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Nectanebo, Pharaoh and Magician

FAME deals capriciously with the Pharaohs. 'Ramessu' and 'Tutmes' have become household words of drawing-room science, but even Egyptologists sometimes fail to recognise the name of Nectanebo. Yet there was a time when the fame of this last of the native Pharaohs, who knew all the art of magic, was in all men's mouths:—

Egipte by eritage entred hee never,
He wonne it by witchcraft for ywis he was knowe—¹

and story-tellers alike on the Ganges and the Thames told how he lost his high estate and what strange fortune befell him thereafter. In fifty various tongues the legend of Nectanebo was everywhere and always the same, for it had a common Greek original, which remained unimproved until the fourteenth century; and it passed in the Dark Ages for sober, serious history, as indeed did all the Fable of Alexander. The Byzantine chroniclers of the decadence² gravely assert that the Egyptian, not Philip, was the father of Alexander the Great; and this belief seems to have been held seriously from the time of the Emperor Constantius until the fourteenth century. The first denial of so piquant a scandal is to be found in French. Albéric de Besançon is moved to repudiate indignantly the popular tale:

Dicunt aliquant estrobatour
quel reys fud filz d'encantatour :
mentant fellon losengetour ;
mal en credreyz nec un de lour,
qu'anz fud de ling d'emperatour
et filz al rey Macedonor.³

¹ *Romance of Alisaunder*, Early Eng. Text Soc., 1867.

² E.g. Syncellus, Glycas, John Malala, and the author of the *Chronicon Pascale*.

³ Albéric de Besançon, stanza 4, edited by P. Meyer, *Alexandre le Grand dans la littérature française du moyen âge*, i. 3 (1886).

But the English appetite for impropriety was less scrupulous, and we find Thomas of Kent and the author of a *farrago* of fact and fable, preserved only in a manuscript at Oxford,⁴ publishing the old libel unashamed.

Here is the common story in brief. Nectanebo, 'after whom Egypt fell from its great honour,' was the greatest of magicians. Did an enemy sail against him, he would pour water into a cauldron and fashion him little ships of clay, and as these fared, so fared the fleet of the foe; so he reigned long in peace. One day, however, came tidings of a great cloud of barbarians, and the king resorted to his usual device; but, lo! the old gods appeared at the helm of the mimic vessels, and Nectanebo knew that the end of the kingdom of Egypt was at hand. Thereupon he shaved his hair and beard, took money in his hand, and came to Pella in Macedonia (but William of Palerne says he fled first to Ethiopia); and his people consulted Serapis and were assured that he would come again to them, not old but young, and put all his enemies under his feet. And this oracle was graven on the pedestal of his statue.

In Pella he lived awhile as an astrologer and prophet, and his fame was noised abroad until at length it reached Queen Olympias, and she came to consult him about her absent lord and hope of offspring. Having been convinced of the magician's power by means of a casket, she is led to believe that she will be visited that night by the god Ammon; and in a dream it comes to pass. Proud and happy, the Queen prays the astrologer that the visitation may be repeated, and he bids her be of good courage and await the god. His heart, however, was full of lust and guile, and he decked himself with the horns and garb of Ammon, and deceived the Queen, and she became great with child. In due course her time was fulfilled, and amid thunders and lightnings and with a mighty cry she gave birth to a boy, whom no one doubted to be son of Philip except Philip himself. The care of the boy was given to Nectanebo the prophet, and years passed by. Now it chanced one day that the tutor and the pupil walked by the edge of a cliff, and the spirit moved Nectanebo to prophesy that Alexander should kill his own father. The boy turned in wrath on the prophet and hurled him over the cliff, but, hearing, as Nectanebo fell, the words 'Thou art my son,' scrambled distracted to the foot of the crag and was taught with Nectanebo's dying breath the true story of the visitation of the Queen. Thereupon he took up his father's corpse and brought it to Olympias and related the magician's story, and with all honour they laid in a Macedonian grave the Egyptian whose Macedonian son was to lie one day in Egypt.

So in outline runs the tale of Nectanebo. Fill it up with flying dragons and all manner of marvels, and you have the last of the

⁴ Douce MS. 299, in the Bodleian Library.

