A PRELIMINARY CLASSIFICATION OF SOME MSS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

In the course of editing the Galland and the Vatican MSS (hereafter G and V) of the Arabian Nights it has shown itself necessary to make some attempt towards an appraise­ment and genealogical classification of the other evidence, manuscript and printed. This investigation is not yet, by any means, complete; but the time seems come for at least a preliminary statement of the results so far reached. It may, perhaps, lead other students of the subject to com­municate information as to MSS which are as yet unknown or insufficiently described and catalogued.

In J.R.A.S. for 1909 (pp. 685–704) I dealt in detail with Habicht's edition (Breslau, 1825–38, completed by Fleischer, 1842–3), and there showed, from his MSS, that this was a recension which he had himself constructed, and that there existed no such thing as a Tunisian MS or re­cension. His edition must be resolved into its component parts, that is the different MSS which he used, and these must be referred to their places in the general classification. Habicht "willfully created a literary myth and enormously confused the history of the Nights."

Another divergent printed text, the classification of which has given much difficulty, is that commonly called "The I Calcutta," or "The Calcutta Edition of the first 200 Nights" (Calcutta, 2 vols., 1814, 1818). I can now prove that it is a descendant of the Galland MS; the proof will come below.

All the other printed texts, with the exception of some separate stories and fragments, belong to the recension which Zotenberg, in the Notice prefixed to his "Histoire d'Alâ al-Dîn," called "la rédaction égyptienne" (hereafter Z.E.R.). He considered that the complete text "n'a reçu sa forme actuelle qu'à une époque assez récente" (p. 52/217).

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Of this recension the I Bûlâq Edition (A.H. 1251, A.D. 1835) is, in general, the best representative; the II Calcutta Edition (1839–42) is often fuller, but it can be shown that the editors have expanded it from I Calcutta and from Habicht's Breslau text. We have therefore no assurance that a plus in it stood in the MS brought from Egypt by Major Turner Macan. It is demonstrable, also, that the different MSS of this recension differ in details among them­selves. Proof of this will come hereafter.

I turn now to the MSS. To classify the MSS of a book like the Nights, or to begin a classification of them, it is neces­sary to find a passage of difficulty as to sense which seems to call for emendation. I think I have found such a passage in the Story of the Fisherman and the Jinni, which I printed fourteen years ago from G, in the Noldke Fest­schrift (pp. 357–383). It will be remembered that that story breaks into two parts having only a most mechanical connection with one another. The first part posits a Jinni contemporary with Solomon, imprisoned by him in a brass qun­guent, and thus cut off from all contact with the world, who knows about a certain enchanted lake with enchanted fish in it, near the sea-shore where he is himself fished up. These fish are white, red, blue and yellow and have a covenant with a beautiful damsel and with a black slave. If any one tries to cook them, then, at the moment when they are turned in the pan, either the damsel or the black slave appears— which one comes seems to depend on whether the cook is a woman or a man—and asks if they hold to the covenant. They reply, "Yes, yes, if ye do it again, we will do it again, and if ye keep faith, we will keep faith; and if ye desert, we have done likewise." Apparently this answer is displeasing, for the fish are then overturned into the fire and are burned black. Further, the fisherman gets only four fish at each cast of his net, and is warned not to cast more than once in a day. As a matter of fact he does so three times in one day and nothing happens.

In the second part there is a lake with fish of four colours in it and there is a queen and a black slave. But

1 On p. 47/213, he says that all these MSS were transcribed at the beginning of the XIXth century, or the end of the XVIIIth, and that they all derive from one single, original text, "dont la rédaction n'est peut-être pas de beaucoup antérieure."
that is all. There is no covenant, no explanation of the
cooking scenes, and the people are contemporaries of the
fisherman and of his world. The first part has evidently a
folk-lore motif, on which I will not enter now; the second
part is a quite normal Muslim story of feminine depravity
and enchantment. That the second part is the original
ending of the first I cannot believe; that original ending
must have been lost, and I think that it is just possible that
the second part was roughly adjusted to the first by a
change in the nature of the enchantment.

