

HER LETTER.

[A correspondent of the Kansas City Times revives a striking poem, of which this is the history. A Southern prisoner of war, at Camp Chase, in Ohio, after pining of sickness in the hospital at that station for some time, and confiding to his friend and fellow-captive, Colonel W. S. Hawkins, of Tennessee, that he was heavy of heart because his affianced bride in Nashville did not write to him, died just before a letter arrived, in which the lady curtly broke the engagement. Colonel Hawkins had been requested by his dying comrade to open any epistle which should come for him thereafter, and upon reading the letter in question penned the following lines:]

Your letter came, but came too late,
For Heaven had claimed its own;
Ah, sudden change, from prison bars
To the great White Throne.
And yet, I think, he would have stayed
For one more day of pain.
Could he have read those tardy words
Which you have sent in vain.

Why did you wait, fair lady,
Through so many a weary hour?
Had you other lovers with you
In that silken, dainty bower?
Did others kneel before your feet,
And twine bright garlands there?
And yet, I ween, in all that throng
His spirit had no peer.

I wish that you were by me now,
As I draw the sheet aside,
And see how pure the look he wore
A while before he died.
The sorrow that you gave him
Has left its weary trace,
As 'twere the shadow of the cross
Upon his pallid face.

"Her love," he said, "would change for me
The winter's cold to spring;
Ah! trust to thoughtless maiden's love,
Thou art a bitter thing!
For when these valleys fair, in May
Once more in blossom wave,
The Northern violets shall blow,
Above his humble grave.

Your dose of scanty words had been
But one more pang to bear;
Thought to the last he kissed with love
This morsel of your soft hair.
I did not put it where he said,
For, when the angels come,
I would not have them find the sign
Of falsehood in the tomb.

I've read the letter and I know
The wiles that you have wrought
To win that noble heart of his
And gained it—fearful thought!
What lavish wealth men sometimes give
For a trifle, bright and small!
What many forms are often held
In folly's flimsy thrall.

You shall not pity him, for now
He's past your hope and fear;
Although I wish that you could stand
With me beside his bier,
Still I forgive you: Heaven knows,
For mercy you'll have need,
Since God His awful judgment sends
On each unworthy deed.

To-night, the cold wind whistles by,
As I my vigils keep
Within the prison dead-house
Where few mourners come to weep.
A rude plank cobb holds him now,
Yet death gives always grace,
And I would rather see him thus
Than clasped in your embrace.

To-night, your rooms are very gay
With wit, and wine and song,
And you are smiling just as if
You never did a wrong.
Your hand so fair that none would think
It pained the words of pain:
Your skin is white—would God your soul
Was half so free of stain.

I'd rather be this dear, dear friend,
Than you in all your glee:
For you are held in grievous bonds,
While he's forever free.
Whom serve we in this life, we serve
In that which is to come:
He chose his way, you, yours: let God
Pro-nounce the fitting doom.

—EXCHANGE.

ARABIC VERS DE SOCIÉTÉ.

EL BEHÀ ZOHEIR.

Although the poems of El Behà Zoheir have possessed a great reputation in the East, they were absolutely unknown in Europe until Professor Palmer laid the world of letters under a debt of obligation by publishing a complete text, accompanied with a metrical translation. Until then, with the exception of a few verses quoted by Ibn Khallikan, the Arabic biographer, and one or two poems cited anonymously in the "Arabian Nights," not a single verse of his poetry had ever been printed or translated.

El Behà Zoheir lived and wrote at a time when the intercourse between East and West had already made itself felt—during the crusades of St. Louis of France—and his poems are remarkable as showing the effect of western civilization and refinement upon the language of the desert. Thus we find in his pages proverbs, sentiments and metaphors which we are accustomed to regard as peculiarly our own, and although this is by no means a characteristic of his poetry only, for instances of it abound in the works of many eastern authors, it is still remarkable how often we here come upon the exact parallel for an English proverb. Thus, to take a single example, the poet says to his mistress:

"But oh! beware lest we betray
The secret of our hopes and fears,
For I have heard some people say
That 'walls have ears.'"

