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BY

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A New Medal of King Behrâm Gour.

[*Read, 15th March 1900. Dr. J. Gerson DaCunha, in the Chair.*]

The subjoined Medal belongs to Mr. J. H. Robinson of Bombay. It is a bronze coin weighing 4 tolas and 42 grains. According to the owner it was found in Persia.

On the obverse, we find the bust of a king, turned to the right. The head bears a crown surmounted with a globe. The hair of the head falls on the neck behind in curls. It carries in the neck a string of jewels and a star-like jewel a little above the string and just below the beard. Just behind the bust, there is a crescent with a globe or a little star on its convex part. In the front of the bust to the right, there is a dragon with its mouth opened to the right. Below the bust, there is an animal. The position of its four feet and its tail shows, that it is running away in full speed.



On the reverse, we find the figure of a young man, rather a boy, with his face turned to the left. He wears a crown or a crown-like cap with three points. The crown or the cap either carries a string or strap of jewels or is embroidered with jewels. The hair appear from under the crown or cap tied in a bundle. He carries a dagger-like instrument suspended from a belt (not visible) on his waist. He carries, in his left hand, a club-like weapon, which rests on his left shoulder. A strap or a strap-like



string is hanging in the front from his neck, which supports something, perhaps a bow (not visible), on the back. By the side of the dagger-like instrument, hangs a bag which is probably a quiver of arrows, which are not visible, being supported on the back. In the front of the young man or boy are several animals, all turned to the left and arranged in three rows, one above the other. In the top-most row, there is an animal (a female) with a young one fallen on its two knees and sucking her breast. In the second row, there are two animals, one going after the other. In the third row, there are three animals. The position of the feet and the tails of the animals shows, that they are not standing, but are in a state of motion, though not running fast. There is something like a stone, nearly three-fourths round, lying in the front of the young man and below the first row of the animals. It is difficult to say, what it is.

The medal bears no inscription. So, we have to depend upon the features, &c., of the figure and upon its accompaniments, to determine what the medal is, and to whom it belongs.

First of all the features of the face, the head-dress, the curl of the hair, the conventional globe, all these lead us to determine, that it is a Persian medal of one of the Sassanian kings. Then the position of the crescent with the globe and the star below the beard, leads us to say, that it is a medal of Behrâm Gour or Behrâm V. A comparison with medal No. 51 of Plate VIII. 6 of Longpériér's *Essai sur les Medailles des Rois Perses de la Dynastie Sassanide* (p. 58), helps us to determine the fact. In our medal, too, the crescent and the globe are behind the head of the figure, but there is this difference, that while in the medal, described by Longpériér, the globe is in the concave part of the crescent, in ours, it is in the convex part. In Longpériér's medal, besides the conventional globe over the head, there is another moon-like globe in the front of one of the three points of the crown. We do not find that globe in the obverse of our medal, but instead of that, we find a globe in the reverse. The form of the crown of the figure on Longpériér's medal is similar to that on the head of the young man on the reverse of our medal. Both have crowns with three points.

Now let us see, if the animals on the obverse and reverse point to any episodes in the career of Behrâm Gour. First, let us take the figure of the dragon. There are two adventures, in which, according to Firdousi, Behrâm Gour's name is connected with a dragon. The first is described as follows : (Mohl. V., p. 609.)

Once upon a time, Behrâm Gour went a-hunting with his courtiers on the frontiers of Turân. Onagers, wild rams, and antelopes were the animals that they hunted. They passed two days in hunting. On the third day, the king came across a dragon, that was brave like a lion. It had hair all over its body and over its head. It had two breasts over its body like a woman. The king aimed at it two arrows, one of which struck its breast, and the other its head. The dragon was killed on the spot, and blood and poison began to flow from its body. The king got down from the horse and cut open the breast of the dragon with his dagger. He found out, that it had swallowed a young man. He wept over the fate of the young man, and the poison of the snake dimmed his eyes. He wandered thus in a state of confusion, seeking for water and a place for rest. He found his way to an inhabited place, and came to a house, where he saw a woman carrying a pitcher of water over her shoulders. He asked for hospitality and the woman gracefully accorded it.