However all that may be, the join comes between the
king's marching out with his army and court and finding the
lake between the four hills, on the one hand, and the story
told to the king by the young king of the Black Isles, on
the other. At this story-telling "fault" I have chosen my
passage. The king determines to set out alone and
investigate for himself the story which must lie behind the
fish and the lake. He thus addresses his wazir, in G
(Night 20, vol. i, F. 27b; p. 373, ll. 13 ff. in my print in the
Noldeke Festschrift):

وفي غداة غيض باسل فاى على يد خفته واحد لامير البلاد
مشوش، وقرر ان لا أمر على احداً، وسأط من التدخل عليه ولا
لزم اخباره، وقرر من يردوا، واستنانتان ثلاث ايام، قبل الربيع
الإمبراطورية، والسمع والنظر وكان امران ان السلطان تجوز ودته
عليه، وقرد بسيف البلاد، واجلى من أحد جبال البرج، حتى يرمع عليه
ومن يردوا، وقرر من يردوا، وقرر من يردوا، وقرر من يردوا،
وأمدد على صمت الجبل، فذكر وردت قد قرر له ساود من بعد قلال صاحب الحديث
فاى قات فرعه وقدمه...

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عليه، وقرد بسيف البلاد، واجلى من أحد جبال البرج، حتى يرمع عليه
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وأمدد على صمت الجبل، فذكر وردت قد قرر له ساود من بعد قلال صاحب الحديث
فاى قات فرعه وقدمه....

The nearest folk-lore parallel to it in my knowledge is what is called
in Scottish Gaelic "Taghaim," probably meaning "spirit call." It
consisted in roasting cats alive on spits, until the devil appeared and granted
the wishes of those who dared so to force him. This parallel, I may say,
was approved by the late Professor Chauvin, who wrote to me that he had
always been puzzled by the story. On Taghaim see especially John
Gregorson Campbell, Superstitions of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland
(Glasgow, 1900), pp. 304 ff. and, also, Note 27 to Scott's Lady of the Lake.
The story stimulated the imagination of later Muslim story tellers; I know
several other forms of it, all derivative. It seems to have suggested, also, to
Keats his "to draw his magic fish through hated fire and flame"
(Endymion, iii, 264-5).
It is plain that this MS does not belong to ZER, for there Ghanim follows Anis al-Jalîs, and thereafter comes immediately the romance of 'Umar an-Nu'mân. Here a whole volume with two parts comes between. But that arrangement connects it with another class of MSS. In the Tübingen University Library there is a MS (No. 32) of this same romance of 'Umar, dated by Seybold (Versuchnis, p. 75) at latest at the beginning of the XVth century. It consists of 290 leaves out of an original 219, numbered 286 to 506. It professes to be a second volume (kitâb) of the Nights, and Part (juz') VII to XIII; the Nights are 283-542. Seybold unfortunately does not state what are the intercalated stories. Again, in the Rylands Library there is another MS of this romance (Arabic 706). Like the Tübingen MS it is very old and a large folio and has lost quite a number of its leaves. It begins on F. 31 (original numberings) in Part VI, Night 251 and ends on F. 263 in Part XII. The story of 'Umar an-Nu'mân begins on F. 52a, Night 281, and extends to the end of the MS; it includes...
the stories of Tāj al-Mulūk and of Ghānim. The first part of the MS contains a story which I did not recognize when I examined it in Sept., 1814.

I conjecture that these three MSS represent an early recension of the Nights in which the contents of G formed the first quarter and the story of 'Umar formed the second quarter of the whole; it was earlier and quite different from ZER. The Christ Church MS mentioned by Jonathan Scott, in the preface to his edition of Galland (vol. i, p. x, ed. of 1811) may also be of this recension. It is of the story of 'Umar and contains Part viii of the Nights: the Nights are not numbered. But I know no evidence which can decide whether, when G came from Egypt, it was part of such a complete recension, or whether it came as a fragment and this recension was a Syrian expansion.

The treatment, as to intercalation, of the story of 'Umar is somewhat similar in the two Paris MSS, which Zotenberg described in his Notice, pp. 17/183 ff. and 21/187 ff.

