

THE REPENTANCE
OF NUSSOOH.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL HINDUSTANI

BY

50.624

M. KEMPSON.

Nazir Ahmed

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTICE.

THE Hindustani tale, of which this little volume is a free version, came into my hands in the course of work in India. It was published shortly afterwards by the author,* and, though little known to Europeans, has passed through several editions in the native presses of Agrá and Lucknow.

I translate it for three reasons. First, because I am sure that the kindness with which the condition and progress of our Indian fellow-subjects are regarded by Englishmen will be enhanced in the minds of those who care to peruse the version; secondly, because the insight which the tale affords into the domestic habits of the people cannot but be useful to all who are engaged in, or look forward to, an Indian career; and thirdly, because I wish to draw attention to the original as the best specimen yet published of the most widely used of the Indian vernaculars, as it is spoken in the home of the language, Dehli, which is the scene of the story.

* MAULVI Haji Hafiz NUZEER AHMED, *Khan Bahadur*, Superintendent Revenue Department, H.H. The Nizam's Dominions, Haidarabad, Deccan.

The Repentance of Nussooh, equally with its companion tale, *The Bride's Mirror*, was written for private circulation among the author's family connections, in the first instance; and the picture of life and manners which it presents could have been drawn by a native only.

The author, who is a finished scholar and dialectician of the Oriental school, was long a "Deputy-Collector" under the English Government, and some years ago was chosen by the late Sir Salar Jung to fill an important office in the administration of Haidarabad, which he still holds.

I have his permission to translate the work.

M. K.

Ascot, 1884.

P R E F A C E.

By SIR WILLIAM MUIR, K.C.S.I.

THE vernacular languages of INDIA are singularly wanting in sound literature of a useful and amusing sort. Such works as there are abound, for the most part, in matter of an objectionable tendency. There is, for example, next to nothing in the way of instructive and entertaining stories, suitable for the young, or for readers of the fair sex. Hence arises one of the great obstacles to education, and specially the education of girls. Husbands and fathers naturally hesitate to encourage a taste for reading to be gratified only by the perusal of questionable books.

The Repentance of Nussooh was submitted to MR. KEMPSON about ten years ago, when Director of Public Instruction in the North-Western Provinces, in pursuance of a Notification offering prizes for meritorious treatises in the vernacular; and it gained the reward of £100.

In awarding the prize to the writer of *The Repentance of Nussooh*, the following orders were addressed to MR. KEMPSON, and published in the Gazette of the NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES for 1874:—

The tendency of the book, and the language in which it is written, are deserving of the warmest commendation. Indeed, the vigour of

expression, the chaste and simple beauty of the style, and the singular aptness and richness of idiom, are probably unequalled in Urdu. The impartial mingling of words of Hindee, and of Persian and Arabic origin, as they are found in the common speech of DEHLI, is a high merit. The copious use of proverbial phrases and poetical adages, especially of phrases occurring in the familiar discourse of domestic life, will add greatly to the usefulness of the book. A most valuable insight is also given into the details of Mahometan family life, which will make this work, like *The Bride's Mirror*, instructive to the European reader.

But the leading feature of the book is its religious bearing. At the outset the AUTHOR frankly acknowledges his inability to inculcate domestic virtues apart from religion; indeed, his conviction in this matter is couched in the strongest possible language. "My first purpose," he writes, "was to establish the necessity of social and family virtue and morality, without reference to religion.* But, as I proceeded, I found that I might as well seek to separate the body from the soul, to tear the nail from the flesh, to sever the quality from the essence, or to divide the ray of light from the sun." And, accordingly, the moral of the story is that an earnest and sincere following-up of religious conviction is the only sound basis of domestic happiness. No doubt, various opinions will be held upon the maxim here laid down; but there can be no question as to the earnest convictions of the Writer, nor as to the Catholic spirit in which, from a Mahometan point of view, he has carried out his object. . . . On a careful perusal of the whole, HIS HONOUR is satisfied that the AUTHOR has well fulfilled his resolution of avoiding everything that is bigoted, or that might prove offensive to persons of another creed; and, also, of laying such stress upon the great verities which underlie religious belief, that his lessons might, by implication, be well received even by others than professors of his own faith. And in this view, HIS HONOUR quite agrees with you that the work may prove acceptable not only to Mahometans, but also to the Hindoo and Christian reader. Such scenes as that of the little daughter's conversation with FAHMEEDAH on the duty owing to her MAKER are full of nature and tenderness, and can hardly be perused otherwise than with profit to the reader of whatever creed.

Such being the case, SIR WILLIAM MUIR has no hesitation in

* The Notification being by Government was necessarily confined to works of a secular character.

admitting this work as properly falling under the scope of the Notification; and in awarding to it the full prize of One thousand rupees, assured that the book is a valuable addition to our vernacular literature, and that it will be highly popular among the Mussulmans, and will be widely read by other classes also.

I believe that, in the present state of Indian literature, no better text-books than these two works of our Author—*The Bride's Mirror* and *The Repentance of Nussooh*—could be found for the acquisition by the English scholar of an easy and elegant style of speaking and writing in the Urdu language. The idiom is that of the pure vernacular spoken in Dehli. The stories abound with characteristic incidents and useful illustrations of the habits and customs of Mahometan life. In this view, both of these works should prove particularly useful for ladies who have occasion to visit the zenânas of Upper India.

The translation has been done by Mr. KEMPSON faithfully and ably. The language and colloquial expressions are happily rendered, and the Oriental ideas and allusions are made readily intelligible to the European reader—a task at times of very considerable difficulty. Some of the chapters and dialogues have been, with advantage, much abbreviated, which in the original are unnecessarily prolix.

Not the least advantage of the work is the knowledge it gives of the better tendencies of ISLAM, in the encouragement of virtue and repression of vice. Indeed, the religious cast of the tale is singular, and, for a Moslem, I believe quite unique. It differs in this respect from all other Mahometan treatises that I have met with. Popular religious works amongst them are, as a rule, purely formal, and confined to the inculcation of a round of duties and ceremonies. That Religion should

be a *pervading influence*, guiding the household and leavening domestic life, is for a Moslem book a novel theme. In fact, it is only in a country under Christian influences, like those which happily are seen and felt in India, that the idea of such a book would present itself to the Moslem mind. And the fact cannot but be regarded as an encouraging token of the effect of our religious teaching in India. This is the more remarkable as NUZEER AHMED, when he composed the work, was little, if at all, conversant with English literature, and its influence, therefore, must have been purely indirect; and, in some respects, the fact is all the more valuable because the influence is indirect. The tale is not the mere imitation of an English work, though it be the genuine product of English ideas.

For all these reasons I have great satisfaction in commending Mr. KEMPSON'S translation to all who are interested in INDIA, and also in advocating with him the use of the original Treatise as a Text-book for the acquisition of HINDUSTANI, and for the examinations of proficiency in the same.

W. M.

July 1884.

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THE
REPENTANCE OF NUSSOOH.

CHAPTER I.

NUSSOOH'S DREAM.

NOT very long ago the cholera was so bad in Dehli that thirty or forty deaths a day were counted in a single street. The public thoroughfares, once crowded with men till midnight, were empty. The hammer of the artizan had ceased, and the street-criers were dumb. There was no visiting, no hospitality, no friendly intercourse, for all had lost heart and hope. A man might be walking about in the best of health, when of a sudden he felt ill. There was no chance of escape, no time even to make a will. In one short quarter of an hour all was over—vomiting, medicine, prayer, and the death-