There are, too, many points of contact between the great poet of Egypt and the produc-

tions of the European muse other than such details as these. "The whole tone of thought and style of expression," says Professor Palmer, "much more resemble those of an English courtier of the seventeenth century than a Mohammedan of the middle ages. There is an entire absence of that artificial construction, exaggerated metaphor, and profuse ornamentation of style which render eastern poetry so distasteful to a western critic; and in place of these defects we have natural simplicity and epigrammatic terseness, combined with a genial wit that remind us of the very society of the poet Herrick."

It is proverbially a want in Oriental poetry that although it abounds in glowing imagery, and in metaphors drawn from natural objects, it rarely displays any real appreciation of natural beauty. In the same way eastern love songs, while they are remarkable for power and imagination, but seldom exhibit deep feeling and true tenderness. Behà ed din Zoheir must, however, be regarded as a distinguished exception to these general rules. The beautiful gardens on the banks of the Nile have often called forth the admiration of travellers, and are, by description at any rate, more or less familiar to most people. Orange trees, with deep green foliage, the spreading banana leaves, varied by the bright blooms of the flowering cactus and the luxuriant roses, combine to make up a picture of almost perfect loveliness. Let Zoheir describe it for us:

"The rain-drops trickle through the warm, still air,
The child-born firstlings of the summer skies:
Full oft I stroll in early morning there,
When like a pearl upon a bosom fair,
The silencing dew-drop on the sparkling lies.
There the young flowerets with sweet perfume blow;
Their feathery palms their pendant clusters hold,
Like foxes' brushes waving too and fro:
There every evening comes the after-glow,
Tipping the leadets with its liquid gold."

The evident appreciation of nature which marks these verses stamps their author at once as in the first rank of her admirers. The imagery too is exquisite, and it is as exquisitely reproduced in the English version. The comparison of the dewdrops on the branches to the pearls on a maiden's neck could not be surpassed, and while we must admire the original we are compelled to pause in appreciation of the beauty of the rendering. Again, the vivid picture of the after-glow comes home with peculiar force to those who have seen or are in any way familiar with the fabled glories of a sunset on the Nile.

El Behà Zoheir is eminently the poet of sentiment, and many of his love-songs are possessed of a rare beauty and tenderness. What, for instance could be more touching than those lines on his blind love:

"They called my love a poor blind maid:
I love her more for that, I said;
I love her, for she cannot see
These gray hairs that disfigure me.
We wonder not that wounds are made
By an unhealed and make I blade;
The marvel is that swords should slay
While yet within their sheaths they stay.
She is a garden fair, where I
Need fear no guardian's prying eye.
Where, though in beauty blooms the rose,
Narcissus' eyes their eyelids close."

Again, it would be difficult to find a prettier conceit than the following:

"Nor, though her voice be passing sweet,
Take heed of it:
For lutes are often a deceit
To mortal wit!
Nor let her face, so fair and bright,
Thy heart betray:
Full oft the stars that shine by night
Lead men astray."

There is no more hackneyed hyperbole in the whole category of love song than that of dying for love, and the metaphor scarcely seems to lend itself to anything more than a pretty turn, such as the following:

"Oh, torture not my life in vain,
But take it once for all away!
Nor cause me thus, with constant pain,
To die and come to life again
A thousand times a day!"

But Zoheir elsewhere expresses the same idea in a new and very beautiful form, which has some claim to be styled truly poetical:

"Thou art my soul, and all my soul is thine;
Thou art my life, though stealing life away!
I die of love, then let thy breath divine
Call me to life again, that so I may
Reveal to men the secrets of the tomb.
Full well thou knowest that no joys endure:
Come, therefore, ere there come on us our doom,
That union may our present joy secure."

It must, however, be admitted that Zoheir frankly confesses himself to be an inconsistent lover:

"I'm fickle, so at least they say,
And blame me for it most severely:
Because I court one maid to-day,
To-morrow love another dearly."

His ready wit, however, enables him to account satisfactorily for his faithlessness:

"'Tis true that though I vow and swear,
They find my love is false and hollow,
Deceiving when it seems most fair,
Like lightning when no rain-drops follow.
You'd like to know, I much suspect,
The secret which my conduct covers:
Well, then, I'm founder of a sect,
Grand Master of Peculiar Lovers."