I give now the text of our passage in the Madrid MS (F. 49a, ll. 3-9):

وَآمَنَيْنِ أَنَّ لا أَعْتَّلُ إِحْدَى دُوَاهُ الْيَوْمِ عَلَيْهِ وَلَا تَعْمَرُ أَحْيَاً

The Sultan draws his sword and mounts one of the hills. He walks (تَمْسَكَ) all that night until dawn. This is evidently derivative from G, by a scribe who abbreviates but also thinks for himself. I know no other version quite like it.

It may be convenient to describe here, so far as I can, another MS of the Aleppo group although I cannot give its reading of our passage. It is well known that Sir William Jones possessed a MS of the Nights of considerable extent. He refers to it in the preface (p. iv) to his "Poems," published anonymously at Oxford in 1772; "the Arabian tales of A Thousand and one nights, a copy of which work in

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Arabick was procured for me by a learned friend at Aleppo." Dr Patrick Russell was at Aleppo from 1750 to 1771 and may have been the "learned friend" in question. In Lord Teignmouth's Life of Sir William Jones there are other references to his study of the Nights, especially with the assistance of a native of Aleppo whom he met accidentally in London and took with him to Oxford; see pp. 32, 33, 36, 111 of the ed. of 1804. Extracts from his MS have appeared in Richardson's Grammar of the Arabick Language, pp. 200-209 (ed. of 1776); and in the 20 pp. printed by Joseph White, Laudian Professor of Arabic at Oxford from 1775 to 1814, as a specimen of a projected edition of the Nights; see for this specimen Schnurrer's Bibli. Arabica, p. 487. From these it is evident that the MS was in substantial agreement, as to reading and division into Nights, with G, being closer to it than I Calcutta, to which I have already referred. Unfortunately this MS has, at present, been lost sight of. At the death of Sir William Jones in 1794 it did not pass to the India Office Library with his other oriental MSS, but was evidently retained by Lady Jones. At her death her library was sold at auction at Evans's, May 10th, 1831, and this MS was bought by the Persian scholar Nathaniel Bland. At his death in 1865 his oriental MSS were bought by the Earl of Crawford (D.N.B., Suppl. i, 216) and it might, therefore, be looked for in the John Rylands Library, Manchester; but it is not there. In the auction catalogue it is described as a quarto, two vols, bound in one, containing 222 Nights.

I have already referred, more than once, to the I Calcutta Edition (Calcutta, 2 vols., 1814, 1818; ii lithogr. ed. in one vol., Calcutta, 1829). The text of our passage runs in it (vol. i, pp. 124 f.):

فَأَعَلَسْ أَنَّ فِي عَيْشِي هَكَيْناً تُمَثِّلُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَا تَعْمَرُ أَحْيَاً

I am indebted for this clue to the sagacity and kindness of Mr William Roberts, the well-known bibliographer and authority on the history of art. The certainty with which he put his hand on the Evans's Sale Catalogue in the British Museum Library seems to me as magical as anything in the Nights.
We have, therefore, three witnesses for a practically identical text. (i) A text printed in Calcutta in 1814-18, "under the patronage of the College of Fort William," and edited by "Shuekh Uhmud bin Moohummud Shirwanceool Yumunee of the Arabic department" in that college. Edouard Gauttier refers to him in the preface (pp. xi f.) to his edition of Galland (Paris, 1822) as "Le Mollah Pirouz." The Mulla expresses the opinion in a Persian note of introduction to his edition that the tales were written by a Syrian Arab for the instruction of Europeans who wished to learn Arabic. In this he follows an Arabic preface to (ii), the Russell MS. This MS was brought by Dr Russell from Aleppo where he was resident physician to the English Factory from 1750 to 1771. Thereafter he was in India, principally at Madras (1781-89) as botanist to the East India Company. (iii) The India Office Library MS came from the library of John Leyden, the friend of Sir Walter Scott. He reached Madras on the 19th of August, 1803, and remained there until 1805; he lived at Calcutta at different times, principally 1806-10, and died at Java, August 28th, 1811. He may have met Patrick Russell in London as he stayed there a few months studying oriental languages before sailing for India. Earlier still he had studied Arabic at Edinburgh during his vacations. Patrick Russell's letter to Sylvanus Urban (Gentleman's Magazine, February, 1799, pp. 91 f.) had drawn wide attention to his MS of the Nights and had shown also how much attention was being paid at the time to the general subject of the Nights. John Leyden must have been following all that.

