

and the same practice prevails at Berlin and elsewhere. There was some discussion as to the advantages of this practice. The chief advantage claimed for it by Dr. Bäckler was that it afforded better facilities for hearing, as some orators speak from the tribune, and others from their seats. One of the two writers remains in his official place in front of the tribune, and the other places himself near the speaker for the time being. In America a complete verbatim report of all debates is printed at the public expense. It is even more complete than the debates themselves, as it frequently contains speeches which are not actually delivered, but only taken as delivered (if we may use the expression), owing to lack of time.

The congress, if it serves no other purpose, will at least serve to show the general public of England that there are other systems doing good work in the world besides the one with which they are best acquainted. Mr. Gurney-Salter read a paper giving valuable information as to the official and non-official reporting performed by the staff who work under his direction. Each 'shorthand-writer' has his own 'shorthand clerk,' to whom his notes are carried every half-hour, and who reads them aloud to two longhand clerks at once, the shorthand-writer all the time never leaving his place, but writing on continuously for two, three, or more hours. When his 'turn' of writing is over, he begins to revise the longhand transcript, which is read over to him while he follows it in his own notes. This is the process pursued in taking the evidence at parliamentary committees, and about 2,800 words of manuscript are produced per hour. All the 'shorthand-writers' but one use the Gurney system, and this one is a phonographer.

Mr. Gurney-Salter also gave some interesting information as to changes which have gradually been introduced in the mode of writing certain words. Comparing the present mode of writing with that in use at the beginning of this century, he described the changes as including a briefer writing of certain words, but as consisting chiefly in two things; namely, the writing of every word separately, and a fuller insertion of vowels—not initial vowels, for they were always inserted, but vowels in the middle of words. These medial vowels are inserted by lifting the pen and writing the remainder of the word in position.

AFGHAN LIFE IN AFGHAN SONGS.

IN *The Contemporary Review* for October, 1887, is an article by James Darmesteter on Afghan life in Afghan songs. Mr. Darmesteter has much to say on the political relations of Afghan to the British Empire of India, but introduces his article with some account of the native folk-songs. On the night of the 7th of April, 1886 (Wednesday, 11 P.M.), as he was sitting in the garden of his bungalow at Peshawer, gazing at the stars and the silver moon, etc., Mr. Darmesteter heard his Afghan *chaukidar* (life and property not being very safe at Peshawer, it is usual to keep an armed watchman, called *chaukidar*), old Piro, of the Khalil tribe, muttering in a broken voice fragments of a song that sounded like a love-song. He asked him to repeat the song to him. This he modestly declined to do for a long time, but at last he gave way, and began,—

"My love is gone to Dekhan, and has left me alone;
I have gone to him to entreat him.
'What is it to me that thou shouldst become a Raja at Azrabad?'
I seized him by the skirt of his garment and said, 'Look at me!'"

Here old Piro stopped, and neither for love nor for money could he prevail upon him to go on: his *repertoire* was exhausted. But Mr. Darmesteter's interest had been awakened, and from that night he resolved to collect what he could of the Afghan popular poetry. The field was new and unexplored. English people in India care little for Indian songs.

He had gone to the border to study the Afghan language and literature, but had soon to recognize that the so-called Afghan literature is hardly worth the trouble of a journey from Paris to Peshawer. It consists mainly of imitations and translations from the Persian, Arabic, and Hindustani. For a time, under the Moguls, an original and free spirit permeated those imitations, and Mirza Ansari, the mystical poet, or Khushhal Khan, prince of the Khatak tribe, would be accounted a true poet in any nation and any literature. But these are rare exceptions, and the theological

lucubrations of the much-revered Akhun Darveza, that narrow, foul-mouthed, rancorous, and truly pious exponent of Afghan orthodoxy, the endless *rifacimenti* of Hatim Tai, the most liberal of Arabs, of Ali Hamza and the companions of the Prophet, or the ever-retold edifying story of Joseph and Zuleikha,—all seem as if they had been written or copied by mediæval monks or unimaginative children.

The popular, unwritten poetry, though despised and ignored by the reading-classes, is of quite a different character. It is the work of illiterate poets: but it represents *their* feelings; it has life in it,—the life of the people; it is simple, because the natural range of ideas of an Afghan is simple and limited; it is true to nature, because it represents those ideas without any moral bias or literary after-thought. Sometimes, therefore, it is powerful and beautiful, because it renders simply and truly powerful passions or beautiful feelings.

During a few months' stay on the border, Mr. Darmesteter collected about one hundred and twenty songs (to be published, with text, translation, and commentary, in the *Bibliothèque Orientale* of the French Asiatic Society) of every description,—love-songs, folk-lore, hymns, romantic songs, and political ballads. If we want to know what an Afghan is, let us put all books aside and receive his own unconscious confession from the lips of his favorite poets. The confession, it is to be feared, would not be much to their honor on the whole, but it will be the more sincere. This is the value of the wild, unpremeditated accents of these people: a poor thing it is, but it expresses their nature.