Pharaohs as our forefathers heard of him at village junketings and by tavern fires in the fourteenth century. They never thought of the magician as a real king who lived and reigned in the middle of the fourth century B.C., nor would such a reflexion have interested them in the least had it occurred. And now in the nineteenth century we have forgotten all about the magician, but record in our dreary annals of ancient Egypt that one Nekhtneb, who took the royal name Kheper-ka-Ra, which a greater king of the twelfth dynasty had borne two thousand years before, established his throne towards 862 B.C. and, being defeated by the Persians about the year 545,⁵ vanished into Ethiopia, and was the last of the native Pharaohs.

What manner of man was this king? Like all his predecessors, lords of a land where literature hardly existed, Nectanebo is personally almost unknown and his annals are obscure. The veil has been lifted indeed from his life for a moment by a contemporary Athenian, and by two Greek chroniclers of later days. Xenophon comes upon him at the close of the career of his hero, Agesilaus, when, for the first time in history, a Spartan king was fighting other men's battles for hire; and Plutarch encounters him in like manner, opening with a pretty story of the first interview of the envoy of Pharaoh Tachos with the redoubtable Spartan—how Agesilaus was found sitting on the grass eating a homely salad, and awoke such contempt in the Egyptians by his plain living, his short stature, and his limping leg, that Tachos broke faith and gave him only a minor command in his war of revolt against Persia. They knew not, or cared not, that thirty years before the Spartan had shaken the Persian dominion in Asia Minor to its foundations, and had been stayed only by dissensions at home from marching to Susa. But Agesilaus, muttering that he would prove a lion yet, had his revenge when Egypt rose behind Pharaoh under Nekhtneb, son of the viceroy, and part of the army of Syria declared for the pretender. Agesilaus declared for the latter and played a chief part in setting him securely on the throne of Egypt. At first, however, this new Pharaoh knew his man no better than his predecessor, and persisted in contempt; until, a last descendant of the Mendesian dynasty having shown himself in the east of the Delta, the Spartan proved himself at Tanis a very scourge of war. Nectanebo doubted no longer: he loaded Agesilaus with favours, and put him at his own right hand.⁶ We are told that, on the Spartan's recommendation, the Egyptian received the Greek astronomer, Eudoxus, and introduced him to the priests, and, when his throne was secure and Agesilaus would return to Sparta, was

⁵ The demotic chronicle of Paris (extracts published by E. Bevilout in *Rev. Égypt.* 1880-5) assigns to Nectanebo II a reign of eighteen years in all.

⁶ Diog. Laert. viii. 8, 87.

lavish in giving. But it was not fated that the old hero should revisit his fatherland in life, for he died on the march to Cyrene, where his troops were to have embarked, and it was his corpse only, lapped in wax, that was borne back to hollow Lacedaemon.

Thenceforward we know little of Nectanebo's reign until its closing scene, merely the bare fact that, with the aid of a mercenary Greek army led by a Spartan and an Athenian, he held his own against successive attempts by the Persians to regain their lost dependency. At last, however, after some eighteen years, the Great King of Susa put forth his full strength and came with all his royal train⁷ and a greatly superior force to the eastern frontier of Egypt. Skirting the walls of Pelusium with its garrison of five thousand Greeks, he advanced to the Pelusiac Nile and there found Nectanebo in a strong position, with a fleet on the river and twenty thousand Greeks and more Libyans and Egyptians holding the fords. Diodorus tells us that the Egyptian's army was good, but Pharaoh, though stout-hearted, a poor general at best. The Argive mercenaries of Persia forced a passage: Nectanebo fled incontinently to Memphis, and Pelusium, stoutly held until the game was up, surrendered. As always happens in eastern warfare, once the king retreats, the defence collapses; the Greeks and Egyptians of the cities in the Delta vied in opening their gates to the foe, and when Bubastis was so betrayed, Nectanebo left his newly fortified capital and fled into Ethiopia, never to reappear in history. The Persians retook all Egypt, sacked its shrines, and carried off their sacred records, which were ransomed later at a heavy price by the priests.

