

## Chapter 11

### BECOMING A GENTLEMAN COLLECTOR

#### ALFRED CHESTER BEATTY'S INFLUENCE ON CALOUSTE SARKIS GULBENKIAN'S MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

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MANUSCRIPT COLLECTING IS often characterized as something done by individuals or families and as a competitive process, symbolized by the “battles” of the auction room. However, friendships can also shape collections, as demonstrated by the thirty-year relationship between fellow bibliophiles Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian and Sir Alfred Chester Beatty. Correspondence in the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation documents the unusual (for the time) collecting friendship between Beatty and Gulbenkian. Professionally, Gulbenkian focused on the growing oil industry in the first half of the twentieth century, especially in the Middle East after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, while Beatty concentrated on copper mining. Gulbenkian’s customary percentage for negotiating deals was five percent, a practice that earned him the nickname “Mr Five Percent,” while Beatty was called the “King of Copper.”<sup>1</sup> Both men amassed fortunes and devoted much of their spare time to creating remarkable manuscript collections. Today, Gulbenkian’s collection is in Lisbon, and Beatty’s manuscripts are in Dublin.<sup>2</sup>

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**1** See Jonathan Conlin, *Mr. Five Per Cent* (London: IPS-Profile Books, 2019); Arthur J. Wilson, *The Life and Times of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty* (London: Cadogan, 1985).

**2** For Gulbenkian’s manuscript collections, see João Carvalho Dias, ed., *European Illuminated Manuscripts in the Calouste Gulbenkian Collection* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, 2020); *The Rise of Islamic Art 1869–1939* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, 2019); João Castel-Branco Pereira, *The Collector and his Tastes: Calouste S. Gulbenkian 1869–1955*, trans. Richard Trewinnard (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, 2006); João Carvalho Dias, *From Paris to Tokyo: Art of the Book in the Calouste Gulbenkian Collection: 19 July to 8 October 2006* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, 2006); João Castel-Branco Pereira, “Calouste Gulbenkian: The Collector as Creator,” in *‘Only the Best’ Masterpieces of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon*, ed. Katharine Baetjer and James David Draper (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 3–15; Richard Ettinghausen, *Persian Art: Calouste Gulbenkian Collection* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1972); Basil Gray, *L’Art de L’Orient islamique: Collection de la Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian* (Lisbon: Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 1963). For an overview of Beatty’s European and Islamic manuscript collections, see Hyder Abbas, “‘We Want Quality and Condition’: The Formation of Chester Beatty’s

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Beatty's Islamic collection of over 6,100 items includes some of the earliest known Qur'ans, individual folios of Mughal calligraphy and paintings, Persian manuscripts, and a small group of loose bindings. Beatty significantly culled his European collection during his lifetime. A small collection of twenty-two manuscripts remains, including biblical, liturgical, and devotional books. Gulbenkian's Islamic collection, considerably smaller than Beatty's, includes approximately 175 items, including Qur'ans and Armenian Bibles, manuscripts, single-leaf miniatures, and paintings, and several loose bindings. Gulbenkian's European collection, similar in size to the remains of Beatty's collection, includes twenty-four manuscripts, an incunable, and eleven single leaves and fragments, produced between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries.

When the two men met in 1924, Beatty was the foremost collector of Islamic manuscripts and a leading collector of European illuminated manuscripts. Gulbenkian was showing increasing interest in the same collecting areas. The correspondence between these men reveals a confidential arrangement to ensure they acquired what they wanted for the lowest prices possible. The letters also shed light on the nature of their friendship and Beatty's influence on Gulbenkian's manuscript-collecting strategy. Although Beatty, an American, and Gulbenkian, an Armenian, could be considered outsiders in European manuscript collecting circles, Beatty helped Gulbenkian adapt to the model of a gentleman collector. Both men took up residence in London and did much of their collecting on the London market. Christopher de Hamel noted several criteria for a gentleman collector during the heyday of Henry Yates Thompson's book-collecting activities.<sup>3</sup> First, a gentleman collector always paid ten percent when offering items for auction. Second, he rarely discussed or recorded what he had spent. It was uncouth to sell one's collection while still alive. In particular, a British gentleman collector should never allow his collection to fall into the hands of, as M. R. James famously wrote: "Boches, Jews, and Transatlantics."<sup>4</sup> However, as noted by de Hamel, Yates Thompson broke all the rules of