The Afghans (*Afghan* is their Persian name; their Indian name is *Pathan*; their national name, *Pukhtun* or *Pushtun*) are divided into three independent groups:—

1. The Afghans under British rule, or what we may call the Queen's Afghans, who inhabit the border districts along the Indus, Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, Kohat, Peshawer, and Hazara. They were conquered in 1849, with the Sikhs, their then masters.

2. The Afghans of Afghanistan proper, or the Emir's Afghans, — the only part of the race that forms something like an organized power.

3. The Afghans of Yaghistan, "the rebel or independent country," that is to say, those Afghans who do not belong either to the British Raj or to the Emir, but live in the native national anarchy in the western basin of the upper Indus, — Svat, Buner, Panjkora, Dher, etc. The Afghan of Yaghistan is the true, unsophisticated Afghan.

The songs were collected in the British districts of Peshawer and Hazara, but most of them express, nevertheless, the general views of the Afghans to whatever part they belong: for though there is no real nationality amongst the Afghans, yet there is a strongly marked national character; and though nothing is more offensive to an Afghan than another Afghan, still there is nothing so much like an Afghan as another. Moreover, many of these songs come from Yaghistan, or Afghanistan. Songs travel quickly. The thousands of *Powindas* that every year pass twice across the Suleiman range, bringing the wealth of Central Asia and carrying back the wealth of India, bring also and carry back all the treasures of the Afghan Muse on both sides the mountain; and a new song freshly flown at Naushehra, from the lips of Mohammed the Oil-Presser, will very soon be heard upon the mountains of Buner, or down the valley of the Helمند.

There are two sorts of poets, — the *Sha-ir* and the *Dum*. With the *Sha-ir* we have nothing to do: he is the literary poet, who can read, who knows Hafiz and Saadi, who writes Afghan Ghazals on the Persian model, who has composed a Divan. Every educated man is a *Sha-ir*, though, if he be a man of good taste, he will not assume the title. Writing Ghazal was one of the accomplishments of the old Afghan chiefs. Hafiz Rahmat, the great Rohilla captain, and Ahmed Shah, the founder of the Durani empire, had written Divans, were 'Divan people,' — *Akli Divan*, as the expression runs. The *Sha-ir* may be a clever writer, he may be a fine writer; but he has nothing to teach us about his people. We may safely dismiss him with honor and due respect.

The *Dum* is the popular singer and poet, for he combines the two qualities, like our *Jongleur* of the middle ages. The *Dums* form a caste: the profession is hereditary. The *Dum* is despised

¹ Hyderabad, a favorite place of resort for Afghan adventurers and *soldats de fortune*.

by the people with literary pretensions, who fly into a passion when one of these ignorant fellows, flushed with success, dubs himself a *Sha-ir*. He is not a Pathan by race, though he has been *pathanized*: he is a low sort of creature, whom the Khans and Sardars treat as the mediæval barons might have treated the itinerant *Jongleur*,—despised, insulted, honored, liberally paid, intensely popular amongst the people.

The novice *Dum* goes to a celebrated *Dum*, who is a master, an *Ustad*: he becomes his disciple, his *shagird*. The master teaches him first his own songs, then the songs of the great *Dums* of the present and past generations. The *Ustad* takes his *shagirds* with him to the festivities to which he has been asked, private or public, profane or religious: he takes them to the *hujra*, the 'common house' or town-hall of the village, where idlers and travelling guests meet every night to hear the news that is going round, and listen to any man that has a tale to tell or a song to sing. The *Ustad* pockets half the sum given by the host, and the other half is divided between the *shagirds*. When a *shagird* feels he can compose for himself and is able to achieve a reputation, he leaves his master and becomes himself an *Ustad*. I am sorry to say that *Dums* generally are not over-sensitive about literary honesty: plagiarism is rife among them. A *Dum* will readily sing, as his own, songs of the dead or the living. It is the custom that poets should insert their names in the last line: you have only to substitute your own name for the name of the real author or of the former plagiarist. People will not applaud you the less, though of course the injured party may retort with a satire or a stab. A good *Dum* may die a rich man. Mira would hardly open his mouth anywhere under fifty rupees. He was an illiterate man: he could not read, but he knew by heart a wonderful number of songs, and could improvise. You would ask him for a song in a certain shade of feeling; then he would go out with his men, and an hour afterwards they would come back and sing a beautiful chorus on the rebab. His song of 'Zakhmé' is sung wherever there are Afghans, as far as Rampor in Rohilkhand, and Hayderabad of Dekhan, and sets them a-dancing as soon as the first notes are struck. It was sung at the Ravul Pindi interview as the national song of the Afghans, though it is nothing more—or, rather, nothing less—than a love-song. An Irish journalist—Mr. Grat-tan Geary, of the *Bombay Gazette*—was struck with its melody, and had it printed. It is probably the only Afghan song that has ever been published (two songs have been translated by Mr. Thorburn in his book on Bannu, and another by Colonel Raverty in the introduction to his Afghan grammar).