So much, or rather so little, do we learn from the bald narrative of Diodorus, supplemented here and there, and here and there confirmed, by the biographies of Agesilaus and stray allusions in tacticians and anecdotists.

What befell Nectanebo later belongs to romance, for even sober chroniclers like Eutychius⁸ (who calls him *Pharaoh Shanak*), while they state that he fled to Macedonia, but do not commit themselves to the scandal about Queen Olympias, had in all probability no other authority than the Pseudo-Callisthenes or one of its versions. Nectanebo vanished so quickly and so utterly that stories were sure to gather round his name. Athenaeus⁹ quotes one (on the authority of Lynceus), to the effect that he was really taken captive by the Persians and brought to Babylon; and doubtless the last of the Pharaohs was credited very early with such a misty immortality as Barbarossa enjoyed.

If we turn, however, to the monuments, although we learn little of Nectanebo's annals—for of all barren and fallacious sources of annals monuments are the barrenest and most fallacious—we

See Longinus, 43.

⁸ *Ann.* p. 267.

⁹ *iv.* p. 150.

gain an impression of the creative power and wide authority of this last Pharaoh, for which literature hardly prepares us. M. Naville, who found at Saft-el-Henneh fragments of a fine *naos* of Nectanebo's construction, of which two sides had been conveyed already to Bulak, besides a cornice at Horbeit and many other remains elsewhere in the Delta, says: ¹⁰ 'Certain it is that in the whole course of my Delta explorations the names of the two Nectanebos are among those which I found most frequently, as well as those of Ramses II and Ptolemy Philadelphus.' He remarks further, that the work of the Sebennytic Dynasty, 'more vigorous than the Psammetichi, less delicate than the Saites, had a decided tendency to revert to the stern beauty of the works of the great Pharaohs.' As we have said, Nectanebo II adopted a royal name from the great twelfth dynasty, and 'the wise and intelligent who treads under his feet the Asiatics, who fights for Egypt against the rebels of the provinces,' ¹¹ reopened the quarries of Assuan and the Hammamat, and comported himself like a mighty Pharaoh of the olden times, ere the New Empire had arisen in Thebes. There are many of his monuments in European museums, probably from the Delta for the most part, such as a fine sandstone sphinx in the Louvre, a lion in Berlin, two lions found in the Baths of Diocletian at Rome, and fragments of four statues now in Paris, London, Nantes, and Rome. ¹² Especially at his native town, Sebennytus, did he erect buildings, being warned in a dream on the twenty-first Pharmuthi in the sixteenth year of his reign.

But it is not only in the Delta that we meet with his name and monuments. His cartouches appear at Abydos and Crocodilopolis and Thebes, at the entering in of the small temple of Thothmes III at Medinet Habu, and again in Karnak. A *bas relief* of his was found at Coptos, and in the Wady Hammamat, hard by, there is a panel carved in the third year of his reign. Still higher up the river notable monuments of Nectanebo exist; for example, the outer pylon of the Isis temple at Philae and the graceful chapel at the south-western corner of the colonnade bear his cartouches. On this isle of Philae, indeed, he is the earliest builder known to us; and we may credit, therefore, the incapable general and immoral magician at least with the conception of using one of the most lovely sites in the world, and with the origination of Egypt's most exquisite group of buildings.

Needless to say, these monuments tell us nothing directly—at Saft-el-Henneh and Medinet Habu alike we learn only that the king warred against Arabian tribesmen, a fact which we might safely have taken for granted—but their wide range and their

¹⁰ Saft-el-Henneh, pp. 3 ff. (*Memoirs of Egypt Exploration Fund*).

¹¹ Translation of inscription on the Saft-el-Henneh *naos*.

¹² See Wiedemann's list, *Aegypt. Gesch.* ii. 716.

character indirectly imply much. We do not find the names of the Saïtes scattered commonly about Upper Egypt, nor the Theban cartouches, with the exception of those of the very greatest kings of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, commonly in the Delta. But these Sebennytics of the thirtieth range impartially from the sea-marshes to the gates of Nubia, and especially the last of the dynasty and of all native Pharaohs, Nekhtneb Kheper-ka-Ra, Nectanebo the magician.

