar, is paralleled in the writings of Donne, Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley. There is a further point which we have not ventured to elaborate, but which may be referred to here in this context as a subject worthy of research : what may be described as the Persian influence in English literature. To a quite surprising extent the poets and writers of this country have been captivated by the magic of the golden road to Samarkand, and the vision which haunted Coleridge and inspired his fragmentary "Kubla Khan" has lured and delighted many another from Moore to Flecker, from Byron to Binyon. There, in the masterpieces of our own native letters, we find a final proof, if further proof were needed, of the fidelity and fruitfulness of the British contribution to Persian studies.

APPENDIX

TRANSLATION OF JAMES VI'S LETTER TO SHAH ABBAS

(see p. 14)

JAMES, BY THE GRACE OF GOD KING OF THE SCOTS, AND OF ALL THE ADJACENT ISLANDS : and by the supreme Will of the same Jehovah nearest Heir to the most Mighty Kingdoms of England and Ireland.

To the most mighty and invincible Prince Shaugh Abbas, Emperor of the Persians, Medes, Parthians, Hircanian, Carmanian and Margian peoples both this side and beyond the River Tigris, and of all the nations and tribes between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf : Greetings and most happy increase of prosperity.

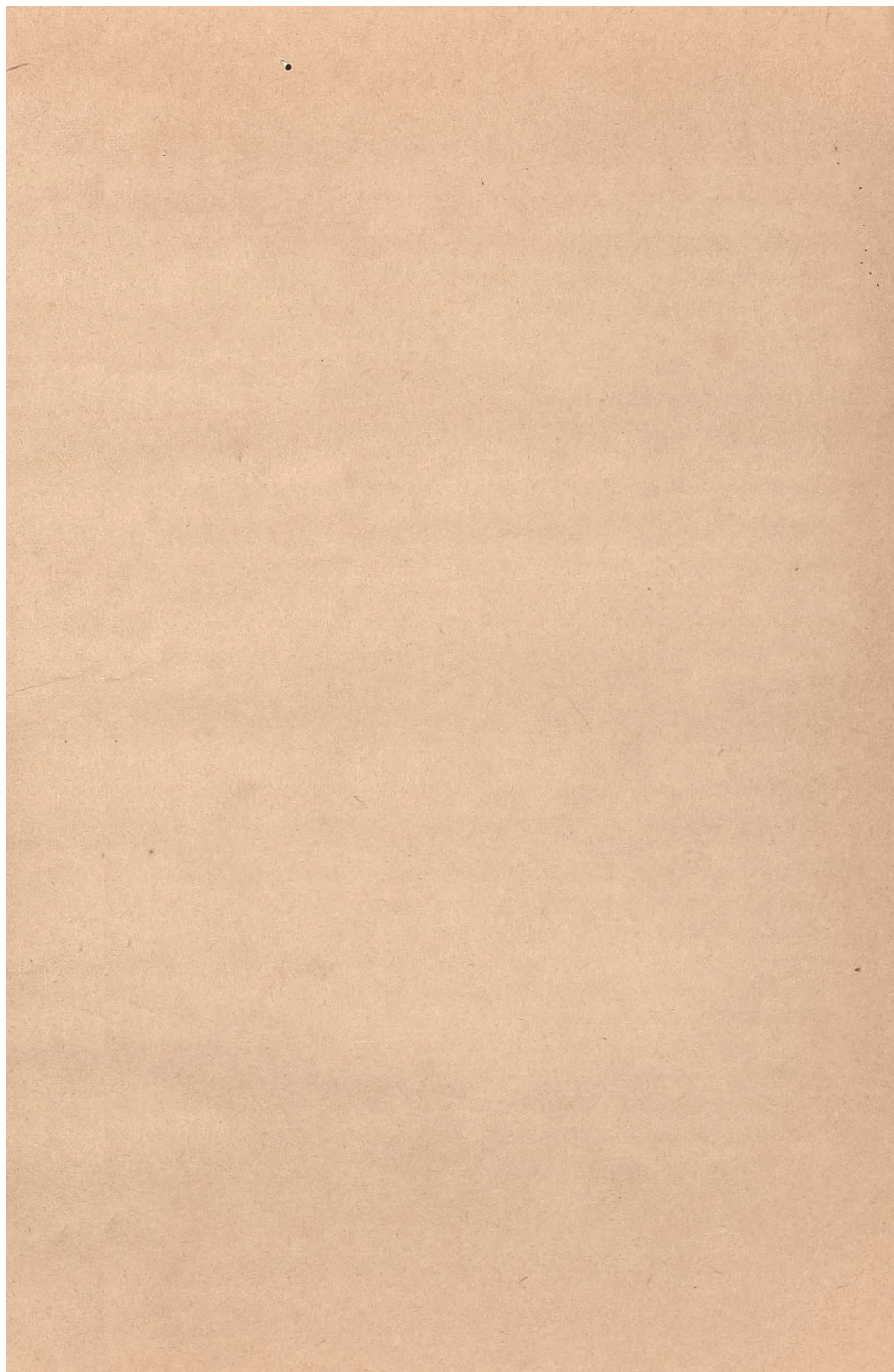
Whereas it is not long since that most noble English Knight, Antony Sherley, in most brilliant discharge of the Mission entrusted to him by Your Majesty, had discoursed much, both wisely and bravely, concerning the affairs of Persia, before many Princes, as well as in the Court of Caesar : it was impossible to tell how much lustre has accrued to your name, since all publicly testify that neither across the vast deserts, nor the rugged mountains, nor the unaccustomed seas was any path impassable to your virtue. Now while many things are related among us by historians of the wars and noble deeds, and of the exploits of the Persian Emperors by land and sea, in which fortune appears by some right of its own to claim the greatest part : in this Mission, whereby the sacred laws of hospitality and the sweet offices of a common humanity may be instituted, cultivated and constantly preserved, between us, our kingdoms and our subjects, it is sure that this is a most certain sign not of fortune