The seat of king Behrâm Gour's second adventure with a dragon was India. His Vazir once excited his ambition to conquer India, then ruled over by a king called Shangel. Behrâm thereupon asked a friendly but threatening letter to be written to the Indian king, asking him either to send tribute to Persia, or, to be prepared for war. He then resolved upon carrying the letter personally, and went to India with a few confidential officers, under the pretence of going a-hunting. He was received by the Indian king with all honours due to a messenger of the king of Persia. On hearing the message, he indignantly refused to pay any tribute to Persia. Behrâm then had a friendly fight in the presence of the king with one of his best warriors.

The superior strength in the fight and the skill in the art of using the bow, which Behrâm showed, made the king suspect, that the

messenger (Behrâm) was not an ordinary courtier of the court of Persia, but a man of royal blood. He asked his minister to persuade Behrâm to postpone his departure for some time, and stay a little longer at Kanoj, where, he said, the fruit trees gave two crops every year. The Vazir tried to win Behrâm over to the side of the Indian king, and persuaded him to make Kanoj his permanent residence. Behrâm refused, and so, the king tried to do away with this powerful Persian messenger, by asking him to kill a ferocious wolf and a dragon in the vicinity of his city.¹

The fight of Behrâm Gour with the above-mentioned dragon in India is thus described by Firdousi: "The Indian king in a private conference with his confidential courtiers, said, 'If this messenger would remain with me in my court, he would be a pillar of strength to me, but if he were to return to Persia, as he insists upon doing, he, with his valiant master Behrâm, would be a source of terror to me and my country. So I have thought of a new device to do away with him. I will send him to fight with the dragon, which causes such terror in our neighbourhood, and I am sure he will be killed in the fight.' He then sent for the Persian messenger (Behrâm Gour) and requested him to free Hindustân from the terror of that dragon, which at times lived in water, and at times on land, and at times killed brave elephants. He told him, that if he killed that dragon, he would agree to pay tribute to Persia and allow him to return to his native country. The messenger (Behrâm Gour) accepted the request, went to the abode of the dragon and killed it."

Now the question is, which of these two adventures of king Behrâm with the dragons is depicted on the medal. The animal below the effigy of the king leads us to say, that it is the second adventure.

According to Firdousi, the Indian king, before sending Behrâm Gour to fight with the dragon, sent him to fight with a ferocious wolf, which caused terror in his neighbourhood. It was an extraordinary wolf,

¹ *Vide* my paper on "The Bas-Relief of Behrâm Gour at Nakshi-Rustam" before the B. B. Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. XIX., No. LI.

which was more than a match even for lions. Behrâm went to the forest, where the wolf had its abode, fought with it courageously, and killed it with his bow and arrow. Thus the animal on the medal seems to be the wolf killed by Behrâm, a short time before he killed the dragon in India. (Mohl. VI., pp. 36-44.)

Now, coming to the device on the reverse of the medal, I think that the scene depicted there, is one of the chase-scenes of king Behrâm Gour. We know, that Behrâm V. was called Gour, on account of his extraordinary fondness for chasing onagers. Out of the several stories attributed to him by Firdousi, the following seems to point to the scene, depicted on our medal : (Mohl. V., pp. 664-668.)

One day, the king went a-hunting with his courtiers and showed them his dexterity in arrow-shooting in various ways. He came across a she-onager. In front of her, ran her young one, all fatigued. Behrâm struck her with his sword and cut her into two pieces. All his officers admired his dexterous blow and praised him.

It seems, that the animal with a young one at her breast, as depicted in the scene, on the reverse of the medal, is the she-onager in the chase scene above referred to. As the feat above referred to, was performed with a sword, we see the king on the medal with a sword-like instrument in his hand.

One may be tempted to say, that this scene on the reverse of the medal is like that of a shepherd and his flock. It looks like it at first view, the animals looking like cows. But then, it is clear, that the young man on the right is not a shepherd-boy. He wears a crown on his head which clearly shows, that he is a prince. Again, he carries a war-like instrument in his hand, and a dagger is hanging at his side. Again, there is something suspended from his neck. This looks like a piece of string supporting his quiver, which appears to be hanging by the side of his dagger. All these are not the requisites of a shepherd. They clearly show, that the young man is a prince and warrior.

The above chase-scene, as described by Firdousi, is attributed to the king in his grown-up age, when he had established himself upon the

throne. But the scene on the medal represents the youth as a boy-prince. It may be, that it is one of the chase-scenes of the time, when Behrâm Gour lived in Arabia under the tutelage of Moudhir, the king of Arabia. Several chase-scenes of Arabia are referred to by Firdousi. It is possible, that Firdousi may have transferred some of them to a later period in the life-time of the king.
