ART. V.—*Description of an Arabic Manuscript bought in Egypt 1898–1900 A.D.* By A. R. GUEST, M.R.A.S.

THE manuscript consists of 827 folios with two detached leaves. The paper on which it is written measures 10 in. by 7½ in., and is generally creamy white and thick. A few sheets are coloured brown, and there are a few sheets of very thin paper.

The writing occupies a space of 6½ in. by 4 in., in seventeen lines to the page; it is in black ink, in a well-formed cursive Naskhi hand. The diacritical points are frequently omitted. Headings in red ink. A fourteenth-century MS.

On one of the detached leaves are half a dozen lines of poetry “written by el Mari al Hanbali” (W.¹ 555), d. 1033 A.H., which show that el Mar’i must have owned or handled this book.

The title appears to begin with

“NATHR EL JUMAN -”

A note on the last volume says: “One of eleven parts of Nathr el Juman FI TARAJIM EL A’YĀN.”

This note is not in the hand of the original scribe, and the title stated seems open to doubt, for the book is by no means solely confined to obituary notices. More than half of the subject-matter is a chronicle of events principally Egyptian, which becomes extremely detailed between the years 600–745 A.H., at the last of which the book ends.

The book also contains digressions on matters of interest and otherwise, besides many detailed archaeological notes referring to “Misr wa’l Qahirah,” which seem important.

¹ W. refers to Wüstenfeld’s “Geschichte Schreiber der Araber,” 1882.

Assuming the part of the note above referred to, which states that the book was in eleven volumes, to be correct, and taking the number of folios, viz. 136, in the last volume, which seems almost complete, as the average number for a volume, it would appear that the volumes to which the fragments belong are the following :—

Vol. ii (a part).

Vol. iv (nearly complete).

Vol. vi (a part).

Vol. vii (nearly complete).

Vols. ix, x, and xi (nearly complete).

Vols. i, iii, v, viii are missing entirely.

The fragments have been arranged in five sections, which are nearly consecutive, the gaps in each section being few. The following is a description of these sections :—

Section I. Most probably a part of vol. ii, 90 ff.,
A.H. 534–567.

The first page is mutilated. F. 1, v, begins with the year 534 A.H.¹ F. 66, v, gives a detailed account of Shawar and the downfall of the Fatimite dynasty. F. 90 resumes the chronicle at 565 A.H.

This part of the book has not a regular chapter of obituary notices at the end of the accounts of the events of each year.

The following authorities are quoted in this section :—

- (1) Umarah, W. 263.
- (2) El 'Imad, W. 284.
- (3) Ibn el Athir, W. 315.
- (4) Ibn Abi Tai, W. 316.
- (5) Ibn Shaddad, W. 318.

¹ From Abi Tai, W. 316.

Section II. 134 ff., A.H. 624–640.

This would appear to be the fourth volume, nearly complete.

The history of events is more detailed than in Section I. At the end of each year in this and each section following there is a chapter of obituary notices.

At f. 10, v, there is a note on the margin. ["This belonged, by the grace of my Master, to my uncle, Maula Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Qalaun. God cover him with His mercy."]

ملكه من فضل ربى عمى مولا حسن بن محمد بن قلاون تغمدہ
الله برحمته

A few pages seem to be missing from this section.

Among the authorities quoted in Section II are :—

El [Qadi el] Fadil,	W. 283.
Ibn el Athir,	W. 315.
Abu Muzaffar,	W. 352.
Ibn es Sai,	W. 355.
El Khazraji,	W. 384.
Ibn Musnad	?

Section III. 193 ff., A.H. 670–689.

Possibly a small part of vol. vi and nearly the whole of vol. vii.

Section III is more detailed than Section II. It contains digressions on the Nubians and the Hindus, and on medicine. There are some lengthy poems in it.

Among the authorities quoted in Section III may be noticed :—

El Jazari ¹ (other it would seem than	W. 348).
Ibn Abd ez Zahir,	W. 366.
Abu'l Fida, †732,	W. 398.

¹ El Jazari. I expect Shihab el Din Muh. ibn Ibrahim mentioned by Ibn Iyas.

There is also a mention of Ibn Saiyid en Nas as "our shaikh," and a reference to "my father" in this section.

Section IV. 274 ff., A.H. 701-734.

Would seem to contain vols. ix and x almost complete, though a few gaps occur.

The first page is mutilated, but appears to commence the year 701 with an account of the then reigning princes. After this there follows a digression of about 60 ff. on the seven climes, birds, the sea, fishes, the peoples of the world, etc. About 30 ff. at the end of these sixty are devoted to an account of the genealogy of the various Arab tribes.

The archaeological notices in this section seem to be of considerable importance, e.g., the digging of the Nasiri Khalij and Birkah, etc.

For the cosmographical part of this section, the well-known early authors, such as Ibn Qutaibah, El Biruni, Eth Thalabi, besides others unknown to me, are quoted. In the historical portion I see no authorities named.

Section V. 136 f., A.H. 734-745.

The year 745 ends the book.

The first page of this section bears the inscription referred to previously: "This is one of eleven parts of Nathr el Juman fi Tarajim el A'yān."

The last page, which is mutilated, has the colophon—

"[This] book [is ended]: praise to
My Gracious Master, etc."—

without date.

DATE OF COMPOSITION, TRANSCRIPTION, AND AUTHOR.

As the author gives us a verse written by him to Ibn Saiyid en Nas and the answer of that Shaikh, who had lent him a book, it appears reasonable to assume that he must have been at least twenty years of age at the time of Saiyid en Nas's death, and that it is possible he may have been any number of years older at this period.

Ibn Saiyid en Nas died in 734 A.H. according to W. 400 and Es Suyuti, in 740 A.H. according to Ibn Iyas.

This appears to me to fix the date of the birth of the author at not later than 720 A.H. The author was a disciple of the Shaikh, as he tells us in more than one place.

There is reason, from references in the book, to believe that its author was a native of El Fayum: Hajji Khalifah mentions Nathr el Juman "by el Fayumi," but gives no further information.

We have other indications as to the date of composition.

- (1) El Mujahid, king of Yemen,¹ was still reigning (see extract). He died 766 A.H. (v. Ibn Khaldun).
- (2) This copy itself belonged to Sultan Hasan (see description of Section II). He died 762 A.H.

As this history goes up to the end of 745 A.H., it must have been finished between 746 A.H. and 762 A.H., and the fragment under consideration must have been transcribed between those dates.

I cannot identify this history with any mentioned by Wüstenfeld for the period, but it appears impossible that a work of such bulk can have been compiled without any record having been made of it by the numerous chroniclers of this epoch.

¹ Brought a prisoner to Cairo in 752 A.H.