

# ROBERT CURZON, TRAVELLER AND BOOK COLLECTOR

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Apart from his deep love for his family and few close friends, Robert Curzon's life was dominated by two great passions: one was for his country seat, Parham, near Pulborough in Sussex, and the other was for his collection of curiosities and armour and books, his 'gimcracks', as he used to call them in his letters to his closest friend, Walter Sneyd. It was interest in Parham, seen in the "reverent and healthy delight of uncovetous admiration",<sup>1</sup> of which Ruskin speaks, that first made me interested in one of its former owners. Of all English country houses, Parham is one of the most sympathetic, giving as it does such an impression of kindness to its young heirs. There is the tiny child's house carved

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Add. MSS. 39583-9671 (The Parham MSS.)

Add. MS. 42502 (The Simonides Papers)

Add. MS. 39046 (Correspondence with Leader)

MS. A. K. R. 9. G. (Curzon's copy of the *Catalogue of Materials*).

My grateful thanks are also owed to the Library of the University of Keele for permission to read and quote from the Curzon Sneyd correspondence which is there (Accession Code: S[Rev. WS Hon. RC] 1-506), and particularly to Dr. Ian Fraser, Archivist, Keele University Library, for the benefit of conversation on Curzon matters and for most generously placing at my disposal the text of his doctoral dissertation (Keele University, 1974); the *Calendar* of Curzon Sneyd correspondence prepared by him (Copyright, Keele University, 1967); and the text of his unpublished biography *Robert Curzon, The Heir of Parham*. This latter draws on much unpublished manuscript material, and is lavishly illustrated. It is greatly to be hoped that it will see the light of day before long.

I am deeply grateful to the Hon. Roger Frankland for permission to quote from family papers which are in private ownership. These are cited in the notes as the *Parham Papers*.

References to and quotations from Curzon's scrapbook, now Harvard University b MS. Eng. 1129, are made by kind permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

<sup>1</sup> J. Ruskin, *Praeterita* (London, 1900), i. 7. (Writing of early visits to noblemen's houses).

in the thickness of the garden wall, the children's playthings, the worn snippets of childish embroidery so carefully preserved from Elizabethan times. From interest in the house, I passed to interest in Curzon, and from Curzon to his books.

By 'books' I mean both the books Curzon wrote and the books he collected. If he was not one of the richest and most important collectors, or greatest writers, of the nineteenth century, he has at least the merit of being interesting. His collection was by no means large, but it was good. After coming back from his first visit to the Levant, Curzon took some of his books to the British Museum, for purposes of dating and comparison.

Did I tell you [he writes to Sneyd] that I went to the British Museum (I think not). I had a very satisfactory rummage there among the M.S.S. and saw a thing or two which might be acceptable to you or me but to my great delight and surprise saw no m.s. of the same date so well written and illuminated as 2 or 3 of my own Greek ones, and received great glory from a nice round little librarian who was pleased to have somebody to talk to, and wondered how so small a person as myself could have gone so great a distance after an old book. In fact, I felt a kind of Hero or Knight errant in the cause when I was trotting over the plains of Jericho with a big book under my arm. (Letter 38, London, 1835)<sup>2</sup>

The collection covered a wide range, from early printed books and incunabula bought from British booksellers, to Latin, Dutch, French and Flemish manuscripts picked up on various trips to Europe; from Scott's holograph *Fire King*, to Curzon's own illuminated *Lay of the Purple Falcon*; from the Greek, Coptic, Bulgarian, Armenian and Syriac manuscripts which he personally rescued from the monastic libraries in which they were rotting, to the Mexican manuscript sent from Italy that resulted in an adventure in the British Foreign Office. His printed books were auctioned by Sotheby's in November 1920. Most of the manuscripts are now in the various departments of the British Library. The Mexican manuscript (B.L. Add. MS. 39671) is in the Ethnology Department at Burlington House. The forty-two Greek manuscripts (B.L. Add. MSS. 39583-624) are in the Department of Manuscripts at the British Library, as are the four Slavonic manuscripts (B.L. Add. MSS. 39625-28) and twenty-two Latin

<sup>2</sup> All quotations from the Curzon/Sneyd correspondence, S[Rev. WS/Hon. RC]/1-506, are referenced by the number of the letter, and the place and date of writing. Spelling and punctuation have to a certain degree been normalized.

and seventeen miscellaneous European manuscripts (B.L. Add. MSS. 39629-70). The Oriental manuscripts are in the Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books at the British Library (Oriental MSS. 8729-855).

Until fairly recently Curzon's own books have been our main source of information about his travels and discoveries. His best known work, *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant*, a perfect combination of travel book (complete with recipes for yoghourt and shish-kebab) and bibliomaniac history, was written during a Lent passed in solitude at Parham. "The origin of these pages is as follows", he writes in the Preface:

I was staying by myself in an old country-house belonging to my family, but not often inhabited by them, and, having nothing to do in the evening, I looked about for some occupation to amuse the passing hours. In the room where I was sitting there was a large book-case full of ancient manuscripts, many of which had been collected by myself, in various out-of-the-way places, in different parts of the world. Taking some of these ponderous volumes from their shelves, I turned over their wide vellum leaves, and admired the antiquity of one, and the gold and azure which gleamed upon the pages of another. The sight of these books brought before my mind many scenes and recollections of the countries from which they came, and I said to myself, I know what I will do; I will write down some account of the most curious of these manuscripts, and the places in which they were found, as well as some of the adventures which I encountered in the pursuit of my venerable game.<sup>3</sup>

*Visits to Monasteries* covers two separate trips which Curzon made in the Near East. The first was in 1833, when he was a young man of twenty-three. Not long before, he had left Christ Church without a degree and had become Member of Parliament for Clitheroe, a family borough. Clitheroe was soon disfranchised as a result of the Reform Bill, leaving its Member unemployed. That was the end of politics for Curzon, although he remained interested enough to preserve, pasted in the back of a Greek volume of the Acts and Epistles (B.L. Add. MS. 39599), a letter from his mother, addressed to him in Constantinople, on the subject of an exciting local contest. "I hope this comical paper /in 1/2 sheets/ will not bother you", she writes. "We had the comfort of leaving my dear mother pretty well. ... —There has been a warm contest

<sup>3</sup> R. Curzon, *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant* (London, 1849 [1st edition]), pp. iii-iv. All further quotations from *Visits to Monasteries* will be referenced by the initials *VML* and the page number in this edition.

at Shoreham, only think, a Mr. Salomons a Jew!!! who found 610 fools to support him. J.P. amongst them! Oh dear. However happily he is beat and the old member returned. Now I will send this with my blessing and best wishes..." Curzon tended to use the manuscripts he acquired as scrap-books for amusing pieces of information concerning their acquisition, or for oddments he associated with the pleasures of the trip, like this affectionate letter reminding him of far-away England. The information thus preserved, along with letters posted back to England giving details of his adventures, must have helped him somewhat in the reconstruction of his voyages for *Visits to Monasteries*, written many years later. There can be no doubt, from the pages of this book, that for Curzon, the pleasure of the hunt in the more or less bloodless and aristocratic sport of book collecting, afforded him as much satisfaction as the final bagging of game. After the prevailing good humour of *Visits to Monasteries*, the tetchiness of a letter to Sneyd, written just before a trip to Italy in 1845, comes rather as a surprise; there is a brief revelation of a desire to have momentarily greater than a sense of adventure, a compulsive and perhaps compensatory edge to the "intolerable disease" of collecting mania.

What an astounding fine thing a 'fortun' is. Last week I finished making a catalogue of my old writings and oriental manuscripts and when I look back on the astonishing labour and difficulty, and research, and no small nous withal, which has been required to get together only 260 old books, and scraps of vellum and papyrus, during a space of nearly ten years, I see what a fine thing it must be, to be able just to get twice as much in one day, by sending a draft for no end of cash, to Mssrs Payne and Bohn etc. (Letter 136, Parham, 1845)

Certainly by this time he seems to have become somewhat travel-sick: "I do not feel up to an expedition, and want to sit upon my fundament and crack nuts across the fire in my own room, instead of rampaging about the world like the wandering Jew" (ibid.).

Curzon's early rampagings were to the Continent, in the company of various members of his family. Already he was haunting the booksellers and exhibiting an interest in 'gimcracks'. "I have got the new keepsake for 1831", he writes home from Dresden in November 1830, "I wonder how it got here. I was very much surprised to see it among some German books in the window of the great Bookseller's shop which contains about 200 books. The Germans are not great readers except the students who

dress in a very odd way, wear long hair and beards à la Charles the First and continually fight duels..." (*Parham Papers*). A few days later he writes about a gimcrack that has obviously intrigued him, besides being the sort of thing that will please the parents. "A man brought me some things made of amber a few days ago which were as wonderfull as any of them [i.e. the things he has seen on his tour]. One was a little spinning wheel about an inch high that worked... [and ] a cherry stone which opened with a hinge. In it was an amber Padlock and key which locked and unlocked it—when you consider the small size of these things and the brittle material of which they are made, it is quite wonderfull" (*Parham Papers*). He and his brother arrived in England penniless, and had to be bailed out of the family's London house. "I am very sorry we are so expensive, particularly as I wish very much to be talking to you instead of looking out of the window at a thick London fog" (*Parham Papers*).

