accustomed to kill his wives on the morning after the consummation of the marriage. But once he married a clever princess called Shahrazād, who spent the marriage night in telling a story which in the morning reached a point so interesting that the king spared her, and asked next night for the sequel. This went on for a thousand nights till Shahrazãd had a son, and ventured to tell the king of her device. He admired her intelligence, loved her, and spared her life. In all this the princess was assisted by the king’s stewardess Dînãzãd. This book is said to have been written for the princess Homāi (MSS. Homānī), daughter of Bahman.... It contains nearly two hundred stories, one story often occupying several nights. I have repeatedly seen the complete book, but it is really a meagre and uninteresting production" *(Fihrist,* ed. Flügel, p. 304).

Persian tradition (in Firdousï) makes Princess IJomãi the daughter and wife of Bahman Ardashir, *i.e.* Artaxerxes I. Longimanus. She is depicted as a great builder, a kind of Persian Semiramis, and is a half-mythical personage already mentioned in the Avesta, but her legend seems to be founded on the history of Atossa and of Parysatis. Firdousï says that she was also called Shahrazād (Mohl v. II). This name and that of Dīnāzād both occur in what Mas'üdî tells of her. According to him, Shahrazãd was Homāi’s mother (ii. 129), a Jewess (ii. 123). Bahman had married a Jewess (i. 118), who was instrumental in delivering her nation from captivity. In ii. 122 this Jewish maiden who did her people this service is called Dînãzãd, but “ the accounts,” says our author, “ vary.” Plainly she is the Esther of Jewish story. Tabarī (i. 688) calls Esther the mother of Bahman, and, like Firdousī, gives to Homāi the name of Shahrazãd. The story of Esther and that of the original *Nights* have in fact one main feature in common. In the former the king is offended with his wife, and divorces her; in the *Arabian Nights* he finds her unfaithful, and kills her. But both stories agree that thereafter a new wife was brought to him every night, and on the morrow passed into the second house of the women (Esther), or was slain (*Nights).* At length Esther or Shahrazãd wins his heart and becomes queen. The issue in the Jewish story is that Esther saves her people; in the *Nights* the gainers are “ the daughters of the Moslems,” hut the old story had, of course, some other word than “ Moslems.” Esther’s foster- father becomes vizier, and Shahrazād’s father is also vizier. Shahrazād’s plan is helped forward in the *Nights* by Dînãzãd, who is, according to Mas'üdî, her slave girl, or, according to other MSS., her nurse, and, according to the *Fihrist,* the king’s stewardess. The last account comes nearest to Esther ii. 15, where Esther gains the favour of the king’s chamberlain, keeper of the women. It is also to be noted that Ahasuerus is read to at night when he cannot sleep (Esther vi. 1). And it is just pos­sible that it is worth notice that, though the name of Ahasuerus corresponds to Xerxes, Josephus identifies him with Artaxerxes I.

Now it may be taken as admitted that the book of Esther was written in Persia, or by one who had lived in Persia, and not earlier than the 3rd century b.c. If now there is real weight in the points of contact between this story and the *Arabian Nights*—and the points of difference cannot be held to outweigh the resemblances between two legends, each of which is neces­sarily so far removed from the hypothetical common source— the inference is important for both stories. On the one hand, it appears that (at least in part) the book of Esther draws on a Persian source; on the other hand, it becomes probable that the *Nights* are older than the Sāsānian period, to which Lane (iii. 677) refers them.

It is a piece of good fortune that Mas'üdî and the *Fihrist* give us the information cited above. For in general the Moslems, though very fond of stories, arc ashamed to recognize them as objects of literary curiosity. In fact, the next mention of the *Nights* is found only after a lapse of three centuries. Maqrīzī, describing the capital of Egypt, quotes from a work of Ibn Sa'īd (c. A.D. 1250), who again cites an older author (Al-Ḳorṭobī), who, in speaking of a love affair at the court of the caliph Al-Ämir (1097-1130), says “ what is told about it resembles the romance of Al-Bāṭṭal, or the *Thousand and One Nights ” (Ḥiṭaṭ,* Būlāq ed., i. 485, ii. 181).