British Contributions to Persian Studies

but of design, not of chance but of virtue. Nor ought we in so manifest a matter to hazard, but that we should confess it to have been determined by the most high providence of Almighty God, that that most gallant soldier Sherley could be diverted neither by the prayers of his distinguished parents, nor by the hope of a most ample patrimony, from leaving his sweetest fatherland and committing himself and his fortune to the charge of Your Majesty, wherefore we hope the time will shortly come when, out of the mutual desire of all the Princes, the hostile banners of the Turkish people, torn to pieces and trodden underfoot, shall be exposed to mockery and derision. But it affects us ill that in so serious and necessary a matter we have dared neither to promise nor scarcely to hope for any help from the English; for the violent and unexpected death of the heroic Count of Essex, who was wont to appear like a thunderbolt ready for all warlike expeditions, has so stunned the inhabitants of that country, that they prefer to fear internal, rather than hope for external actions: indeed the greater part of those who now direct English affairs are not only fighting among themselves on account of private enmities, but in consequence of the friendship for the Turks initiated by their merchants strenuously oppose this our mission. Having ascertained this through our confidants, we have therefore not hesitated to warn and exhort the Knight Sherley not to embark on any vain enterprise likely to be unprofitable to Your Majesty and fatal to himself. He, submitting to our authority and counsel, has suffered himself to become to some extent an exile, so that when hereafter the Crown of that Empire devolves upon us he may be able to reap the richer fruits of his labours. For when the Kingdom of England, furnished with a most powerful fleet, and most famous for the circumnavigation of the whole globe, strikes the greatest terror into the hearts of the Ottoman people, there is no doubt that, under Divine providence and out of these happy auspices of friendship, we shall some day attain, both for yourselves and ours, an everlasting glory joined with the greatest advantage. We would therefore commend to Your Majesty the Knight Sherley as a man most skilled both in all varieties of arms and in political wisdom: a man with whom words count less than faith, hand than spirit, yet eminent in both distinctions. Although we perceive that that fortitude which, encompassed by the roots of virtue, has so often given forth a wonderful example of its quality, will continue to be preserved and nourished, yet we shall cause it to be known to the whole world, that there has been more power in good will to join us together, than in earth and sea to keep us far apart. May the Most High God grant to Your Majesty all lasting well-being. Given in Scotland, in our renowned Palace at Edinburgh. In the Year of the World 5680, of our Lord Jesus Christ 1601, and of our Reign 34.

Your most loving brother,

JAMES R.



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