The first of the Levantine voyages was undertaken three years later. In 1833 he began his travels in Egypt; from there he went overland to Palestine, visiting *en route* St. Catherine's on Mount Sinai; he spent Easter in Jerusalem and visited the monastery of St. Sabba, one of his most profitable hunting-grounds. After this he went to Corfu, whence he made a trip to the Meteora monasteries in Albania, and from there back to Corfu and home again. His second journey began in 1837 and took him first to the monasteries of the Natron Lakes in the Libyan Desert and then to Mount Athos via Constantinople. In 1841 he made a third trip, this time as private secretary to the Ambassador at Constantinople, Sir Stratford Canning. He was soon sent to help settle a border dispute in Armenia, and his experiences there furnished the substance of his second book, *Armenia. Visits to Monasteries* and *Armenia* are his only writings to have had any wide circulation. His *Catalogue of Materials for Writing* is a rare book, published in a small edition of only fifty copies. His *Lay of the Purple Falcon* is even rarer, as a mere thirty copies were printed. Apart from these, he wrote a few essays on book-collecting matters for the Philobiblon Society, of which he was an enthusiastic member.

In recent years A. N. L. Munby has published more material pertaining to Curzon's life and interests. The chapters which appear in *Phillipps Studies: III* and *IV* deal with the correspondence between Curzon and Phillipps, Victorian bibliophile ex-

traordinary; apparently Curzon was one of the very few people for whom the peevish baronet felt any affection. Even in the early days Sir Thomas had been someone Curzon admired, and perhaps desired to emulate. It was Sneyd, however, who had made the first contact, at one of the sales of Richard Heber's books.

I should like to have seen

Sir Thomas Philips

tho [writes Curzon], and for nothing, as you did, pray make a picture of him as well as you can remember and send it to me. Did he look at all illuminated anything in the Jarry stile? or was he of a more Byzantine complexion, that is your true cut for a bibliomaniac. He should be a little short wizened old fellow, testy rather, with an old fashioned coat like one of my oldest Greek M.s.s.... But now as to Sir T. Phillips... What a fine sight it must have been to see him walk out of the auction room when the sale was over with all the greatest men of the place bearing illuminated romances and grim folios of the 10th century, to his carriage at the door. (Letter 44, Hagley, 1836)<sup>4</sup>

While Curzon slips in and out of the pages of *Phillipps Studies*, Munby devoted a whole chapter to him in *Connoisseurs and Medieval Miniatures*. This essay deals mainly with Curzon's friendship with Sneyd. The friendship is minutely documented by the five hundred and six letters from Curzon to Sneyd which are now in Keele University Library.<sup>5</sup> Although Sneyd's letters to Curzon have not been found, some of his contributions to the friendship have been preserved in the scrapbook compiled by Curzon which is now in the Houghton Library, Harvard University.<sup>6</sup> Munby's essay is illustrated by two of Sneyd's cartoons from this scrapbook. One is of Curzon and Sneyd dressed up as manuscripts, running to greet each other; the other is of a visit paid by Curzon to the booksellers Payne and Foss.

The letters of Curzon to Sneyd are of enormous value and it is greatly to be hoped that they will be published before long. As well

<sup>4</sup> For an account of Sir Frederick Madden's reaction to the "fine sight" of Sir Thomas walking off with manuscripts he had most particularly wanted for the British Museum, see A. Munby, *Phillipps Studies: III* (Cambridge, 1954), p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> A preliminary sorting of the letters was done for the *Calendar* by Dr. Fraser, who has since edited a large proportion of them for his doctoral dissertation. I concur with the hope of A. Munby, *Connoisseurs and Medieval Miniatures* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 82 and 92, that he will eventually publish them.

<sup>6</sup> Harvard University b MS. Eng. 1129.

as being full of fascinating details about his books and travels, they shed a great deal of light on the inner life of the author of *Visits to Monasteries*. Somewhere in the series of novels *Strangers and Brothers*, C. P. Snow says that a life lived from the inside is never the same as that same life observed from the outside. Unfortunately, unless the minutiae of a life are preserved by some means—as in journals, or in letters—all that eventually remains is the casing of the external life. Here we have an independent young man, “shrewd, quaint and travelled”, in the words of his best friend’s brother, making adventurous journeys to the Middle East, collecting manuscripts, coming back to his country house, and producing a book that proved to be no less than a classic of English literature, contributing to the wealth and knowledge of his country. What could be more fitting? more admirable? The letters show something of the life beneath the surface. They show the devotion and trust of a lifelong friendship, sealed by a common obsession. They show the vicissitudes of family life, the stresses that drove Curzon abroad, the dissatisfactions with being abroad that drove him home again; the longing for a home of his own, a position, a wife and a family, when it seemed too late to do anything about it. Curzon spoke with perfect freedom to Sneyd; the humour, the jollity of *Visits to Monasteries* is still there, but so are the frustrations, and the deeper disturbances, of day-to-day existence.

It is partly owing to Sneyd’s care in preserving the letters that we still have them. When he was writing *Armenia*, Curzon borrowed back his letters to Sneyd from Erzerum, without divulging his motive. He says he has been looking over some old letters from Erzerum, and that several of them are “not as stupid as might be expected”. Had Sneyd any epistles from thence? He says he is not writing anything for publication: it is just a whim of his wife’s (Letters 227, 228, 229, Parham, 1853). A few months later he announces the completion of *Armenia*: “I have been surrounded with troubles, and sorrows from the acts of various relatives. Besides this I have written a book, tho a very little one, about Armenia, where the Turks and Russians are fighting. I wrote it in 11 1/2 days, so you may suppose it is neither very long or very wise” (Letter 232, Parham, 1854). Five years later, Sneyd is still asking for his letters back (if, indeed, it is these that are meant). Curzon says he thought he had returned them, but that if Sneyd could not find the package, he would have another rummage for it.

Book-collecting absorbed both friends, and was the subject of confidences, teasing, and perhaps subconscious rivalry. Manuscript-collecting occupied Curzon's sleeping and waking life. "I dreamed last night", he writes to Sneyd, "that you and I were at Mount Athos, and that we quarrelled terribly about 2 old MSS. we found there; you swore one of them was not about medicine and I swore it was, and so awoke hoping we may never quarrel about medicine or anything else" (Letter 88, Parham, 1840). He shares with Sneyd news of new finds, or new acquisitions: "I should like to come and see you at Cheverells very much, when we can swelter down the lanes and mouse over the old books in a friendly way. I have heard again from De Bure, Vat as gott an Jarry vitch his so pratty as vas never to be ad bi gar. So he is going to send it to me to look at if I choose to have it for 9 times its weight in gold. But it is a very fine one" (Letter 14, Rugely, 1832).

On one occasion Curzon pretended he had bought a great many manuscripts at Sneyd's expense. "In pursuance of your kind offer, I have looked over Payne and Foss's shop, and have got half a dozen Books which I shall always look upon with greater pleasure, from the remembrance of your goodness in making me a present of them. They are all MSS. and for fear of any mistake in the bill, I send you a list of their names... They do not look badly on my shelves as they are, but I as know you would like me to have them well bound I am going to send 2 or 3 of them to be covered with gold plates and carvings in ivory of which Garrard will send you the account... You need not trouble to pay Payne and Foss before next week, at least, I should not think you would be arrested before that time" (Letter 57, London, 1837). Fast on the heels of this letter he sends a penitent note: "I wrote you an absurd epistle the other day about books which was all nonsense so I am writing to tell you... how sorry I am to go and leave you and all my other good friends behind. I am still bent on starting at the end of this month and am going right away for Constantinople by sea... I am in some hopes of a solemn missive from the Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Patriarch of the Greek Church, asking him to let me look over the old books in an authoritative manner, which is the only thing that can be of use to me" (Letter 58, London, 1837). In the next letter, Curzon announces that he has been provided with a "right lordly missive", the precise value of which he recounts in *Visits to Monasteries*.



When we had smoked our pipes for awhile, and all the servants had gone away, I presented the letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury....

"And who", quoth the Patriarch of Constantinople, the supreme head and primate of the Greek Church of Asia—"who is the Archbishop of Canterbury?"

"What?" said I, a little astonished at the question.

"Who", said he, "is this Archbishop"?

"Why, the Archbishop of Canterbury".

"Archbishop of *what*"? said the Patriarch.

"*Canterbury*", said I.

"Oh", said the Patriarch. "Ah! yes! and who is he"? (*VML*, pp. 335-6)

Back in England, Curzon often found life oppressively dreary. He wrote to Sneyd, "Really, the solitariness of my existence is unindurable. It is like living in a madhouse, where you may or may not have observed, that the lunatics never converse with each other. And this is very unwholesome for the mind" (Letter 75, Parham, 1839). And later: "I wish I could get a place in the Chinese Expedition" (Letter 88, Parham, 1840). More than once he complains that no one understands his concern for books, as Sneyd does, and he wishes often that Sneyd would come and share with him the pleasures of a gimcrack and a bottle of wine.