And here let me introduce with all reserve a new witness. The demotic chronicle of Paris, translated in part by M. Revillout, has a good deal of a vague sort to say about Nectanebo II. Written in the Ptolemaic period, it seems to supply in a sense the link between the king of history and the king of romance. Its compiler evidently regarded the last Pharaoh as the greatest of all the later kings; the old prophecies of a great deliverer, who should save Egypt from the Medes, which he quotes and interprets, he refers all to Nectanebo. *C'est le chef qui viendra après eux pour accomplir les destinées de Memphis*: he shall be (and the compiler admits that he was) a great king, proud and magnificent. But Nemesis strikes him down in his vain glory (here we seem to detect the touch of a Greek hand); he flies to Ethiopia, and the chronicler says of him finally, *Celui qui s'en est allé en Éthiopie a établi déshonneur sur son nom. On lui a fait honte en Éthiopie: on lui a fait honte à lui-même. On lui a fait honte à son fils.*

I do not put this witness forward to testify to the real history of the king, seeing that both the authorship and the translation of the chronicle are not beyond question, but in the present connexion it serves to show that Nectanebo was of great importance in the eyes of posterity, and that stories were gathering about his name before the Christian era.

Moreover, there is a hint conveyed by the remains of his reign and more than a hint in literature that the last Pharaoh played a part in developing a new order as well as in imitation of great predecessors. The problem most full of interest to the modern world among all those connected with ancient Egypt concerns the opening out of the secret inhospitable land, whose civilisation, priestridden and emasculated by the regularity of the natural conditions of life, in the words of Hegel, sat immovable as one of its own colossi, a Memnon ever waiting for the Dawn. Only when considered as flowing, or about to flow, through the channel of Jew or Greek, into the main stream of civilisation, which runs deepening and broadening to ourselves, do Egypt and its art and its history stimulate a higher craving than a fine intellectual curiosity; and, therefore, we must place Nectanebo far higher in the scale of history if he did something, however little, to introduce Greeks to his kingdom, than if, like his predecessors, he had

scourged the Bedouin of Libya or Arabia and raided the blacks of the Sudan, and commemorated such achievements on towering pylons with all the glorious exultation that an Alexander might have displayed on the further bank of Hydaspes.

There has been quoted already a bald statement made by Diogenes Laertius, that Nectanebo, for the respect he bore Agesilaus, recommended the astronomer, Eudoxus, and his companion, Chrysippus, to the Egyptian priests.

The Greek seems to have made a serious study of this old sacerdotal system of astronomy, mixed up inextricably with the legend and practice of sun-worship, and applied to no better purposes than the casting of horoscopes or the fixing of festivals. We are told that he shaved his head and chin, so as to become an Egyptian among the Egyptians, and studied for a year and a half with one Chonuphis in Heliopolis; and Strabo says that, one time taken with another, he dwelt eleven years in the valley of the Nile. Curious visitors and inquiring globe-trotters had been there before him, but he is the first Greek of whom it is recorded that he was a student in Egypt.

The scanty notices of this Eudoxus tell us that, like all his contemporaries, he was filled with deep reverence for the hoary learning of the priests, and, furthermore, that afterwards he won no small reverence himself in his own country because he, first of the Greeks, had penetrated the secrets of Egypt. Modern astronomical critics, from Delambre¹³ onwards, have been inclined to hint that the most part of Eudoxus' reputation was based, indeed, on his supposed possession of esoteric knowledge; for the metrical version of his 'Phenomena' by Aratus fails wholly to support his claim to genuine scientific fame. Probably he derived nothing that was useful from the Egyptians, save an improved solar-lunar cycle, such as served them for the better ordering of their festivals and the supporting of their pretence to rule the Nile and the seasons; but being superstitious and having lived long under the Circean charm of Egypt, he assimilated a mass of lore about the inner meaning of constellations and all the subject of astrology, which in the day of Greek decline came to stand him in better stead with fame than the discovery of the spherical nature of the earth or the borrowed luminosity of the moon served Thales, or that of the planetary motion of the earth served Pythagoras.