There can be no doubt that these three are connected and there can be no reasonable doubt that the Russell MS is the source of the other two. But exactly how, where and when these two were derived from the Russell MS is not so easy to decide. That I Calcutta is not based immediately on either seems certain. Its editor evidently intended to put one hundred Nights into each volume and he had difficulty in making out two volumes. Yet the India Office MS has 281 Nights and ends like G and V in the story of Qamar az-Zamān, and the one volume, so far found, of the Russell MS has 141 Nights, while, in his letter, Dr Russell says that his MS has 280 Nights. The editor of I Calcutta
has had to pad out his first volume at the end with the story of the marriage of al-Ma'min and Burān (Nights 94-100; pp. 398-430); the source of his text has not been determined; it is fuller than any other form of this story in the Nights. His second volume he has padded with the story of the Guile of Women (Nights 196-209; pp. 367-378). He then added for good measure Sindbad the Sailor, pp. 378-458, not divided into Nights. Guile of Women and Sindbad he got from Langlès' edition, Les Voyages de Sindbad le Marin et la Rose des Femmes (Paris, 1814); both are also in an appendix to Savary's Grammaire de la Langue arabe which was edited by Langlès in 1813. That this was his source was stated by Gauttier in the preface to his edition of Galland (vol. i, p. xx) and De Goeje showed the same recension. But the Indian editor must have touched and separately) that Langles and I Calcutta were of the same recension. But the Indian editor must have touched up the style and introduced slight modifications from the point of view of the teacher of Arabic. That was evidently his attitude, and I suspect that he so dealt with his whole book. It becomes, therefore, very difficult to say whether any differences between the texts, of change, addition or omission, are due to this pedagogical attitude or to the MS which he used. It is plain, however, that his MS was defective at the end of the Porter cycle of stories. I Calcutta omits entirely the second Lady (al-mufrada), and an ending had to be invented. So the wronged sister (she of the dogs) disenchantsthe dogs at Harūn's request (p. 302, Il. 5 ff. from below). With a view to this possibility she had learned and remembered the formula. Harūn, Jā'far and Masrūr (I) marry the three sisters. This does not give a high impression of the independent story-telling ability of the editor. At the end of the Hunchback cycle there is an equally strange addition. The Barber not only becomes a boon companion of the king but shows himself a magician and a poet (I Calcutta, vol. ii, pp. 186-188; Night 162 = G, vol. iii, F. 38; Night 170).

I now take up the question of the Habicht text or texts. In the Breslau edition, vol. i to the middle of p. 12 (I. 9) is the ordinary ZER text; but there a text begins which is a descendant of G. But in G, in the story of the Merchant and the Jinni, the third Shaykh's story is omitted. That has been inserted here (p. 63, I. 12 to p. 66, I. 1) from ZER. On the margin of V, at this point, there is a similar insertion but abbreviated. At the foot of p. 349 in Night 69 comes the end of the Porter cycle and on p. 350 the story of the Apples begins. But I have already noted, in my article in J.R.A.S. (July, 1909, p. 690) on Habicht's recension, that Habicht's MS reckoned by me as 1b and marked with Library No. ii, 17 is in two parts, coinciding with this division and change of story, and that the first part ends in Night 69, with:

This part of the volume is in a small unidentified modern hand; but the second part is a single gathering written by Habicht and evidently intended to bridge over to his MS volume ii, printed in Breslau, vol. ii. We have here, therefore, a MS, a descendant of G, with Nights numbered as in G, ending, like G, the Porter cycle in Night 69; but following that immediately with the story of the Daughter (i.e. female descendant) of the Kisrā (Chauvain's No. 106).