Everything at home is so melancholy that I really hardly know how to bear it, and wish myself back in Egypt with all my heart. I shall certainly go abroad again as soon as I can, not that I have any inclination for travelling about, but I am sure I should not live long, without some active employment to dispel the gloomy thoughts of the various failures in my prospects and affairs at home, when I am by myself... I sometimes think seriously of writing a book by way of something to do, as touching the various Libraries abroad... I want you to come and back me up, a bottle of wine does not taste well when you are alone, and I feel almost ashamed of my antiquated tastes when I have nobody to keep me company in a pursuit which most people think absurd. (Letter 38, Parham, 1835)

Although for neither of them was the problem of a career particularly pressing in terms of sheer economic necessity, Curzon, and Sneyd as Curzon saw him, suffered from the Victorian malaise of inability to find suitable employment. In an undated, though probably early, birthday card, entitled "U & I in 1880", Sneyd portrays himself and his old friend reminiscing by the fire. Curzon is saying, "This snuff was given me by the Grand Signior when I was Ambassador at Constantinople". "Ay"? replies

Sneyd. "That was in 1868—the same year that I was translated from Dorchester, to the Archbishoprick". For neither of them did the chosen—or dropped-into—career last. Sneyd, who had had his doubts about entering the church, soon resigned from his incumbency. And Curzon, who had gone with Sir Stratford Canning to Constantinople, in spite of all his protests when at home that he wished to be abroad again, fiercely resisted the diplomatic career that would keep him there. "You say I had better adhere to the diplomatic line which I have fallen into [he wrote to his father], but that is not my notion at all. I wish for some employment in England, not abroad, I have been abroad enough, and if I could I should like to be about the court, for there I might become known and make useful acquaintances, which might lead to something else, for diplomacy does not suit my book by any means".<sup>7</sup> He sometimes complains of the miseries of having been "brought up to no profession", and being good at nothing in particular. And he recommends that Sneyd should at least have a house and take a wife: "It is the want of something in which I can take an interest which has made me stupid and unhappy, and I am sure that if you had a house to pull about, and a wife to look pleased when you came home, you would be infinitely more comfortable than you are now" (Letter 62, Thebes/Cairo, 1838). Ten years later he is still wishing that he himself was married: "I feel very lonely, my Father and Mother won't talk, and have no sympathy with me, I wish I had a wife to comfort me, more than ever, alas, alas" (Letter 156, Parham, 1847).

The lack of a settled career allowed for a certain self-indulgence. Curzon was a very romantic young man, riding high on the wave of the new medievalism. As for many Victorians, weighed down by the trivialities of modernity, the past for both Curzon and Sneyd seemed to hold all the attractions that the present did not. "The good old times as far as I have been concerned were in the days of our old auncient holy Faders", writes Curzon (Letter 204, Catton, 1851). In a cartoon of Pugin-like contrasts, Sneyd draws himself and Curzon tugging on the skirts of Old Father Time, a skeletal figure with an hourglass and a scythe not at all unlike the canting device in the Sneyd coat of arms, in a vain attempt to prevent his crossing the ever-widening rift between the past, with

<sup>7</sup> From the *Sneyd Papers*, of which the Curzon/Sneyd correspondence forms part; quoted in Dr. Fraser's doctoral dissertation.

its pageboy, castle and manuscripts, and the present, with its steam-engine, smoke, air balloon, factories, Victorian gentleman, *The Times*, *The Penny Magazine*, and the three-volume novel. Curzon's images of himself as a book collector are revealing. As we have seen, he saw himself as a "sort of biblical knight errant, ... who had entered on the perilous adventure of Mount Athos to rescue from the thralldom of ignorant monks those fair vellum volumes, with their bright illuminations and velvet dresses and jewelled clasps, which for so many centuries had lain imprisoned in their dark monastic dungeons" (*VML*, p. 394).

Curzon was always deeply responsive to the physical appeal of books—one of the most touching passages in *Visits to Monasteries* is his description of two beautiful volumes which he had to leave behind at a monastery of the Meteora. "I sat down on a stone in the court-yard", he writes wistfully, "and for the last time turned over the gilded leaves and admired the ancient and splendid illuminations of the larger manuscript, the monks standing round me as I looked at the blue cypress-trees, and green and gold peacocks, and intricate arabesques, so characteristic of the best times of Byzantine art. Many of the pages bore a great resemblance to the painted windows of the earlier Norman cathedrals of Europe. It was a superb old book: I laid it down on the stone beside me and placed the little volume with its curious silver binding on the top of it, and it was with a sigh that I left them there with the sun shining on the curious silver ornaments" (*VLM*, pp. 308-9). He was moved, too, by other attractive artefacts. The pretty, decorated boat that carried him from Coom Calessi to Imbros put him in mind of even earlier adventures than the medieval knights:

As I sat in my beautifully-shaped and ornamented boat, which looked like those represented in antique sculptures, with its high stern and lofty prow, I thought how little changed things were in these latitudes since the brave Captain Jason passed this way in the good ship *Argo*; and if an old author who wrote on the Hermetic philosophy may be taken as authority, that worthy's errand was much the same as mine; for he maintains that the golden fleece was no golden fleece at all, "for who", says he, like a sensible man, "ever saw a sheep of gold"? But what Jason sought was a famous volume written in golden letters upon the skins of sheep, wherein was described the whole science of alchemy, and that the man who should possess himself of that inestimable volume should conquer the green dragon, and being able by help of the grand

magisterium to transmute all metals, and draw from the alembic the precious drops of the elixir vitae, men and nations and languages would bow down before him as the prince of the pleasures of this world. (*VML*, pp. 344-5)

One of the things that makes Curzon's place in the annals of book collecting of particular interest is that, although nothing had changed since the time of Jason and his Argonauts, everything was going to change shortly after the coming of Curzon, for he had arrived at the very end of the era in which the world of the Eastern Mediterranean lay open to doughty gentleman adventurers in search of mythological or metaphorical golden fleeces. Already things were becoming difficult. Curzon was never able to obtain manuscripts from Patmos, though he greatly wished to. He touches on the subject in a travel letter written to Sneyd, the intitial D of which is decorated with a drawing of himself in oriental costume, sitting in a library which could very well be that of St. Catherine's on Mount Sinai. He has been sailing on the Aegean, going from island to island. "My dear Sneyd, you have heard of St. John and ought to know as you are a parson where he wrote the Apocalypse, well, I went there. The island contains manuscripts of unknown age and value, heaps of them are there, and nobody in these parts knows or cares anything about them. I have been saying to myself, lay up treasures on the earth" (Letter 25, *On the Aegean Sea*, 1834). Patmos was unforgotten on the second voyage, but still no manuscripts were forthcoming. "At Patmos [he wrote to his mother] I saw some very precious old books, in fact the most valuable manuscripts I have ever met with. I wanted to get them for the British Museum, or at least to have got some for the Museum and some for myself, but the monks would not sell them. This is a great pity as they are of no earthly use where they are, and their value is quite unknown to their possessors, while they would be worth I do not know what in England" (*Parham Papers*). Patmos was, however, an exception, and Curzon was able to make purchases in many monasteries.

Barely twenty years after Curzon's last visit, Henry Coxe, then sub-librarian of the Bodleian Library, was sent to the same region to make a *Report to Her Majesty's Government on the Greek Manuscripts Yet Remaining in the Libraries of the Levant*. From the beginning, Coxe complained, his task had been rendered difficult by the suspicion which had taken the place of the ignorant open-handedness that had greeted Curzon and his contemporaries

on their travels. "At many places", writes Coxe, "it was pointedly asked in what capacity I was travelling, and whether I was a collector, or coming in what seemed to them a more legitimate capacity".<sup>8</sup> Coxe's task in the Near East was not to collect books, but to catalogue them. Nevertheless, this was the great period for the building of the magnificent collections of Greek and Oriental books in the British Museum. One of Curzon's avowed reasons for collecting was that his books would enrich his country by being held in her national collections. And, although Munby says it is sad to see books bearing the family motto, "Let Curzon Holde What Curzon Helde", in the British Library rather than on the bookshelves at Parham, it should be remembered that it was a source of pride to Curzon that he would be a public benefactor. Coxe, likewise, would not have been averse to acquiring fresh treasures for Britain. His hopes were completely disappointed. No one in any monastery would dream of selling, let alone giving away, any of their precious books.

You may believe, Sir [writes Coxe], that I was anxious to procure for our own national library many of these volumes which I have now been enumerating, and felt that I should be borne out by you in resorting to all fair means to gain so desirable an object. I did not, therefore, hesitate to say that I was prepared to guarantee an equivalent either in books or in money, if they would consent to part with any manuscripts that I might select. They would not, however, entertain the idea for a moment. They had now, they said, become aware of the value of what they possessed, (although they admitted that a few years since it was far otherwise, and that a collector then would have found very little difficulty in obtaining anything he wished for barely more than the asking)... Indeed, I may state here at once, that the idea of purchasing from large proprietors, especially religious foundations, was altogether hopeless... If I would give them the weight of each manuscript in gold, they would not let them go.<sup>9</sup>

Curzon had come at that time, when "books could be had for barely more than the asking", and no doubt his collecting, in conjunction with that of all the other bibliomaniacs then wandering round the Levant, was in part responsible for the decline. It is not easy to put Curzon's activities as a collector in the context of the complex tale of collecting that needs, some time, to be told. It