Nevertheless, the inheritor of those scientific traditions, and withal of Nicetas's theory that the earth's revolution accounted for the apparent motion of the stars, and of the Metonic cycle, must have come strangely at first to the rigid school of Egypt, where it was not permitted to inquire into astronomy as a science, but a certain immemorial doctrine of the earth and the heavens was promulgated

¹³ See his *Hist. de l'Astronomie ancienne*, i. ch. 4.

as a creed unaltered and unalterable, much as at the Azhar in Cairo in these days; and one cannot but fancy that, ere his own eyes were dimmed by the Nilotic mirage, he opened those of at least a few other men, modifying a little their fossil tradition, as western men of science have done in the same study in China, and Franks do in medicine, at least, whenever they come into contact with the doctors of Islam. At any rate, in his introduction of northern science, Nectanebo may be said to have shown no jealousy of foreign culture, but a willingness to confront his priests with it, as Mehemet Ali might have confronted the sheikhs of the Azhar with the western.

Furthermore, we know that King Nectanebo maintained for sixteen years in Egypt a large force of Greek men-at-arms, under two captains, a Spartan and an Athenian; and a very significant fact is recorded of this force in Diodorus's jejune narrative of the final reconquest of the Delta by the Persians. '*All the cities,*' says the chronicler, '*were held by two nationalities, Greek and Egyptian.*' At this epoch, then, the Hellene in Egypt is no longer confined to his little treaty-port of Naucratis beyond the western Nile, nor is contained in fortresses at Daphnae on the fringe of the eastern desert or in Memphis; but he is present in every town of the Delta. The introduction of Greek mercenaries by the first Saite dynasty and the reliance of subsequent kings on those foreigners to maintain their throne and wage their wars in Syria and Nubia; the kindly reception given by Amasis to distinguished Greeks, his relations with potentates and shrines of Hellas and marriage with a Cyrenian—these are facts to which attention has often been invited. If the demotic chronicle, already quoted, is to be treated as an authority, the corps of Greeks eventually dispossessed the temples in Memphis, Bubastis, and Heliopolis of their best lands, and played a great and hateful part in the history of the Nile valley until the Persian conquest. The kings relied wholly upon, and oppressed the Nilots with, these haughty janissaries. They are encouraged to establish their gods in Egypt: *ils ont laissés la mort après eux: on ne la chassera plus.*¹⁴ Nor has it escaped historians that at a later period, when the Africans revolted against Persia, both the Libyan chieftains who began, and the Nilots who made good, the liberation of Egypt, established and maintained themselves chiefly by Greek aid. They invited Athenian fleets, collected Hellenic men-at-arms, were assiduous to mingle in Greek affairs, and, like Amasis, welcomed such as Herodotus or Plato, who came to see their land.¹⁵ There is an evident advance in Hellenism made by all these native dynasties of the fifth and fourth centuries beyond what had been

¹⁴ Revillout's translation.

¹⁵ The few facts known about these phil-Hellenic princes have been set forth often and recently by Professor P. Gardner in his *New Chapters in Greek History*, vii.

foreseen by the Saïtes. No longer was it a matter of a band of alien prætorians, but the kings, and no doubt the great nobles, introduced the Hellenic arts of peace. It is not the origination of a marked phil-Hellenic policy, but an especial part in its further development, that we claim for Nectanebo II. We have far too little authority to proceed to define his part; let it only stand recorded that at the end of his reign there were Greeks in every city of the Delta.

