

THE CAESARIAN SECTION IN AN ARABIC MANUSCRIPT DATED 707 A.H.

As the eminent scholar in whose honour this volume has been compiled is not only a Professor of Arabic, but also a Doctor of Medicine and a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, before whom he delivered the FitzPatrick Lectures on Arabian Medicine in 1920, it has been thought not unfitting to include in it some reference to medical science in the Muhammadan world. The picture here reproduced is believed to be the earliest representation of the Caesarian section; it is found in a MS of al-Bērūnī's *al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah*, now no. 161 in the Library of the University of Edinburgh, but previously in the possession of Mr. R. B. M. Binning, of the Madras Civil Service, who purchased it in Ispahan in the year 1851. The colophon bears the date 707 A.H. (= 1307-8 A.D.), and the MS is thus considerably older than any of those used by Professor Sachau in the preparation of his edition of *al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah* (Leipzig, 1878). But—unlike the MS described by Professor Salemann in the *Bulletin de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St Pétersbourg* (1912, p. 861 *sqq.*)—this Edinburgh MS does not supply material for filling up the numerous gaps that occur in Professor Sachau's edition; the arrangement of the text as well as the illustrations would seem to indicate that the Paris MS (Bibliothèque Nationale, Supplément Arabe, Nr. 713, probably about the second half of the 17th century) is ultimately derived from the Edinburgh MS, or that both are copies of a common original; but only a more careful comparison than has been possible to the present writer can determine this question.

The Edinburgh MS contains 24 pictures, of a style that has provisionally been grouped under the vague designation of the Mesopotamian School. Like all pictures in Arabian and Persian MSS of the period, they exhibit the influence of those Chinese conventions which the victorious progress of the Mongol arms impressed upon the art of Western Asia, but there are characteristics also, which distinctly in-

dicade influences akin to those familiar in Byzantine paintings. We know practically nothing of the pictorial art of the Nestorian Church, which was still flourishing in the East under Mongol rule up to the beginning of the 14th century, but it may well be presumed that the art of the Orthodox Eastern Church, so rich and extensive in its development, made its influence felt in the neighbouring Christian Churches, even though these were not in communion with it. This picture, as well as others in the same manuscript, presents the characteristically Byzantine balance of figures on either side of the picture, and the central group reproduces a well-known convention. The particular manner in which the subject-matter of several of the other illustrations is represented, makes it exceedingly unlikely that they should be the work of a Muhammadan artist, but, though there are distinct indications of Christian influence, there is on the other hand no certain evidence that they were painted by a Christian artist.

The surgical operation which forms the subject of the picture reproduced here, receives only a passing reference in al-Bērūnī's chapter on the nature of the various eras of the world, in the section devoted to the era of Augustus (p. 29 of Sachau's edition). Here he states that the mother of Caesar Augustus died in labour-pains and that her womb was cut open and the child was taken out. The only other instance that al-Bērūnī mentions of such a Caesarian section being performed is that of the birth of Aḥmad ibn Sahl who revolted in Khurāsān against the Sāmānid Naṣr ibn Aḥmad (918-919). Al-Bērūnī gives no indication that he was actually aware of any instances of this operation being performed in his own time, but it is noteworthy that his great contemporary, Firdawsī, describes the birth of Rustam as occurring after the performance of such an operation on his mother, Rūdāba. In spite of the vast extent of the literature on the subject of the Caesarian section, the historians of surgical science have not yet extended their researches by the collection of examples from the Muhammadan world.

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وهو اول اعيان صبره ن ومعنى قيصر بالامر بجيحه شق عنه والسبب في
 ذلك ان امه ماتت في المخاض وهى حامل به فسق بطنها واخرج عنه ولقب بقيصر



كأنتي على الملك ما نزلت في حوضه من ماء ان كانه ان ينجوا احد من سبها هاشم

The Caesarian Section