<sup>8</sup> H. O. Coxe, *Report to Her Majesty's Government on the Greek Manuscripts Yet Remaining in the Libraries of the Levant* (London, 1858), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

is evident that there was a great deal of bibliomaniac activity in the Levant besides his own, some of it on the part of collectors less scrupulous than he. In 1839 Simonides was in the monastery of Russico on Mount Athos, picking up a useful knowledge of Greek paleography and a number of Greek manuscripts for his stock as a bookseller. In 1845 Tischendorf took home with him to Leipzig forty-three leaves of the book later known as the *Codex Sinaiticus* from St. Catherine's on Mount Sinai.<sup>10</sup> Messieurs Didron and Durand visited Mount Athos just after Curzon and rescued and printed the painter's manual of Dionysius of Fournas, which Simonides later kindly corrected from his own (forged) copy. One result of their visit was that the Athonite monks became alive to the value of their books, and thereafter it was almost impossible to take anything away from the Holy Mountain. Henry Tattam, Archdeacon of Bedford, went in 1839 to the Convent of the Souriani on the Natron Lakes, which Curzon describes in *Visits to Monasteries*, and bought up for the British Library the vast collection of manuscript books (or rather, the loose remains of what had once been books) which Curzon had previously seen, and, it is to be presumed, reported on. It is said that it was Curzon who paved the way for Tattam, though it was Tattam's reconnoitring that had persuaded Curzon that the Natron Lakes were worth visiting.<sup>11</sup> But Miss Platt, who accompanied her stepfather the Archdeacon, does not once mention Curzon's name, either in connection with the Convent of the Souriani, or in connection with the discovery of the longed-for Coptic-Arabic dictionary, speaking of them as if they were wholly new finds. Her *Journal of a Tour through Egypt, the Peninsula of Sinai and the Holy Land, in 1838 and 1839*, published anonymously in 1841, is a more pious and less entertaining account than Curzon's, but it is full of interesting detail about the joys and problems of book collecting in the Levant—note, for example, the frequency with which Tattam, on enquiring at the convents for old Coptic manuscripts, was solemnly presented with grimy copies of his own printed edition of the Coptic Gospels.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For an account of the documents connected with Tischendorf's acquisition of the *Codex Sinaiticus* and a review of the previous scholarship on the subject, see I. Ševčenko, "New Documents on Constantine Tischendorf and the *Codex Sinaiticus*", *Scriptorium*, xxviii (1964), 55-80.

<sup>11</sup> A. Esdaile, *The British Museum Library* (London, 1848), pp. 108-109.

<sup>12</sup> Miss Platt, *Journal of a Tour through Egypt, the Peninsula of Sinai and the*

All this bibliophilic fervour contributed to the decline which seems to have set in so rapidly. There seem to be subtle laws governing the movements of book collectors, and in any one historical period travellers, bookworms, antiquarians, scholars and knaves will be drawn as it were by invisible threads to a certain spot on the map, among themselves depleting its resources. Everywhere that Coxe went he was greeted with tales of the treasures that had been and were, alas, no more. Politics and economics have their part in the laws that govern the movements of books; Greece, newly liberated from Turkish dominion with the help of Byron and others, was made freshly aware of her great heritage by the collecting of Curzon and his contemporaries; libraries everywhere, to whom any books at all remained after the ravages of war, the elements, or bibliophiles, suddenly decided they were the best caretakers of their own stock. For this reason, it is a privilege for us to have the account of bibliomaniac adventures which Curzon has given us, for they can never be repeated.

It should be said here that Curzon was not a brilliant paleographer, bibliophile, historian or librarian; but one of the things which made him interesting was that, unlike Humfrey Wanley, who was all those things, he did not sit in the comfort of home and negotiate, but went out into the field and hunted on his own account. In a letter to Sir Thomas Phillipps, Curzon confessed that he did not possess a copy of Montfaucon's *Paleographia Graeca*.

And in fact I have very few Bibliographical works, for I am a beginner in that pursuit... Most of my erudition in that line has been obtained by grubbing among the tumble-down libraries of foreign convents, and I have several times got scent of an old tome which I have traced from one monastery to another, till I have run him down at last... I think one learns more in a few minutes from a general interview with a MS. than by almost any description that can be given.<sup>13</sup>

Considering Curzon's lack of technical expertise, he managed to bag some magnificent specimens of his "venerable game". His criteria for choosing books from among the piles of ill-kept volumes in dark monastic libraries were simple and obviously

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*Holy Land in 1838 and 1839* (London, Richard Watts, published anonymously for private circulation, 1841), p. 188.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Curzon to Phillipps, quoted in *Phillipps Studies: III*, p. 126.

good. He describes in *Armenia* the nature of the art of looking over foreign libraries:

This, as my bibliographical friends are well aware, is a peculiar art or mystery depending more on a general knowledge of the first aspect of an old book than a capacity to appreciate its contents. A book written on vellum implies a certain antiquity immediately recognisable by the initiated. If it does not appear to be ancient, it is more than probable that it contains the works of some author of more than ordinary consideration... An illuminated manuscript on vellum, if not a prayer book, secures additional attention... A large manuscript as a general rule is worth more than a little one... Uncial writing—that is, a book written in capital letters—is much more ancient than one written in a cursive hand, and the most ancient volumes were generally large square quartos.<sup>14</sup>

Certainly Curzon was regarded as enough of an expert for his advice to be sought in the dispute about one of Simonides' most famous 'forgeries'. Simonides had come to England in 1853 with a collection of genuine manuscripts, culled mostly from the monasteries of Mount Athos, and a handful of rare and impressive documents written by himself. He was given short shrift in England, except by Phillipps, who bought many of his wares, and even he sent him to Henry Coxe at the Bodleian with a note saying, "At all events he can see some of your MSS., in a conspicuous place, and it may be as well to count the leaves before".<sup>15</sup> It is still part of the oral tradition of the Bodleian that Coxe, on being asked to date some of Simonides' manuscripts, immediately said, "Nineteenth century". When Simonides' activities as a forger had become widely known, he decided to do a double take, and claim that at least one highly regarded genuine work was the product of his own labours. He chose the *Codex Sinaiticus*, one of the earliest and most valuable of all biblical codices, which Tischendorf had finally persuaded St. Catherine's to hand over to the Russian Emperor, minus a few pages. The collector J. E. Hodgkin, who had befriended Simonides late in life when he was "discredited and almost destitute",<sup>16</sup> wrote to Curzon to ask the whereabouts of a certain monk, and his opinion as to the validity of Simonides' claim. Curzon wrote back a letter full of good paleographical sense about the *Codex Sinaiticus*, and

<sup>14</sup> Curzon, *Armenia* (London, 1854), p. 237.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted by Munby, *Phillipps Studies: IV* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 118.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.



demonstrating the speed with which he was capable of assessing manuscripts.

Sir: It is so long since I have been in the Levant that I have at present no means of ascertaining anything about the monk Kallinikos. H.M. Consul at Salonika would probably be able to inform you, whether that person really exists, and what position he may hold in Mt. Athos if he does exist.

With respect to the Mt. Sinai manuscript, I should be quite satisfied as to its authenticity, if I was allowed to examine it, for ten minutes, or if Sir F. Madden, or any other competent person, was permitted to do so.

It would be very difficult to carry out so voluminous a forgery, in the writing, the nature of the vellum, the way in which the leaves were set together, and other peculiarities of a very early manuscript, that I should doubt whether Mr. Simonides would be competent to take in a person really conversant in such matters. From my own experience I should imagine it would be hardly possible to deceive any one, who has studied the matter carefully.

I am, Sir, Yours faithfully...<sup>17</sup>

The manuscript was at this time in St. Petersburg, and, of course, Curzon did not have the opportunity to look at it for even ten minutes. Simonides said his monogram appeared on certain pages of the book—pages which turned out on inspection to be mutilated or missing. So Simonides was discredited, although it is still a mystery how he knew which pages to pick.

Although Coxe was greeted everywhere by tales like the one that had greeted him on the island of Crete, "that there had been but a few years back a fine and very old manuscript, as the monks described it, of the New Testament, but it had been surreptitiously taken from them by a traveller from Corfu in search of antiquities",<sup>18</sup> there was good reason for the collecting done by Curzon and his fellow bibliophiles. It is said that the *Codex Sinaiticus* was on its way to feed a monastery fire when Tischendorf first set eyes on it. Curzon saw himself as a knight-errant rescuing the manuscripts from their dark monastic dungeons. He frequently tells horror stories of the way in which manuscripts were being treated. In one monastery, in Bulgaria, a visiting antiquarian found the manuscripts being used as hassocks, to save the bare feet of the monks "from the damp of the marble floor". "I must add", says Curzon, "that the lower halves of the

<sup>17</sup> B. L. Add. MS. 42502 (J. E. Hodgkin Simonides Papers), f. 214.

<sup>18</sup> *Report to Her Majesty's Government*, p. 20.

manuscripts were imperfect, from the damp of the floor of the church having corroded and eat away their vellum leaves, and also", he concludes with characteristic candour, "that, as the story is not my own, I cannot vouch for the truth of it" (*VML*, p. xxiv). This traveller's tale was easily matched by his own experiences. There was a library which had itself completely rotted away, leaving the books exposed to rain and sun (*VML*, p. 394). There was a monastery where books were being used to cover jars once full of preserves (*VML*, p. 85). There was the litter of loose leaves covering the floor at the Convent of the Souriani (*VML*, p. 88).

That the covering of preserve pots was a recognised use for manuscripts proved useful at the monastery of Caracalla, which provided a goodly portion of the Greek manuscripts in Curzon's collection. At Caracalla Curzon happened upon a single page of uncial writing in the decayed library. "As I had found it impossible to purchase any manuscripts at St. Laura [another of the Mount Athos monasteries], I feared that the same would be the case in other monasteries; however, I made bold to ask for this single leaf as a thing of small value".

"Certainly"! said the agoumenos; "what do you want it for"?

My servant suggested that, perhaps, it might be useful to cover some jam pots or vases of preserves which I had at home.