In A.H. 1115 (A.D. 1703-4) there was finished at Baghdad the transcription of a MS of the Nights in which the first 69 Nights coincided with the first 69 Nights of G. There, then, followed the story of Harūn ar-Rashid and the Daughter of the Kisrā. Other stories followed in a sequence not found elsewhere. Apparently there had come to the transcriber a MS derived from the first 69 Nights of G, and he had continued it freely from other sources. For all this see Zotenberg's Notice, pp. 35/201 ff. This MS is now lost; but was copied in Paris early in the IXth century by Michel Sabbagh for Caussin de Perceval. It must have come into his possession after 1806, for in that year, the year of his edition of Galland's version, he evidently did not yet know it. This copy is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Fonds arabe 4678, 4679; Suppl. ar. 2522, 2523). In 1827 it was used by Fleischer in his article already referred to in criticism of the first vol. of Breslau in J.A., vol. xi, pp. 217 ff.

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1 So the young Fleischer thought in 1827. See his "Remarques critiques" on Habicht's first volume in J.A., vol. xi, p. 222.
From the above it is highly probable that this Baghdad MS lies behind the first vol. of Breslau, and a comparison of our test passage makes it certain. It runs in Breslau (i, p. 116, II. 11 ff.):

Our description by Zotenberg of the Nights is not exactly the same, and ends in the middle of the story of Anis al-Jalfs, I do not know; but that is the fact. It may be proved thus. Zotenberg observed (Notice, p. 6/172) that one leaf was lost from G containing the greater part of Night 102, the whole of Night 103, and some lines of Night 104, and that at the foot of the preceding page (G, vol. ii, F. 29b) and on the margin of the following page a few phrases had been inserted to fill the gap. These phrases are reproduced almost exactly in Ibn Najjar’s MS and in Breslau (vol. ii, p. 123, f. 8, to p. 124, f. 15). Only I do not think, as apparently Zotenberg did, that they were suggested by the context. They seem to be derived from another recension; it is noticeable that ZER has the same recension as G (on the evidence of V) had originally, but omits much of the verse.

I now give the readings of a number of MSS which seem, so far as my present knowledge goes, to be isolated. The most remarkable of them, as to reading, is the Christ Church MS, at Oxford, No. 207 (Kitchin’s Cat., p. 60), which is apparently the same as the C 20 referred to by Jonathan Scott in the preface to his Arabian Nights, vol. i, p. x. Zotenberg (p. 45/211) reckons it in his oriental group and, according to Scott, it gives G’s sequence of stories to the end of the Hunchback cycle; but I do not know how the Nights are numbered. Our passage—for the transcript I am indebted to the kindness of Professor Margoliouth—runs in it:

These three, then, are all descendants from G and are of one type.

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The second part of the Breslau text is derived directly from G. It extends from Night 72 b to Night 208, Breslau, vol. ii, p. 4 to end in Breslau, vol. iii, p. 105, I. 7. This in Habicht’s MS (see my article on him in J.R.A.S., p. 691) is in the hand of Ibn Najjar, his Tunisian friend; but is derived straight from G. Why Ibn Najjar sent a MS to Habicht, which he had copied from G, breaking off abruptly in the middle of the story of Anis al-Jalīs, I do not know; but that is the fact. It may be proved thus. Zotenberg observed (Notice, p. 6/172) that one leaf was lost from G containing the greater part of Night 102, the whole of Night 103, and some lines of Night 104, and that at the foot of the preceding page (G, vol. ii, F. 29b) and on the margin of the following page a few phrases had been inserted to fill the gap. These phrases are reproduced almost exactly in Ibn Najjar’s MS and in Breslau (vol. ii, p. 123, f. 8, to p. 124, f. 15). Only I do not think, as apparently Zotenberg did, that they were suggested by the context. They seem to be derived from another recension; it is noticeable that ZER has the same recension as G (on the evidence of V) had originally, but omits much of the verse.

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This seems to me a derivative attempt to produce a smooth narrative in independent language.

The Wortley-Montague MS in the Bodleian stands also by itself both in contents and in reading of this passage. To the end of the Porter cycle it has apparently the same division and numbering of Nights as G; thereafter is chaos. It is a quite modern MS of the middle of the XvIIIth century (A.H. 1177/8) and shows that even at that date there was not any generally recognized recension of the Nights and that individuals had to form their own. The passage runs (vol. i, p. 89):

آتَرَ الْبَلَادَ تَحْزَبَ وَاتَّقَنَّ بِهِ وَشَاقِنَ مِنَ ِّالَّذِي عَلَى الْبَرْحَةَ حَتَى صَارَ عَلَى ظَهَرِهِ وَمَا بَقِيَ لَهَا ِّالَّذِي فَلَحَ لَهُ سَوَادٌ مِنْ بَعْدِ فَجْرٍ وَلَالٍ لَا عَلَى مِنْ يَضْرِبِّي الْفَضْيَةَ...