The people piously inclined object to song, among the Afghans as well as elsewhere; and the Mollahs inveigh against the *Dums*. There is only one occasion when even a Mollah will approve of the song of a *Dum*: it is when the Crusade, or, as the Anglo-Indians say, the Crescentade, has been proclaimed; then is the time for the *Dum* to rehabilitate himself, as he sings the glories of the sacred war, the bliss reserved to the *Ghazi*, the roses that grow for him in the groves above, and the black-eyed houris that come from heaven and give the dying man to drink of the sherbet of martyrdom. But, in spite of the Mollahs, the *Dum* is as popular in his profane as in his semi-sacred character. Song is a passion with the Afghans; in fact, one of the few noble passions with which he is endowed. Whenever three Afghans meet together, there is a song between them. In the *hujra*, during the evening conversation, a man rises up, seizes a rebab, and sings, sings on. Perhaps he is under prosecution for a capital crime; perhaps to-morrow he will be hunted to the mountain, sent to the gallows; what matters? Every event of public or private life enters song at once, and the *Dums* are the journalists of the Afghans. Possibly the *Dum* of to-day has preserved for us faithfully enough a picture of what the Bard was with the Gauls.

ENGLISH COIN-SALES OF 1886 AND 1887.

As the English season for coin-sales will soon begin again, *The Athenæum* gives its readers some information on the general results of those which have taken place during the last ten months. The coin-selling year may be said to commence in November, and to end in July: sometimes it is extended into August, but, if so, it

never oversteps the first week of that month. Even between November and August there are certain periods which have to be avoided, especially immediately before and after Christmas and Easter. The reason for these precautions arises from the circumstance that collectors of coins are comparatively few, and some of the largest buyers live out of London: consequently those who have collections to dispose of must be careful to offer their ware for sale when these rare birds are most likely to be in town. Sales of pictures and china will generally secure a good attendance, but not so it is with coins: so these precautions must be taken.

Coin-sales may be divided into two classes,—ancient and modern; the former dealing chiefly with the coinages of Greece and Rome, the latter with those of nations of modern times. It will be found, on looking through the sale-catalogues of the last season in England, that those of modern coins predominate. Of ancient coins there have been only three collections sold: viz., a portion of the stock of the late William Webster, the well-known dealer, Dec. 22; a collection of "a gentleman relinquishing the pursuit," June 14 and 15; and a cabinet of select Greek coins, June 27 to July 1. On the modern side there have been three sales of four to six days each, in December, May, and August: others of the war medals, etc., of Capt. E. Hyde Greg; the coins of the late Joseph Mayer of Liverpool; of the late Archdeacon Pownall, vice-president of the Numismatic Society; and of Major W. Stewart Thorburn. There has been one very important sale in Paris of Roman and Byzantine gold coins, belonging to the Vicomte Ponton d'Amecourt; but, as we are concerned chiefly with what has taken place in England, we shall not enter into any particulars of that sale, beyond remarking that the prices yielded on that occasion far surpassed those of any previous sale of this class of coins. We mention it as it attracted many English buyers.

A general glance at the above-mentioned catalogues will show that there is, and has been for some few years, a considerable falling-off in the prices of ancient coins, while a more than corresponding increase has taken place in the sums realized by modern coins and medals. Rare and fine Greek and Roman coins will always command a market, but these pieces are exceptional; and a general good average depends principally on the more ordinary pieces in silver and on the copper coins. The sale of a "cabinet of select Greek coins" in June and July, when the catalogue was issued, bid fair to witness some big prices; but unfortunately, when the coins came to be examined, by far the greater portion, at least of the rarities, were pronounced to be forgeries, and the consequence was that those collectors who went to London bent on making some good purchases for their cabinets returned home with their purses but little lightened. It was a bitter disappointment to many; but it has served as a warning, to those who have collections to dispose of, to be careful and see that what they offer for sale is 'above suspicion.' A coin, before it passes from the auctioneer's hands into those of the buyer, has to undergo a severe and critical examination. It is turned over and over, its merits or demerits are discussed on all sides, and, if any doubt is expressed as to its genuineness, rumor soon spreads the doubt, and it is generally doomed. In the sale referred to, among the false coins there were many genuine pieces, and some of considerable rarity; but their character was damaged by their false brethren, and they paid the penalty of being in such bad company. The other sales show a fair average of prices for the finer pieces, but a very low one for the more common ones, especially those in copper. As an illustration we may give a few examples. Syracusan decadrachms, or 'medallions' as they are more commonly called on account of their size, realized from £19 to £20 10s.; a tetradrachm of Naxos, with seated figure of Silenus on the reverse, £7 10s.; similar coins of Aenus, £10; of Akanthus, £7 7s.; of Ariarathes IX., king of Cappadocia, £18; an electrum stater of Cyzicus, £13; a tetradrachm of Antiochus VI. of Syria, £12, etc. These pieces are all somewhat rare; but, when we examine the lots containing the smaller silver coins and those of copper, we find as many as twenty or more going for only a few shillings. These results are very disappointing, especially to those who formed collections some years ago, and consider them in the light of invested capital.

Let us now turn to the modern side, and see what is taking place with English coins and medals. Other European coins, for the