"Oh"! said the agoumenos. "Take some more"; and without more ado, he seized upon an unfortunate thick quarto manuscript of the Acts and Epistles, and drawing out a knife cut out an inch thickness of leaves at the end before I could stop him. It proved to be the Apocalypse, which concluded the volume, but which is rarely found in early Greek manuscripts of the Acts. (*VML*, pp. 381-2).

The bibliophile's passion for saving books from damp, mice, neglect and all such hazards was, of course, nothing new to those rummaging in the neglected libraries of the Levant. One of Curzon's western manuscripts, a beautiful, large volume of the Lives of Charlemagne, probably produced at the school of St. Denis, had formerly belonged to the famous eighteenth-century French antiquarian, Claude Jardel. Jardel wrote in his book, "Ego Claudius Robert Jardel, verus possessor, vili pretio, unicum pretiosissimumque hunc codicem M.S. a vermibus et pulvere recepi".<sup>19</sup> And, he goes on to say, he has given the book a new

<sup>19</sup> B.L. Add. MS. 39646. The manuscript is related to another product of St.

binding to facilitate its passage down the centuries, and an index in French to help scholars find their way around the confusing mass of material it contains.

Like many other antiquarians, Curzon was in the habit of writing in his books his name, the date of acquisition, the name of the place where he bought it, and occasionally a more extended account, either of the circumstances in which the book was bought, the price, or bibliographical details concerning similar volumes in other libraries and so on. There seems to be a small doubt sometimes as to whether the place given in the manuscript itself was the correct one, perhaps suggesting that Curzon 'wrote up' his manuscripts after he got home. A letter fastened in the back of his own copy of his *Catalogue of Materials for Writing*<sup>20</sup> points out that on two occasions the note in the manuscript itself, and the place given in the catalogue, disagree, adding that it is the catalogue which is more likely to be accurate. So a copy of the Psalter and Canticles (B.L. Add. MS. 39586) comes from Caracalla, not St. Sabba; and the curious dialogue between God and Moses which Cureton translated for Curzon comes from St. Sabba, not Therapia (though I think it more than likely that Curzon bought a St. Sabba book in Therapia). Occasionally Curzon makes fun of his own confusion, as in the following entry in a copy of the Canticles (B.L. Add. MS. 39588): "R. Curzon, 1834. I forget whether I got this ms. at Therapia, of an old woman, who lived at the top of the hill, behind Ld. Ponsonby's stables, from whom I had four bad mss. of the 16th century; or whether I got it at Athens, from a certain schoolmaster". Very often he manages to preserve the sense of personal contact between himself and the provider of the manuscript. In his fifteenth-century Xenophon (B.L. Add. MS. 39614) he writes, "Written by δαμιανος Υουιδότης at Venice, in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, and bought of a little old priest who belonged to the monastery of S. Francisco della Vigna at Venice in 1834. I have 2 MSS. written by the same scribe [here follows a list] and five more volumes of the same set are in possession of the Rev'd. Walter Sneyd [here follows another list]. They appear to be transcripts from older mss. probably in the library of St. Mark". This same

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Denis, B.N. MS. Lat. 12710, the work of a late twelfth-century historian. See J. Lair, *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*, xxxv (1874), p. 543.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., MS. A. K. R. 9. G.

little old priest, with whom Curzon seems to have struck up a friendship, was the source of more than one manuscript from the Franciscan monastery in Venice.

Curzon seems to have been generous in allowing others to use and read his manuscripts once he had brought them home. He himself was not always up to reading his own codices (though he did occasionally go in for a little collating),<sup>21</sup> and that indeed was never his main object in acquiring them; he enjoyed the process of acquisition immensely and greatly wished to add to his nation's store of knowledge, but, beyond a basic knowledge of what was in each manuscript, he was prepared to leave the business of "extracting the pith" to "translators and compilers of history".<sup>22</sup> In one fragmentary copy of the Psalms in a blue velvet cover (B.L. Add. MS. 39589), he writes: "This fragment of the Psalms, with an introductory treatise, was brought to me while staying with Lord Ponsonby, at Therapia, near Constantinople, September 1837. I gave for it one dollar. The long preface and the notes are seldom if ever to be met with in mss. of the psalms of this date. Not having been at the trouble of reading them, I do not know what they are about". But he was always happy for others to read and decipher his manuscripts, and was indeed always curious about their contents. He would have liked to have known what his odd Mexican manuscript was about; and when he wrote a reply to a letter in which Phillipps pressed him to have a facsimile made, he said he feared it was impossible, but that, "I have the satisfaction of thinking that my MSS. have not been useless, for the New Testament has been printed from the Coptic manuscripts which I brought from Egypt and the Natron Lakes, and other books have been freely lent to and copied by various learned men".<sup>23</sup> Cureton's translation of the *Dialogue between God and Moses* (the manuscript copy of this, with an introduction by Curzon, is B.L. Add. MS. 39670) was published for the Philobiblon Society. Curzon notes in his copy of Josephus' *History of the Judaic War* that, "The initial letter to the third book has been engraved for Shaw's *Dresses and Decorations of the Middle Ages*". The letter is

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the letter to Sneyd in which Curzon speaks of collating two of his manuscripts of the Gospels, treating them as old gentlemen of his acquaintance (Letter 34, London, 1835).

<sup>22</sup> *Armenia*, p. 239.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Curzon to Phillipps, quoted by Munby, *Phillipps Studies: IV*, p. 151.

a knight resplendent in armour.<sup>24</sup> In *Visits to Monasteries*, Curzon describes a cross he bought on Mount Athos, which was also copied for Shaw's book (*VML*, p. 437).

Curzon seems to have had some deep sympathy for the scribes who produced the books which he collected. In a note now fastened in the back of his own copy of the *Catalogue of Materials*, he writes a paragraph on the grim faces of scribes in medieval miniatures. (It is possible that this paragraph is a rough draft of something which later found its way into one of Curzon's printed books, but I do not recollect having come across it anywhere.) "The manuscript of a book", writes Curzon, "must have usually been considered as a desperate undertaking, amply accounting for the invariable and probably heart-felt exclamation of *Laus Deo Finis*, which which [*sic*] the weary scribe concludes his work, and in which the reader may possibly sometimes have cordially agreed with him" (f. 9). He had, nevertheless, a profound appreciation of the results of the scribe's agony, and wrote with pleasure of a well-produced book. "I have a MS.", he writes in *Visits to Monasteries*, "which is remarkable for the perfection of its writing, the straightness of the lines". And, although the binding is crude, it was evident to him that the book was made "ad majorem Dei gloriam". "It was this feeling, which in the middle ages produced all those glorious works of art, which are the admiration of modern times, and its total absence now is deeply to be deplored in our own country" (*VML*, p. 101-2).

It was in imitation of a pious scribal colophon that Curzon wrote at the back of one of his manuscripts the prayer,

Deus miserere animam  
Robert Curzon, qui  
hunc librum de Terra  
Sancta in Angliam advexit. A. D. 1834.

Maybe in writing it he had some sense of playing a part in the history of the book. As the author of *Fontes Harleiani* points out, quoting M. R. James, those who carry books from place to place, whose contact with the book is recorded in its pages, are in some way intimately associated with it ever after.<sup>25</sup>

Several of Curzon's entries at the beginnings of manuscripts refer to adventures had in the process of collecting. In a Greek

<sup>24</sup> B.L. Add. MS. 39645.

<sup>25</sup> C. E. Wright, *Fontes Harleiani* (London, 1972), p. xviii.

*Evangelistarium* (B.L. Add. MS. 39604) he writes, "I bought this manuscript from the monastery of St. Sabba, which stands on the ravine of the brook Kedron, about an hour from the Dead Sea. This was on my first visit to the monastery, when it was governed by Bedouins. I gave the superior, or Agoumenos, 20 pieces of gold for it— and it served me for a pillow during 3 nights, when I was wandering on the banks of the Jordan". On his second visit, when he acquired a second batch of books, he wrote in one of them, a Greek copy of the Acts and Epistles, "This remarkable tome was obtained on my second visit to the monastery of Agios Sabba, near the Dead Sea, which was then in possession of Ibrahim Pasha's troops, who had stormed the place, and turned out our former entertainers, the Bedouins of Houran, by whom we were captured on a well-remembered ledge of rock on a tremendous precipice above the Kedron. Palmer narrowly escaped being shot by an Egyptian soldier from the top of the great tower on our last appearance there, from his having mentioned with a loud voice, that the above soldier was the father of a dog. Whereas he was probably only the son of a B".<sup>26</sup>

It is on the fly-leaves of the manuscripts that we find some earlier versions of the stories that later appear in *Visits to Monasteries*. Like all game-hunters, Curzon always entertained an acute feeling of loss for the 'ones that got away'. I have already quoted his description of the two pretty manuscripts that he had to leave behind at the Great Monastery of the Meteora. He does not, however, mention in *Visits to Monasteries* that he did in fact entrap one small manuscript on that occasion. His account on the fly leaf of this insignificant Greek paper manuscript of various theological works (B.L. Add. MS. 39618) runs as follows:

When I was at the monastery of Meteora I was travelling in company with a band of robbers, or Klepti, a sort of warriors on their own account, not exactly thieves; with whom I had made friends after being taken prisoner by them in a defile of Mount Pindus near Mezzo. I had bought two magnificent manuscripts of the superior, one of them a quarto of the Gospels full of illuminations, like the Codex Ebnerianus in the Bodleian, only with more miniatures. When I was about to be lowered above 100 feet, over the precipice at the end of a rope, the only access to this curious place, the librarian claimed his share of the money: the rest were it appears ignorant of the bargain, and pricking up their

<sup>26</sup> B.L. Add. MS. 39598.

ears they said the money ought to be equally divided. Thereon ensued a debate, which ended in my being obliged to give up the two MSS. and receive back the money, a great many pieces of gold which I had given for them, and I was let down in so careless and jerking a manner by the excited community that I expected to be dashed to pieces against the rocks. When I was dangling near the earth my friends the robbers held their long guns across their knees according to their custom and fired a *feu de joye* in token of their gladness, when their bullets spattered against the precipice around me, so that I was grievously sorry for myself. On my explaining the cause of the altercation which had been going on above, they said, Oh, stop here awhile, and we will soon get you the books. We will teach the monks to quarrel with our friends. I had some difficulty in preventing them from storming the monastery, to such a degree had I made friends with the mammon of unrighteousness. At last we got away, leaving the rivers of the village of Kalabaki, which their party had just sacked, and burned, behind us. This little book remained in my bag, having been forgotten in the row.