Turning to the poet's more serious verses we find them imbued with the spirit of much sound philosophy. Thus in some lines to a friend who had lost his ship at sea, with everything on board, he says in conclusion:

"To taste misfortune thou wert not the first:
So goes the world, nor plays new-fangled tricks;
Things often mend when they are at the worst,
As lamps burn brighter when we cut the wicks."

Again, the lines on "Life," a quarrel in imitation of the Persian, show us the poet in a serious mood:

"How oft does this life in sad trouble go by,
Yet of it how careless, how thoughtless, am I!
Ah, life! if to-day bring not pleasure to me,
When thou'rt gone is there any fresh life after thee?"

El Behà Zoheir was the author of numerous panegyrics which are of the greatest value in elucidating the history of his time. They are not, however, by any means happy examples of his style, and do not readily lend themselves to elegant translation. They are at the same time full of allusions and references to current events, which are of little interest to the general reader. He is much more at home in satire and invective. From his numerous verses on "bores" he seems to have been as much pestered by them as are our modern literary lions. Thus he says:

"I'd as lief have the Angel of Death for a guest
As that dolt, Not a friend has he ever possessed:
If you breathe but his name over water, I think
It would make it unfit for a person to drink."

Again he says:

"That fellow puts all joy to flight:
His talk is like a winter's night,
Lone, cold, and void of all delight."

Some of Zoheir's epigrams too are very good, and fulfil all the conditions of these difficult compositions. Thus he says of the weather:

"The summer, with untimely heat,
Has come upon us far too soon.
Oh, April! this unwonted feat
Will leave no work at all for June!"

A governor had been dismissed from his province, and the poet takes the opportunity to write an epigram containing one of those jeu de mots, of which he was a perfect master:

"They turned him out for rognery,
And very sad he seemed to be.
Says he, 'When things like that befall
No grief ever comes to me at all.'
Says we, 'You lie, grief comes to you,
And you have come to grief, sir, too!'"

There are numerous instances of Zoheir's facility in the composition of satirical verse, but we must content ourselves with a single example:

"Wit is for ornament designed,
Praise Him who to you gave it not!
When wits were met to mauling,
You were not then upon the spot."

ECHOES FROM PARIS.

Paris, April 29.

It is reported in Paris (we cannot say with what foundation) that the Duke of Argyll has taken a large house near Fontainebleau.

The nomination of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld Bisaccia as successor to the much-regretted Marquis de Biron as president of the Jockey Club gives unqualified satisfaction.

A FRENCH lady of title, of wealth, married, and happy to all appearances, has just shot herself at Nice. She went into her room, put on a white satin dress, and blew out her brains.

The latest continental idea is to slip a fox out of a bag, hunt it, and, when "caught" by the hounds, rebag it. Some brushes are kept in stock, and on each occasion a brush is presented to the lady who is in at the death, or rather at the "bag."

The black coat evening dress has never been loved, except for those who are in it. There are, consequently, frequent efforts made to get emancipated. The last attempt has been by the Duc de Morny. He has figured in a plum-coloured velvet instead, adorned by sapphire buttons. Perhaps the idea may have been picked up in New York, but it will not do for civilization.

Those English players who are troubled at Monte Carlo by having to make a mental calculation as to the relative value of the louis they are winning (?) to English sovereigns may have their labor lightened by following the rule of multiplying the louis by eight and cutting off one cypher. For instance, forty louis multiplied by eight give 320 louis; cut off the cypher and the product is thirty-two sovereigns.

TENNIS fever has set in strongly among the Americans, and has attracted the attention of aristocratic male Paris. The French ladies do not admire the exercise. It is rude and rough, they say, and may pass for a boarding-school girl. Be that as it may, the greatest pleasure was shown in witnessing the match between the various American young ladies, who showed great skill.

THE five o'clock tea is liked as a custom in Paris, but the tea itself is not quite to the taste of French society, which never will take to tea as a beverage. We hear that this summer sorbets are, consequently, to be substituted, as they are usually delightfully perfumed with essence of rose, lily-of-the-valley, jasmine, and bergamote. Consequently, they have a valuable alterative quality when administered to gentlemen who smoke potent "baccas."

