

4. TRANSLITERATION.

SIR,—Mr. Lyon in p. 636 of the Journal, 1890, writes :

“I hope I shall be favoured with suggestions from those who are interested” . . . in the problem of Transliteration from Arabic or Arabized types.

This invitation of Mr. Lyon has induced me to write. And first, to explain my own experience and general position.

In the year 1830 I fell in with the problem by grammar and dictionary, but on January 1st, 1831, entered Aleppo with friends, was shut up there by the Ottoman preparation for war against David Pasha of Bagdad for fifteen months. But first plague, next inundation, disarmed David; so in the summer of 1832 our party reached Bagdad. The provincial dialects of Syria and Bagdad were my primary study, from the people themselves; afterwards in many after years I had endless specimens of popular Arabic in Egypt and Algiers; moreover, from 1836 began my studies in Libyan texts in Arabized types. In fifty years my mind had more than one change in detail, largely agreeing with Mr. Lyon in principle.

But I may first mention MAPS, as that in which we mainly look down upon the Ancients and the modern Orientals. Eastern scholars must now learn our Geography; but when they try to make a Map for Arabs, they will (perhaps against their will) wish for Roman transliteration. The dots of Arabic as essential parts of letters are an unendurable vexation in any full map. I infer that *accents* or dots as essential parts of letters, such as *h*, *t*, *d*, *s*, *z*, ought to be used *as little as possible* in transliteration, if we cannot always avoid them.

Next, from Oberleitmen's Grammar of Ancient Arabic I learned (though, without his warning, from the careless utterance of natives I should hardly have trusted my own ear) that the vowels indicated by vowel points (*always* in poetical or sacred Arabic, but in prose only to save a native from ambiguity) have *two* received utterances, *fine* with

fine consonants, generally *less clear* or certainly different with thick consonants. Any European, as soon as he knows the fact, wishes to write them by *different vowels or diphthongs*. In trying to learn Arabic words from unpointed prose, I became ere long aware of my liability to very grievous error, which is easier to indicate than to illustrate. In trying to say something in Arabic I elicited a general shudder and sort of hiss. And when in surprise I asked, What did I say wrong? no one dared to tell me. Evidently all were shocked. On one occasion I asked a Turkish literary man to help me to read a piece of unpointed Arabic, but he replied, "I dare not;" and on my surprize, he explained: "Not knowing all the vowels, I might unawares say something obscene." The dictionaries of Golius or Freytag easily show the danger.

As a very simple example how in our view a vowel written the same in Arabic may change, I give the words *تين* *dates* and *طين* *mud*. I write them with different vowels, *tien*, *dates*; *tuin*, *mud*, if for a moment *t* stands for ط. On experiments with natives, I found they really changed both the initial consonant and the vowel: but my final opinion was, that if I uttered both with the *same* vowel (ie), I always seemed wrong, however carefully I thickened my *t* for ط; but if I got my *ui* with the native sound, they easily forgave, perhaps did not observe, any inaccuracy in my preceding consonant. What will Mr. Lyon think of my sanguine idea, that if once a learned Arab cares to learn our transliteration, and finds all his vowels written as letters in full, he will care less about the coarse pronunciation of certain consonants, and look upon any excess as rustic vulgarity.

That *Fatah* in the sacred name الله is pronounced as English *u* in *Fun*, *Dust* (in *majorum Dei gloriam*), and not as in our *Man* or *Men*, displays the uncertainty. *Moslem* is written by the French, where my ear would dictate *Moslim*; but the French have not our short *i*, and with them our ship becomes sheep. I dare not enter details, until it is agreed that textual vowels and diphthongs ought to enter

our transliteration. In my little Arabic Dictionary I have done my best as to vowels, while aware how vague my appreciation of French eu, eû, oeu. A native scholar to assist in transliteration ought to know both English and French vowel sounds accurately, and write for us his best attempts for all the possible Arabic vowels in Roman type.

Proceeding to consonants, I regard d, t (English or French) as equivalent to Arabic ت د although *our* letters are not *dental*, but only "gingival," the tooth touching the gum. Mr. Lyon appears to make h the strong wheezing H, I have not understood why. Our h, s, z, k, g (hard), j, b, p, v, f, l, m, n, r seem identical with Arabic or Persian sounds. For g (hard) is wanted in Libyan and Persian; but we want figures for غ غ ذ ث ظ ض ط ص چ ژ ش خ ح.

(1) To economize dots or accents with least blame or dispute, we may use existing Alphabets. Modern Greek gives Γ (*ghamma*), Δ (*delta*), Θ (*theta*) for غ ذ غ. Only, to avoid, in the small of Γ, a form too like to γ, strip the cross from F f of Latin; then, to avoid confusion with long f, merely lower f in the line. Then Ϛ means Ghimel.

A Hindu gentleman some thirty years ago, calling on me, said: "You in Europe surpass us in the mechanism of writing, whether by skill, or accident, or by fate. You have capitals and common letters, Roman or Italic, varied punctuation and quotation marks." In desiring to retain all these I go beyond Mr. Lyon. Thus for غ I covet both Γ and Ϛ. I once used English g for غ as Mr. Lyon proposes; but in Persian and Libyan I want it for our hard g.

(2) From Hebrew I take as ח its frequent equivalent ח as capital, with small letter ח which suits print admirably. For the cursive form in MS. we need not provide: each will take his own course. I have tried both ח and a crossed ח, as ח̄. Our x and c are disposable, and x both in Spanish now and perhaps in Oscan once, sounded as our sh; therefore x for ש cannot be blamed. The c being in Italian hard or soft, may stand for English ch, Persian چ; but French j,

in the cases which need it, may be a two-horned j, while English j is of course ج of Arabic. The thick Arabic ص is probably Hebrew ש which I nearly imitate in quasi-Roman types; also Δ for ض. For ط I print T with curved top T, τ as small letter to avoid likeness to r. Else I use t̄ or t̄, *i.e.* t with double cross. Also ʒ with tail for ظ.

Finally I imitate ع from Arabic in Ğ; and خ remains. At first having used c for ك (which at Bagdad is sounded soft as our *ch* in *chin*), the k was at my disposal, and I used it as vibratory for خ. Now I prefer the usual k for ك, only adding a cedilla for Bagdad. Something must be invented, and the only real difficulty is fix one way out of several. Hitherto it has been written kh; so we must treat it as k *made vibratory*: rough *ch* of German Swiss. I finally printed &: Messrs. Stephen Austin & Sons have the type: but again and again I have preferred as simpler to put lower the main stalk of k into ꝑ, so as neither to complicate the figure nor increase its width.

I know too well the difficulty of *uttering* certain consonants. For ص and ظ we are told to say س and ز *with your tongue between your teeth*; which seems the way to bite your tongue. A learned Maronite from the Lebanon was a candidate for the Arabic Professorship at University College, London, when I was a Professor there. He called on me, and politely tried me in all the Arabic sounds; and at last said: "You are right in every thing." But if I had tried to talk fast, instead of uttering single words, slowly and carefully, I knew that I should have gone wrong often. Concerning ظ (my tailed ʒ) I have found ظ in special cases to take two sounds; as ظالم ẓâlim, oppressive; yet ظلم (ḍalam) be dark; ظاهر ẓâhir, external; yet ظهر (ḍahr) back; but döhr, noon. I also propose to print a Hamza in certain words, ʿehhib, ʿêdi, ʿehliey.

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