"After all", adds Curzon in the printed version, still, no doubt, feeling some regret at the thought of the two books left behind, "what an interesting event it would have been, what a standard anecdote in bibliomaniac history, if I had let my friendly thieves have their own way, and we had stormed the monastery, broken open the secret door of the library, pitched the old librarian over the rocks, and marched off in triumph, with a gorgeous manuscript under each arm"! (*VML*, pp. 310-11).

Another story recounted on the fly-leaves of a manuscript is the tale of the long-drawn-out haggling at the monastery of Xenophou at Mount Athos, which resulted in the acquisition of two splendid manuscripts, a most beautiful *Evangelistarium* written throughout in the shape of the cross, with the first pages in purple ink overlaid with gold (B.L. Add. MS. 39603), and a fine copy of the four Gospels (B.L. Add. MS. 39592). On the fly-leaf of the latter volume, Curzon has written, "The original velvet is curious. I have seen only one other Greek MS. originally bound in velvet. The paper fly-leaves have been inserted since the book was bound. It is entirely perfect, and was no doubt written for the use of some distinguished personage, as its style is altogether different from the MSS. usually met with, in the libraries of the Greek monasteries of the Levant".

Curzon's enthusiasm, always easily aroused, was greatly fired by the other manuscript, which he assumed, on account of its richness and a piece of late marginalia to that effect, to have been

written by the Emperor Alexius Comnenus. He gives a long and extremely breathless history of the Emperor and the manuscript, up to the point in time at which he came across the latter:

Sometime during the Greek revolution this book found its way across the peninsula of Mount Athos to the library of the monastery of Xenophou where I found it lying on the ground under a 3-legged stool with a fine MS. of the 4 Gospels with a commentary bound in faded red velvet lying on it. On looking at the note on the first leaf I suspected it might be the book mentioned by Dr. Carlyle and enquired its history of the monks. They said they knew that the two MSS. above mentioned were precious books and that they were set aside under the stool that they might be preserved more carefully as they had something to do with some king or other but who or what he was they did not seem to understand. I did not suppose, however, that they would part with these books so I said no more about them if they would sell me 3 rolled manuscripts of prayers for the dedication of churches. This they peremptorily refused to do. Well, I said, if you will not sell those will you sell me the two old books under the stool, as they do not seem of much use to you? To this they immediately agreed if I would give them 5000 piastres. As I knew this was an imaginary sum of money beyond all bounds of credibility, I said that that was too much, intending to come round by degrees, as if I agreed at once they would imagine the books to be invaluable, and would not sell them at all. I was invited to come into another room to drink some coffee and there to my joy I saw the corner of the two books peeping out from under a handkerchief where they were hid. For three hours long did we sit and talk and drink little cups of coffee with incense in it. Several times I got up to go away but was recalled and at last they agreed to give me the two books for 20 English sovereigns. I walked away to the boat down the rocks with a book under each arm and 6 or 7 of the brethren followed me laughing at the way in which they had done the Milordos Ingleis out of a purse of gold for two rubbishy old books palaia pragmata which were good for nothing in their eyes.

In the version of this story which appears in *Visits to Monasteries*, Curzon, taking his usual pleasure in delaying the joy of the moment of acquisition for as long as possible, has extended the original three hours of bargaining to five. The price has risen to twenty-two instead of twenty pounds and, in the manuscript version, the hungry saddle bags and dismally surprised donkey, which figure so largely in the printed version, are nowhere to be seen. But the teller of traveller's tales is to be allowed his art, and there is no reason why Curzon should not spice up his concoctions for public consumption.



The manuscript thus acquired makes a magnificent entry for the *Catalogue of Materials for Writing*, for Curzon preserves the cross shape in which the manuscript is written for the printed notice in the catalogue. The compiling of this catalogue illustrating "the rise and progress of the art of writing" was one of Curzon's main reasons for collecting, after the sheer joy of sleeping on mattresses stuffed entirely with fleas, jogging for miles in the desert on mule or camel back, and prodding in person in dark, musty libraries. He had written to Sneyd from Thebes in 1838, saying, "You know I want to have 100 manuscript *books*, as specimens of writing at different times, and I think I now have 60, which are good ones, and average £25 apiece in value, besides the rest of the seedy tomes, which I bought formerly, and which I do not count in the collection" (Letter 62, Thebes/Cairo, 1838). While it is probable that Curzon had already made a list of his books, he did not begin serious work on an annotated catalogue until 1847, during a spell at Parham when he had nothing to do but fidget and consider his collection.

My fingers itch to be making all sorts of little improvements [he wrote to Sneyd], for the want of which the place looks so melancholy and forlorn, but my mother cannot abide any change for the better or worse, or my father either, he has the bump of destruction and mending but not of creation, so I am afraid to act, and am bored with doing nothing. However, Hussey set me at writing a history of writing and literary antiquities, and I have written 25 elephant folio pages on that gay subject, and therein I have quoted Hermes Trismegistus and several early saints and wiseacres, and it all looks so wise and learned, that I feel frightened at my own works; when I look at the hard names which are written in my own hand, and consider the trouble and research which the author must have taken, to write such a "Nobull Werke", I feel convinced that it must have been done by somebody else, and that I must be a changeling, it being out of the question that I could have dirtied so much paper, with so much curious information. Howbeit, about thirty of these pages, which will be enough, would look nothing in a printed book, and I cannot understand how Mabillon and the Benedictine Fathers managed to spin out the same subject into 7 or 8 fat quarto volumes for as far as Greek and oriental matters go, it seems to me that one could not make out above twice as much pages to say all that could be said about old books. (Letter 147, Parham, 1847)

A little later, the "Opusculum... has swelled to vast bulk, considering my dislike to quill driving", and it now contains, "1 a lyttel tretysse on writing, 2 history of curious out of the way

libraries, 3 catalogue of my own oriental books and old stories etc., 4 adventures and history of Mount Athos, 5 ditto, Holy Land, and there should be a 6, and 7, of Albania, and the Coptic monasteries in Egypt and Africa. There are about 300 quarto pages, written. I wish I knew who would look it over for me,—and who would give me £100,000 for it afterwards” (Letter 152, Parham, 1847).

It was Murray who looked it over for him, and as a result the first three sections were knocked off and became the *Catalogue*, and the rest, with the addition of further material, *Visits to Monasteries*. The *Catalogue of Materials* as it was printed is about a third of the length of the book that was planned. In Curzon's own copy of the *Catalogue*, now in the British Library, there is a manuscript introduction describing the scope of the whole project, intended to give “some notion of the different contrivances by which mankind have been enabled to transmit their ideas to one another, and to preserve the records of distant ages, for the benefit of generations yet unborn”. “The first division”, he goes on to say, “contains hieroglyphics, and writings, on Tablets, and Gems, as well as rolled manuscripts on various substances. The second MS. Books and the 3rd—some early or curious specimens of printing”. The printed catalogue contains examples from the first category, and a number of Greek and Oriental manuscripts; there are no Western manuscripts, and no printed books. Curzon has supplemented his own copy with hand-written lists of his Western manuscripts, and incunabula. His comment on his favourite Jarry manuscript, which has flowery illuminations and a script that looks as if it could have been produced by a little, delicate typewriter (B.L. Add. MS. 39642), reads, “This is a most beautiful and precious specimen, of the wonderful writing of Jarry, the extreme rarity of whose MSS. is well known to all bibliographers. This little book is preserved in its original red velvet case which is enclosed in a box formed like a book”.

Included, too, in the list of Western manuscripts is Curzon's own *Lay of the Purple Falcon*, which I should like to consider for a moment, as Curzon's activity as a manuscript-maker is part of his life as a manuscript-collector. He was, as I have said, a romantic young man and yearned, like many a Victorian medievalist, for the perfections of the High Middle Ages. In 1853, during a lonely sojourn at home, he wrote to Walter Sneyd, “Nobody here cares a bit for old MSS. or Oriental adventures. So I dream to myself all

day of the glorious things I have seen and hope to see some day or other and think how nice it must have been in the 15th century to wear a murrey coloured gown and read Sir Tristan de Leonis seated on a carved throne in an old Gothic room with the sun streaming on the illuminated pages of the book through the rare ymagerie of the mullioned window".<sup>27</sup> Curzon had more opportunities than most to practise the knight-errantry of rescuing beautiful manuscripts; and in making a manuscript, on real parchment, with illuminations, he must have fulfilled in a small degree the wish of many of his contemporaries, to re-create what they so admired.