I have extracts from two other MSS which are so abbreviated that it is not worth while to transcribe them: the Ouseley MS in the Bodleian (Ous. 242; in Ouseley's Cat. No. 577) and a MS in the India Office Library, Loth 843.

But the readings in a Paris MS are so individual that I give them although I cannot bring them into connection with any other MS. It is Suppl. arabe 1721 iv (Fonds ar. No. 3615; cf. Zotenberg, p. 49/315). Written at the beginning of the XvIIIth century, it came from Egypt and contains the first 210 Nights, agreeing with G in division and numbering of the Nights down to the end of the Hunchback cycle. Thereafter comes Anis al-Jahl; then Zadbakht; then Sindbad. Our passage comes in Night 19 on F. 29b:

فَضَرَ الْبَلَادَ إِلَى أَنَّ الْقَلَمَ أَفْضَلَ سَيْفَ وَخَطَّعَ عَلَى سَلْطَةِ ِّالَّذِي وَسَرَ طُوُّ لَيَتَّهُ فَإِنّا أُصِحَّ عَيْنَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ فَقْصِهِ حَتَّى قَرْبِهِ مَـنْهُ...

This is almost verbatim what stands in I Bûlāq (vol. i, p. 20) except that it omits about a line which tells how the king continued journeying a day and a second night. This may have dropped out through the repetition of the phrase.

I do not take space here to reproduce the printed texts of ZER. They divide under two types which can easily be linked up with the MS evidence. In the one—I Bûlāq, I Bûlāq and the Cairo editions generally—there is no mention of the king climbing a hill and the difficulty, which Galland removed by making him come down again, is not raised. This type says instead, وَرَسَلَ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ just as we have seen in Reinhardt. In one Paris MS (Fonds ar. No. 3666) neither this phrase nor mention of the hill occurs. The other type of text (II Calcutta, vol. i, p. 43; Bombay lithograph, vol. i, pp. 33, 34; Salhani, vol. i, p. 39) follows the original tradition with and makes no mention of coming down again; the king walks on upon that hill for a day and two nights. This is also the reading in Wortley-Montague (vol. i, p. 89) and in two Paris MSS (Fonds ar. Nos. 3595 and 4073); in all these in Night 7. In this there is evidently such conscious editing as we have already seen in the Habich text (and the Paris MSS 3613, 3614, 3707).
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following hypothesis. In the recension immediately preceding ZER there were originally 152 Nights up to the end of Ghânim, and Ghânim was followed immediately by ʿAlī b. Bakkar. It was desired to lengthen, by the addition of ʿUmar and the Beast Fables, which seem frequently to follow ʿUmar; see on this my article on Habicht in J.R.A.S., July, 1909, p. 701. So the Nights up to the end of Ghânim were lengthened and reduced in number to 44. That set free 107–8 Nights. Of these 101 were given to ʿUmar—about 3½ pages to a Night—and over the remainder the Beast Fables were spread, 7½ pages to a Night. But this means that the recension preceding ZER contained the full number of 1001 Nights; as, otherwise, ʿUmar could have been added at the end or in a gap. Also, it means that that recension did not already contain ʿUmar, as we have evidence that some quite early recensions did. Also, this explains the double occurrence of what is essentially the same story in Taj al-Mulik and Ardashir; the latter was already in the Nights when ʿUmar was introduced bringing with it the former.

It was a remarkable piece of luck which, at the beginning of the XVIIIth century played what is still the oldest known MS of the Nights into the hands of Galland, their first introducer to Europe. But a quite modern MS may carry a more complete tradition than one centuries older. It would, therefore, be unsafe to take G alone and disregard all others, and I already possess evidence that even ZER contains elements which had been lost in the ancestry of G; or, otherwise expressed, that ZER goes back to a more complete text of the G recension. But upon that and upon some other questions of relationship I am not yet in a position to make a complete statement.

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