SOME of the French mad doctors are of opinion that the bloodthirsty proclivities of Fenians, Nihilists and Communists are due to a species of mania. It is said that the object of the recent arrest of Louise Michel is to institute an inquiry into her mental condition. According to Parisian scientists women are most liable to the epidemic of phrenzy of this species, and they account on this ground for the extraordinary ferocity of the female ferocity during the Commune. Louise was originally a servant girl, and the currently-received story of her political aberrations is that she conceived a violent attachment for a son of the house in which she served, was irritated beyond control by the social considerations which forbade a union, and hence wildly adopted the principles of Socialism.

A STATUE of Lamartine is about to be erected by subscription, and each subscriber is to receive as a premium a lock of the poet's hair. This much was known, but it was left to a contemporary to explain in what way the desired locks of hair were to be obtained. The explanation is as follows: "M. Ysopy, nephew of the Cardinal of that name, inherited the latter's large fortune, about thirty years ago, and got rid of it all in a bad speculation, the establishment of a kind of Cremorne, called the Salle Ste. Cécile, which entirely collapsed at the Revolution of 1848. Ysopy resolved to turn barber, obtained Lamartine's custom, and continued to attend him in a professional capacity till the end of the poet's life. During this period of twenty years, the barber carefully collected every hair that was cut from the poet's head, and it is this goodly crop which is to be shared amidst the subscribers to the statue."

FOOT NOTES.

MADAME MOJESKA will spend her summer vacation on the Pacific Coast, and instead of "doing" the fashionable watering places she will camp out with her husband and a few friends in the National Park.

PAUL H. HAYNE, the poet, is living near Augusta, Ga., in a cosy little white cottage set in fifty acres of ground. It was presented to the poet by ex-Governor Colquitt, of Georgia, after Mr. Hayne's residence was burned down.

COUNT DELVA, son of ex-President Delva of Hayti, who arrived from Havana recently, is as black as a coal, but he is very intelligent and his manners are pleasing. His sister, known as the "Black Countess," created a sensation in Paris a year ago by attempting to poison herself. Her melancholy was caused by disappointment in love, but she has since fully recovered, and is again a prominent figure in Parisian life.

AS English literary man makes a sweeping accusation against women. He declares that he would never, if he could help it, trust a woman with a book. First, he says, that if she leaves it on a table, she invariably puts it open face downward and breaks the back, and next that she never cuts it well into the corners, so that as soon as it is really opened the leaves are torn. Are these iniquities confined to the weaker sex?

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, during his long term of service in Congress, was never known to be late at his seat. On one occasion, just as the clock struck the hour for the commencement of the session, a member inquired of the Speaker if it was not time to call the House to order. "No, sir," was the reply: "Mr. Adams is not yet in his seat." Just then Mr. Adams appeared and it was shown that the clock was three minutes fast.

AMONG the persons recently presented to the Emperor of Russia at Gatchina was an old veteran of ninety-eight, from Tavastehus, in Finland, who received a gold coin from the hands of the Empress Catherine II., at eleven years of age, and wears the medal of Alexander I. for the war of 1812. He was taken prisoner by the French at Moscow, and was personally interrogated by the great Napoleon. The Czar took great interest in the old man's account of the burning of Moscow, and afterward introduced him to the Empress and her children.

THE ancient gate of the Scheldt at Antwerp, which was erected, in 1624, in honor of Phillip IV., from plans by Rubens, has lately been removed to make room for the new dock. After being thoroughly repaired, it is to be re-erected as near to its original site as possible. The gate is adorned with sculptures by Artus Quellin, and on the river side of it is a Latin inscription:—"The Scheldt delights to roll its obedient waves for him who rules over the Tagus and the Ganges, the Rhine and the Indus; under thy auspices, great Phillip, it will bear the same vessels it bore formerly under the emperor, thy grandmother."

AEROLITES.—The largest in any museum in United States try is in the National museum. It was found in Northern Mexico, the region where most of the aerolites have been found. Its weight is 3,000. The second largest is the Gibbs aerolite, in the museum of Yale College, weighing 1,600 pounds; and the third in size is also in the National Museum, its weight being 1,400 pounds. This last is called the "Tucson aerolite." The government also owns a heavy mass of iron found in the interior of Greenland, which for a time was believed to be a monster aerolite. Several smaller aerolites are to be found in the Smithsonian Institution and other museums of the country.