The first part of the *Lay of the Purple Falcon* was composed at Oxford, presumably before Robert Curzon was born, by Reginald Heber, famed above all for "From Greenland's Icy Mountains", and half-brother of Richard Heber, the book collector and close friend of Sir Walter Scott. The first printing of the *Lay* occurs in Mrs. Amelia Heber's hagiographical account of her late husband's life. She prints a letter from an anonymous friend, who speaks of Heber's ability to quote and improvise verse. "One moonlight night, (I do not recollect the year) we were walking together, talking of old fabliaux and romances, with which his memory was full; and we continued our walk till long past midnight. He said it was a very easy style, and he could imitate it without an effort; and as he went along, he recited, composing as he recited, the happiest imitation of the George-Ellis-specimens which I ever saw. He came to my rooms, and wrote it down next day. He called it, 'The boke of the purple faucon'".<sup>28</sup> What motives may have led Curzon to finish the lay we do not know, but finish it he did, on the evidence of the preface to his printed version. "A note at the end of the manuscript related that it was the work of two persons; the first Canto, and I imagine the beginning of the second, were originally written by Reginaldus Episcopus C—, in partibus infidelium. The rest was composed by one Robert the rhymer, a 'conynge clerke', of whom no further account is given". Curzon had a manuscript of the romance made<sup>29</sup> and he commissioned

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Curzon to Sneyd, quoted by Munby in *Connoisseurs and Medieval Miniatures*, p. 85.

<sup>28</sup> Amelia Heber, *The Life of Reginald Heber, D.D.* (London, 1830), i. 341 ff.

<sup>29</sup> There are a number of unanswered questions remaining about the calligraphy and illuminating of the manuscript. The drawings are reminiscent of Curzon's style, but they may not be by him.

William Nicol to print, in 1847, a limited edition of thirty copies. One of these he sent to Sneyd, with a note saying, "herewith journeyeth that all absorbing and mellifluous romance, that is y'cleped ye Lay of the Purpure Faucon. This singular pleasant tome was completed 2 or 3 days ago, moreover, the bill accompanied it, in the same parcel, with the first copy, which considerably spoiled the joke to me..." (Letter 160, Parham, 1847).

The manuscript is in some ways different from, and rather nicer than, the printed version. It is a slender volume on fairly good vellum, padded out with a number of blank paper pages; it has royal blue marbled end-papers and a black pebbled cloth binding. "It is a kynge both fine, and felle", the poem begins boldly, "That hight Sir Claudius Pantagruelle".

The fineste, and filleste, more or less,  
Of all the kynges in Heathenesse...  
LXX dukes that were soe wighte  
Served him by daye and by nighte  
Thereto he made him a lothely messe  
Everie morninge, more or lesse,  
A wanne childe of vii yere age,  
Thereof he seethed hys pottage.<sup>30</sup>

The initial "I" of the first line is decorated with a cross-looking hooded falcon sitting on a T-bar in the branches of a tree which forms part of a delightful medieval hunting scene. There are hooded riders, a falcon and a heron flying in the air, and the buildings of a monastery in the background. A pointing hand in a wide sleeve, all too familiar to those who browse in manuscripts, indicates a marginal gloss which reads, "Comeng Madame Abesse Julie Barnes allast a la chasse a Sopwell".<sup>31</sup>

The king's love for one Cecilee, whose hand he can only win by presenting her with a purple falcon, leads him on a series of unlikely adventures. Finally, aided by "Good Mahoud, good saint Abadone and good St. Termagaunt", the king gets his bird, and stuffs him in his pocket.

<sup>30</sup> B.L. Add. MS. 39669, f. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Curzon probably took his identification of "Juliana Barnes" with the Prioress of Sopwell from Joseph Haslewood's *Literary Researches into the History of the Book of St. Alban's*, which was published with the facsimile of the manuscript produced by White, Cochrane and Triphook (London, 1810).

In that pocket it was so deep  
 Full much did Pantagruel keepe  
 That is of candels and iii bones  
 A cheese and string and certain stones  
 A cyndere and ii ratte trappes  
 Some koblyr's wax and moche gold.<sup>32</sup>

The miscellaneous contents of the pocket belong to the stock character of the comic chevalier, beloved throughout English literature from Sir Topaz to Hudibras, and from Hudibras to the White Knight; and the parallels with the latter make me wonder if Lewis Carroll did not perhaps see a copy of the *Purple Falcon*.

Sir Claudius takes the dead falcon back to Cecilee, who is well pleased. A great feast is held, at which a seven-year-old child is served to the assembled company.

The tables with their burthens groaned  
 And as the tankard passed around  
 First was the heathen proverbe heard  
 That virtue is its own reward.<sup>33</sup>

An inconsequent ending if ever there was one. The manuscript ends with a drawing of two pairs of legs, very close indeed, dangling from a bed. The purple falcon is on the ground with its feet in the air; and a dog surveys the scene with smug satisfaction.

So concludes this poem in the tradition of rampant medievalism greatly popularized by Sir Walter Scott. And it could well be Scott who provided some of the inspiration for the poem. The Curzons possessed Scott's autograph of one of his earliest ballads, the *Fire King*, dated 1799.<sup>34</sup> Like the *Purple Falcon*, it is set in Saracen parts. The manuscript of the *Fire King* has as its epigraph two lines from the anti-chivalric *Hudibras*,

<sup>32</sup> B.L. Add. MS. 39669, f. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., f. 12.

<sup>34</sup> The influence of Scott is on the Heber side, not Curzon's. I have not been able to track down the route by which the manuscript of *The Fire King* came into Curzon's library, but it could very well have come out of Heber's collection, which contained some Scott manuscripts. The Heber collection went on the market in a series of sixteen auction sales between 1834 and 1839. It was at one of these, presumably Sale 11 (the manuscript sale) that Sneyd first saw Philipps. The catalogue of this sale (Part 11 of *Bibliotheca Heberiana* [London, 1834-1839]) includes the manuscripts of *Guy Mannering* and *The Monastery*. *The Fire King* is not mentioned. It is possible, however, that this slender manuscript, if Heber's, did not reach the sale at all, but was bought by Curzon via the booksellers Payne and Foss, to whom the entire Heber collection went before being auctioned.

Agrippa kept a devil-bird  
In the pommel of his sword,

and begins,

Bold Knights and fair Dames to my harp give an ear  
Of love & of war & of Wonder to hear  
And you haply may sigh in the midst of your glee  
At the tale of Count Albert and fair Rosalie.

It is possible that Sir Claudius' constant invocation of Mahound and Termagaunt was influenced by the verse,

The standards of Mahound and of Termigaunt yield  
To the Scallop, the Saltire and crossletted shield  
The eagles were gorged with the infidel dead  
From Bethsaida's fountain to Naphthali's head.

But if so, it is a connection obliterated by the printed version, for Scott has dismissed Mahound and Termagaunt, perhaps for metrical reasons, and replaced them with, "The Saracens, Curdmans and Ishmaelites yield..." Lost, too, in the printed version of the ballad is Scott's scribal colophon, "Quod Le Seneschal de la Tour Smaylhorne".

The printed edition of the *Purple Falcon* contains, in addition to the poem itself, a preface and marginalia in medieval French, such as, "Commeng il mangeast moult piteusement li petits enfangs"; "Commeng il estoit malcontent"; "le bel oiseaulx"; and, "ici, Pantagrue combast en fort mauaise odeur". The preface is a post-hoc evaluation of sources and analogues, and shows a remarkable knowledge of the highways and byways of late medieval literature, from "Juliana Barnes'" "nobull werke, of Hunting, hawking and cote armuris", to the antiquarian's fairy, that "disappeared with a curious Perfume and most melodious Twang".<sup>35</sup> Altogether, the "edifying and adventurous history of Sir Claudius Pantagrue", if not a treatise in gold letters on the skins of sheep describing the whole science of alchemy, is at least a fine example of one kind of alchemical transmutation,—parody, wrought by people who not only owned and collected Caxtons and Wynkyn de Wordes, but also read and enjoyed them.

<sup>35</sup> The "antiquarian" is John Aubrey: "Anno 1670, not far from Cyrencester, was an Apparition: Being demanded, whether a good Spirit, or a bad? returned no answer, but disappeared with a curious Perfume and most melodious Twang. Mr. Lilley believes it was a Farie" (*Aubrey's Brief Lives*, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick [London, 1950], p. 297).

Much of Curzon's collecting was done early in life. In middle age he settled happily into marriage with the daughter of the woman of whom Byron had written "She walks in beauty like the night". Their first child was born at Catton in 1851. Two years later the joys of fatherhood prompted Curzon to urge Sneyd yet again to marry: "Now why don't you be off and pop the question to Lady Louisa; and then it will be all right. For I find no gimcrack to compare to my little Babby, whose pleasure at seeing me yesterday was worth anything [MS. incomplete] (Letter 223, Parham, 1853). Although having a wife and child hampered Curzon's movements somewhat, his joy in acquiring a good manuscript remained unabated long after his travelling days were over. And, with his customary sense of humour, he was not averse to turning into an adventure the finding of a book which came to him not after hours of bargaining with the agoumenos of a Middle Eastern monastery, but through a friend who was living in Italy. The friend, Sir Henry Leader, had promised Curzon a certain Mexican manuscript that had come into his possession. Curzon wrote him an enthusiastic and whimsical letter explaining how he had obtained permission for the manuscript to come in the official despatch bag to the Foreign Office, where he would pick it up.