It is just here that we would fain call archæology to our aid. There is a strong *a priori* probability, since Greek soldiers had been present for centuries and had come to garrison all the land, that some of the life of Hellas was breathed into the dry bones of Egypt. *A posteriori*, too, the ease with which Alexander conquered the valley of the Nile, its complete quiescence under his lieutenants, mostly Greeks, and the almost instantaneous adoption under the first Ptolemy of Greek political and municipal organisation, Greek writing, Greek coinage, Greek commercial ideas, Greek art and literature—these facts suggest that the Hellene was no stranger in Egypt. It would, indeed, be an interesting inquiry—did material exist to determine it—how far Soter found Hellenic ideas already implanted in the Nile valley when he came to power. Unfortunately, however, it is in the fifth and fourth centuries that archæological material fails us most completely in Egypt; partly, no doubt, because it was an age of transition, unsettled and unquiet; partly, too, because sites of that period, likely to be at all instructive, lie in the rainy Delta, ten times more a prey to natural decay and to destruction by man's device than sites in Upper Egypt; but partly also because very little systematic research has been devoted to such sites or to this period anywhere. Mr. Petrie's excavations at Daphnae and Naucratis are not very helpful in this particular matter. Daphnae ceased to be a Greek settlement about 560 B.C., and its exploration has taught us nothing of importance about the Hellenic race in Egypt that we did not know before, except one very notable fact, that there were present in the camp-town, while it subsisted, not merely Hellenic soldiers, but Hellenic artificers and artists as well. But, up to the present, evidence of their handiwork or their influence is still to seek on other and longer-inhabited sites. Naucratis gives us, however, one piece of negative evidence not without significance. Mr. Petrie observed that nearly all the pottery, which he found on the site, must be dated before a point not long posterior to the beginning of the Persian period in Egypt. If such is the case with the pottery, then such it will be with the other and more uncertain remains as well; and this fact, taken with the evident ruin which the explorer discovered to have taken place before the Ptolemaic restoration, makes it certain that Naucratis began to decline in the fifth century. Never a great city, it had seen its best days even when Herodotus visited it, and in the fourth century was of but little account. How

came this to be? Greek influence was not less in Egypt; we know that it increased. The centre of power did not shift from the Delta, for it remained in Marea, Mendes, and Sebennytus. The true explanation, in all likelihood, is that Egypt came to be opened far more generally to Greeks. Greek skippers began to visit other ports, enter other mouths of the Nile, and trade directly with Egyptians and their own countrymen, now settled all over the Delta; and Naucratis, removed as it was far inland and on the east, did not commend itself to mariners or merchants when its legal monopoly existed no longer.

More instructive for our purpose would be positive evidence from sites not known already to be distinctively Greek—remains, for example, of late black-figure and red-figure pottery from all the Delta. There is hope still. Huge sites like those of Sais, Mendes, Sebennytus, or Buto have not been thoroughly ransacked—hardly searched at all for Hellenic or Hellenized remains. In the north of the Delta there is a large field almost virgin—all that swampy region round Lake Burlus, extending from Rosetta to Mansurah, in which numerous mounds stand up like islands in a sea. Some of these hillocks yet may yield us the evidence we want, for in their region the Greeks must have settled most. And something more still may be learned perhaps from finds already made, but disregarded; and much evidence, no doubt, has perished. Great as is the debt which history owes to the early explorers in Egypt, to Mariette above all, it would be far greater had they had wider knowledge, more catholic sympathies, and a better conception of the function of the excavator. Of too many diggers it is no injustice to say that they destroyed ten pieces of evidence where they established one. Careless of what did not concern their own special study, or had no immediate bearing on investigations in which they or their circle were engaged, they often allowed their diggers to cover up, steal, or destroy what now we should account to be of more value than what they preserved.

Among the numerous relics of Saite art, which make up the most part of Egyptian collections in museums, it has been found possible to trace the dawn of Greek refinement and idealism. Some day, perhaps, we may have enough relics of Sebennytic art to follow out the further development of these happy influences in a period before the Ptolemaic. In the lightness, almost excessive, and the superior grace of the colonnade of the terminal chapel at Philae we seem to detect the Greek; and certain it is that this building and Nectanebo's screen at Medinet Habu, did they not bear his cartouches, would be ascribed to Ptolemaic architects. In brief, the development which marks Pharaonic architecture under the hands of the Greek artists from Alexandria, was beginning already before Alexandria was founded. Did Greeks plan and build also for Nectanebo?