That the *Nights* which we have are not the original translation of the *Hezār Afsāne* is certain, for the greater part of the stories are of Arabian origin, and the whole is so thoroughly Mahom­medan that even the princes of remote ages who are introduced speak and act as Moslems. It might be conceived that this is due to a gradual process of modernization by successive generations of story-tellers. But against this notion, which has been entertained by some scholars, Lane has remarked with justice that, much as MSS. of the *Nights* differ from one another in points of language and style, in the order of the tales, and the division into nights, they are all so much at one in essentials that they must be regarded as derived from a single original. There is no trace of a recension of the text that can be looked on as standing nearer to the *Hezār Afsāne.* And the whole local colour of the work, in point of dialect and also as regards the manners and customs described, clearly belongs to Egypt as it was from the 14th to the 16th century. Some points, as De Sacy and Lane have shown, forbid us to place the book earlier than the second half of the 15th century. Galland’s MS. copy, again, was in existence in 1548. Lane accordingly dates the work from the close of the 15th century or the beginning of the 16th, but this date appears to be too late. For Abu’l-Maḥāsin, an Egyptian historian who died in 1470, writing of Ḥamdi, a famous highwayman of Bagdad in the 10th century, remarks that he is probably the figure who used to be popularly spoken of as Ahmad al-Danaf (ed. Juynboll ii. 305). Now in the *Nights* Ahmad al-Danaf really plays a part corresponding to that of the historical IJamdi, being now a robber (Lane ii. 404) and again a captain of the guard (Lane ii. 249). It would seem that Abu’l-Maḥāsin had read or heard the stories in the *Nights,*and was thus led to compare the historical with the fictitious character. And, if this be so, the *Nights* must have been composed very soon after 1450.@@1

No doubt the *Nights* have borrowed much from the *Hezãr Afsãne,* and it is not improbable that even in the original Arabic translation of that work some of the Persian stories were replaced by Arab ones. But that our *Nights* differ very much from the *Hezār Afsāne* is further manifest from the circumstance that, even of those stories in the *Nights* which are not Arabian in origin, some are borrowed from books mentioned by Mas'üdî as distinct from the *Hezār Afsāne.* Thus the story of the king and his son and the damsel and the seven viziers (Lane, ch. xxi. note 51) is in fact a version of the *Book of Sindbad,@@2* while the story of Jalī'ād and his son and the vizier Shammās (M'Naghten iv. 366 seq.; cf. Lane iii. 530) corresponds to the book of *Ferza and Sīmās.@@3*

Not a few of the tales are unmistakably of Indian or Persian origin, and in these poetical passages are rarely inserted. In other stories the scene lies in Persia or India, and the source is foreign, but the treatment thoroughly Arabian and Mahomme­dan. Sometimes, indeed, traces of Indian origin are perceptible, even in stories in which Hārūn al-Rashīd figures and the scene is Bagdad or Basra.@@4 But most of the tales, in substance and form alike, are Arabian, and so many of them have the capital of the caliphs as the scene of action that it may be guessed that the author used as one of his sources a book of tales taken from the era of Bagdad’s prosperity.

The late date of the *Nights* appears from sundry anachronisms. In the story of the men transformed into fish—white, blue, yellow or red according as they were Moslems, Christians, Jews or Magians (Lane i. 99)—the first three colours are those of

@@@1 The hypothesis of gradual and complete modernization is also opposed to the fact that the other romances used by Cairene story­tellers (such as those of ‘Antar and of Saïf) retain their original local colour through all variations of language and style.

@@@2 The Syriac *Sindibãn,* the Greek *Syntipas,* and the *Seven Sages* of the European West.

@@@3 De Sacy and Lane suppose that the original title of the Arabic translation of the *Hesār Afsāne* was *The Thousand Nights.* But most MSS. of Mas'üdî already have *The Thousand and One Nights,* which is also the name given by Maqrîzî. Both ciphers perhaps mean only “ a very great number,” and Fleischer *(De glossis Habichtianis,* p. 4) has shown that 1001 is certainly used in this sense.

@@@4 Gildemeister, *De rebus indicis,* p. 89 seq.