London, September 19, 1859

My dear Leader,

As I am theoretically a Tory, and as all my family are Tories, of the most rank description, I feared I had no hope of getting your manuscript through the myrmidons of the present government. However I confided my distress to Lord Londesborough, a mighty collector of old plate, and old armour—or perhaps new plate and new armour which we believe infinitely to be antient—He says he knows you very well, and he applied to Ld. Malmesbury for me, who says, "If you wish to have the book taken to the Mission in Florence, it will be forwarded over". Therefore, my dear Leader, pack him up in swaddling clothes of waterproof stuff, and make him comfortable for the journey, and tell him to be quiet, and not to quarrel with the other despatches in the bag, and when he gets to Parham, I will put him in a certain little drawer, in the pedestal of a horrible Aztec image, something like this [an excellent drawing here]. It is of red terra cotta, with a good deal of character, only the said character is very bad, and has a diabolical expression. The old gentleman is squeezing the throats of 2 serpents, which are twining round his arms and body. This will be a suitable resting-place for the antient MS., which I will have facsimiled, if it is not too expensive, for the benefit of those who try to decipher its hieroglyphics. If I do this, you will of course have the first

copy, and I cannot sufficiently thank you for a present, which adds so much to the glory of my library.—The totally illegible nature of its chiefest treasures, constitute its highest value, and certainly this is the most utterly incomprehensible of the whole lot—how interesting it would be to make out from these strange books, the history of antient America—Rawlinson and Wilkinson have made such discoveries in cuneiform and hieroglyphic characters, that I have little doubt about the Aztec being read some day. I shall now be looking forward to the arrival of this strange old tome, for which I must again express my grateful thanks.

With kind regards to the Signora,

I am sincerely yours,

Robert Curzon.<sup>36</sup>

The manuscript eventually arrived in the despatch bag, and Curzon wrote off a letter to Leader in high delight, as usual unable to resist the impulse to hold off the moment of acquisition till the last possible second.

My dear Leader,

I came to Town on Monday, for two days, and immediately started for the Foreign Office, after the Aztec manuscript according to your instruction—I enquired after Mr. Stavely—he was out of town. Mr. Somebody Else was not in. Mr.—was out. At last a gentleman, who was sitting on a chair in a passage, told me in a condescending way, that if I wanted anything, I had better apply to Mr. Conyngham, the chief Clerk, who knew everything, and did everything, when everybody else were helping each other to do nothing, which seems to be the principal occupation of Londoners at this time of year. I found Mr. Conyngham, and took off my hat, and made an oration, as touching a small parcel, which should have come from Florence, some 10 days ago. So Mr. Conyngham rang a bell, and told a man to look in Mr. S's room, for the parcel—no such thing was there, every other room was searched, where such a thing was likely to be—I feeling more and more sold at each report. At last I put my tail between my legs, and was prepared to sneak out, when a man to whom Mr. Conyngham was giving orders, to copy a long despatch in a fair hand, said, “I saw a parcel directed to Mr. Curzon, who used to belong to the Foreign Office, a week or more ago, down in the Hall, at the bottom of the stairs”. “I am that unfortunate individual who belonged to the Foreign Office”, said I “—and where do you think the aforesaid parcel is likely to be”? “Oh. I am sure I don't know where it is now”, said he, “for it is ten days ago, when I saw it down the Hall”. Mr. Conyngham, who has only one leg, kindly hobbled

<sup>36</sup> B.L. Add. MS. 39046, f. 76.



down a dark back stairs with me—we caught a Porter, who swore by his Gods, that there was no such parcel, and never had been one, inferring that my folly was only equalled by my ignorance, in the ways of the Foreign Office. So I thanked Mr. Conyngham, and in turning round, upset several parcels which were lying on a chair—when lo! there was the precious bundle underneath a plethoric package addressed to Miss—. I made a grab at my treasure, and went on my way rejoicing.—Well, I opened his covers, and looked at him, inside and out, on one side and the other, and turned him over, and turned him back again, with exceeding care, and tenderness, and straightway fell into an exceeding great doubt, about what the deuce all those horrible little figures could possible [*sic*] mean—I recognised at a glance, my old friend who was cutting off his enemies nose, as the Emperor intends to do to Queen V. How very exactly you had copied it—and I am going to take this most curious MS. down to Parham tomorrow, where it will have a little shrine of its own, under the throne of the frightful idol, that I told you of.—Now I have only to repeat my very sincere thanks for all your trouble, and kindness and generosity, in presenting me with so great an addition to my collection of antient MSS.—all your letters shall be placed with the Aztec tome, under the protection of the image, which its writer once adored, and I hope some day you will come over, and see how much I appreciate your present.

Ever sincerely yours,

Robert Curzon.<sup>37</sup>

Leader's coloured tracing of "my old friend who was cutting off his enemies nose" is now pasted in Curzon's own copy of the *Catalogue of Materials for Writing*. Curzon made a manuscript entry describing the book, and trying to relate it to more familiar kinds of manuscripts:

They [the little pictures] are all so well done, that I imagine their singular style must have been conventional, and that the antient Mexican artists were restricted to certain laws, in the delineations of the Sacred, and historical events, which was the case with Egyptian hieroglyphics, and the pictures of the Saints, in the Middle Ages of Europe. 14 MSS. of this kind are at present known to exist... which is all that remains of the literature of the antient Mexicans, whose mighty Empire and peculiar civilization, were at the height of prosperity and power, before the horrible atrocities of Cortes.

The book had certainly captured Curzon's imagination, and it is evident that for a long time he entertained the idea that he had

<sup>37</sup> Ibid f. 78.

mentioned to Leader, of having a facsimile made. Sir Thomas Phillipps encouraged Curzon in this project, replying to a letter in which Curzon had complained that he felt "seedy":

My dear Curzon,

I am quite distressed to receive so indifferent an account of yourself, and fear that it has been brought about by inactivity of mind and body. I wish most earnestly that you would engage on some pursuits that would call forth all your energies—and I cannot think of any one that would suit you, except the publication of your Mexican MS.; to complete which would I think be every way worthy of your talents. Do, pray, let me hear that you are willing to undertake it.<sup>38</sup>

Curzon wrote back that his funds were not at present sufficient for the task of having a facsimile made.

I hope [he wrote to Sir Thomas] to get a facsimile of the famous Mexican MS. made, which I will be sure to send to you whenever it is done. But Mr. Gladstone, who has all the law and the profits on his side, has taken away all my money for the next six months, so I cannot begin anything of the sort, at present.<sup>39</sup>

No facsimile had been made by the time Curzon died; but people and manuscripts have a habit of crossing each other's paths, and not long after Curzon had obtained the Aztec manuscript, another interested antiquarian, Mrs. Zelia Nuttall, was on its track. She had first heard from Signor Villari at Florence that the monks of St. Mark's had a manuscript which they thought worthless, and "probably intended for the amusement of children":

Later, a disturbed political period supervened, and the monastic orders were suppressed throughout Italy. The library of San Marco became the property of the state, and was thrown open to the public. On revisiting the library, Signor Villari made enquiries about the Mexican manuscript, but in vain, for it had vanished. He subsequently learned that it had been sold to a wealthy Englishman residing in Florence.<sup>40</sup>

The "wealthy Englishman" must have been Sir Henry Leader. Villari applied to him, but was told that the manuscript "was no

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Phillipps to Curzon, quoted by Munby in *Phillipps Studies: IV*, p. 150.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>40</sup> Zelia Nuttall, "How the Codex was Brought to Light", in *Codex Nuttall: Facsimile of an Ancient Mexican Codex, Belonging to Lord Zouche of Harynworth [sic], England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1902), p. 2.

longer in his possession, and had been given to a friend in England"—without a shadow of a doubt Robert Curzon. Mrs. Nuttall finally traced the book to Parham, perhaps to the little drawer in the pedestal under the Aztec statue:

It was in these surroundings that, during one-third of a century, the Codex remained undisturbed and so lost to view that not even a rumor of its existence reached the outer world. It is undoubtedly to this circumstance that the codex owes the freshness and brilliancy of its coloring, and the fact that it is in a more perfect state of preservation than any other known manuscript of its kind.<sup>41</sup>

This is probably intended as a compliment to Curzon's son, Lord Zouche, who had by then inherited the manuscript. But I feel that a little credit should go to the monks of St. Mark's, who for so long had possessed the manuscript and refrained from using it as a hassock or a covering for preserves. Lord Zouche gave his permission for a copy to be made, and the Peabody Museum at Harvard gave funds for the publication. I am sorry that Curzon never saw the magnificent facsimile that was made for the benefit of the public, and that he never learned that the "most entirely incomprehensible wollum that I have got"<sup>42</sup> told the "History of the Conqueror named Eight-deer, also Tiger's Claw".

But that he did *not* find out is also a comfort—for it serves as a reminder that the life of a book is longer than the lives of its owners, and that its history continues to unfold after they have ceased to be. Surely one of the greatest joys of book-collecting is knowing that for a short while one is a steward of something that exists not only for oneself, but also for "the benefit of generations yet unborn".

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from Curzon to Sneyd, quoted by Munby in *Connoisseurs and Medieval Miniatures*, p. 103.