We may take leave, then, of the last of the Pharaohs with the assurance that he was far from being a nobody among Pharaohs. He ruled once more over all Egypt like a king of the olden time, and was enlightened above his fathers; and romance may be credited with having done something to preserve from an ill-deserved obscurity the name of Nekhtneb Kheper-ka-Ra. It would be over-bold, however, to conclude that the magician owes his fame, otherwise than remotely, to the real merit of the king. The reason of the latter's existence in the realm of romance has afforded a theme for much curious speculation. A few have advocated the simple view that the king was in fact an adept in sorcery, notorious in his generation—a view incapable equally of proof or disproof. Wiedemann suggests that an obscure god Nekhtbaau, whose name, not infrequently found in magical books, is enclosed sometimes in a cartouche, has imparted a spurious reputation to Nekhtneb; but the two names are not easily to be confounded, and, furthermore, it is more than probable that the originators of the legend knew nothing whatever about Nekhtbaau. Far more consonant with the spirit of folklore is the view of the best editors and critics of the romance,¹⁶ that Nectanebo is exalted by a pious Egyptian fiction to be father of Alexander in order to salve national *amour-propre*, like the princess who was credited with the conception of the earlier conqueror Cambyses.¹⁷ Nectanebo, defeated but not done with, has a second *avatar*, like our own Arthur and a host of heroes of lost causes in all ages and all lands.

Egyptian patriotism, perhaps, was sensitive enough to call for such an opiate; it had held its own once and again in the face of all Persia, and it was treated with all respect by the Ptolemies. The romance, redolent of Rome and Christianity though our earliest version of it¹⁸ be, may well preserve traditions current long before in Egypt; for it seems to hail in part at least from Alexandria, whose foundation¹⁹ and constitution it describes at length, and

¹⁶ E.g. K. Müller in the preface to his edition of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*; Paul Meyer in the introduction to his *Alexandre le Grand dans la littérature française du moyen âge*; M. Favre, *Recherches sur l'hist. fab. d'Alexandre le Grand*, &c.

¹⁷ Herodotus, iii. 2.

¹⁸ The *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, as we have it in our best manuscript, the Paris A, is not later than the fifth century A.D., nor much earlier than the third. Its text is very chaotic and diverges much in different manuscripts and in its Latin versions; but as neither Greek nor Latin manuscripts are earlier than the ninth century A.D. we can draw no better conclusion than that an archetype existed earlier than that date, better than our best version. A critical edition of the Greek text is devoutly to be desired. Much might be done by comparison of the main versions and epitomes like that in the library of Corpus, Oxon., and the scholar would be led into some delightful by-ways of romance. Something has been done by the Germans, Zacher, Landgraf, and K. Müller (editor of Arrian in the Firmin-Didot series); but there is a fair field still wherein to win a name and fame.

¹⁹ For example, Paris A gives a list of fifteen villages, besides Rakotis, existent previously on the site of Alexandria. The names, albeit corrupted, seem to have

whose *colluries gentium* is represented fitly by its jumble of ideas and phrases—Jewish, Roman, and Greek. We have remarked already that the demotic chronicle of Paris proves that stories had grown up early about the last of the Pharaohs, and it would not have affected the growth of a folktale after a generation, or its inclusion in romantic literature, that Nectanebo was still on the throne of Egypt ten years later than Alexander's birth, for was not the latter held in Persia to have been begotten by Darius Ochus on a daughter of Philip, ere she was sent back to her father for the foulness of her breath? ²⁰ Moreover scandal had smirched the fair fame of Alexander's mother in her lifetime. She herself, in the ecstasy of Thracian orgie, boasted her child son of a god, and her husband called the boy a bastard, and disgraced him with his mother.

Nevertheless it must be admitted that there is really no sort of necessity to find so studious a motive for such a fairy tale as this of the Pseudo-Callisthenes. Really nothing more is required than the natural decay of that famous pretence, promulgated devoutly by Alexander's successors, if not by himself, that he was son of Ammon. In the centuries of little faith, that immediately preceded and followed the Christian era, no one believed much in deities, but every one believed in magic. For what once gods did directly human agents came to be preferred, and the last Egyptian Pharaoh took inevitably the place of the Egyptian god. Nectanebo may have won already a place in folklore, if not by the merits of his reign, at least by the strange and sudden ending of it; but, after all, the popular mind under the early Empire needed only to be assured that he was an Egyptian to accord him also the credit of being a magician.

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been originally genuine Egyptian forms. See on several points in the romance, G. Lumbroso's article in his *Egitto al tempo dei Greci e dei Romani*.

²⁰ D'Herbelot, *Bibl. Or.* s.v. 'Escandre.' See also Favre, *op. cit.* p. 10.