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South Asian Manuscript and Miniature Collection," in *Arts of South Asia: Cultures of Collecting*, ed. Allysa B. Peyton and Katharine Anne Paul (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2019), 95–127; Laura Cleaver, "The Western Manuscript Collection of Alfred Chester Beatty (ca. 1915–1930)," *Manuscript Studies* 2 (2017): 445–82; Charles Horton, "'No Duds!' The Manuscript Trading of Alfred Chester Beatty," *The Book Collector* 65 (2016): 207–34; Charles Horton, *Alfred Chester Beatty: From Miner to Bibliophile* (Dublin: Townhouse, 2003); Brian Patrick Kennedy, "The Collecting Technique of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty," in *Art is My Life: A Tribute to James White*, ed. Brian Patrick Kennedy (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 1996), 107–19; Viola Barrow, "Chester Beatty and his Library," *Dublin Historical Record* 40.4 (1987): 133–42; Richard James Hayes, "Foreword," in *The Chester Beatty Western Manuscripts: Part I...3 December 1968* (London: Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, 1968), 9–10; Richard James Hayes, "Contemporary Collectors XVIII: The Chester Beatty Library," *The Book Collector* 7 (1958): 253–64.

**3** Christopher de Hamel, "Was Henry Yates Thompson a Gentleman?" in *Property of a Gentleman: The Formation, Organisation and Dispersal of the Private Library 1620–1920*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1991), 77–87.

**4** The comment is made in a letter from M. R. James, Bloomington, Indiana University, Lilly Library, Thompson, H. Y. MSS 1917–1922, No. 2. See also J. Q. Bennett, "Portman Square to New Bond Street, or, How to Make Money Though Rich," *The Book Collector* 16 (1967): 325–26.

a gentleman collector, setting the stage for a new definition for future generations of book-collectors.

When Beatty and Gulbenkian entered the London scene, being commercially focused was less frowned upon in book-collecting circles. However, protocols still existed for interacting with dealers and auction houses, loaning works for exhibitions, and supporting scholars and museum curators. Before meeting Beatty, Gulbenkian routinely asked for discounts when purchasing reference books, refused to pay commissions based on winning bids plus auctioneer's fees, and used bartering techniques with dealers to cull his collection of unwanted items.<sup>5</sup> These were not the activities of a classic gentleman collector. Beatty may have wanted to share the fundamentals of a gentleman book collector, a role he had mastered with Sydney Cockerell's help.<sup>6</sup> While sharing one's insight is certainly a gentlemanly thing to do, the correspondence highlights that Beatty's desire to limit competition for the books he wanted most was also a motivating factor in pursuing a relationship with Gulbenkian.

### A Collecting Friendship

In 1932, eight years into their friendship, Gulbenkian outlined how he thought his collection differed from Beatty's in a letter to Frederic Sutherland Ferguson at Quaritch Ltd. Gulbenkian viewed Beatty as a scientific collector who wanted to have all eras in his collection.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, Gulbenkian declared that his goal "had always been" to have a small number of works of the highest quality and best periods. He clarified that this meant works from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, with beautiful miniatures in perfect condition. While Gulbenkian was probably referring to his European manuscripts, based on an analysis of his purchases, this was not his strategy for any part of his collection before meeting Beatty in 1924.

Gulbenkian's first recorded Islamic book art purchase was a seventeenth-century Qur'an in a lacquered flap binding decorated in flowers.<sup>8</sup> The work, previously owned by British Army officer William Brereton, was plundered from the Emperor of China's palace in 1860. Other than its spoils-of-war provenance, nothing is extraordinary about this Qur'an. Gulbenkian waited seven years before purchasing his second manuscript,

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**5** Bernard A. Quaritch to Calouste Gulbenkian, December 16, 1912, CGF, LDN60; Gulbenkian to G. J. Demotte, November 5, 1914, CGF, LDN69; Hagop Kevorkian to Gulbenkian, April 5, 1917, CGF, LDN118.

**6** Cleaver, "Western Manuscript Collection," 445–47.

**7** "Comme vous le savez, je ne suis pas, comme M. Beatty, un collectionneur scientifique ayant en vue de posséder toutes les époques dans sa collection. Mon but a toujours été de n'avoir qu'un nombre très restreint d'ouvrages de la plus haute qualité et des meilleures époques. Pour être plus précis, je me limite du XIV<sup>e</sup> au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle pour les ouvrages avec très belles miniatures de la plus parfaite conservation." Gulbenkian to F. S. Ferguson, March 23, 1932, London, Bernard Quaritch Ltd. Archives.

**8** LA155, purchased July 18, 1900, Christie's sale: lot 144, Reference A7.14.6. CGF, Inventory of manuscripts 1957, MCG01937. See also Dias, *Paris to Tokyo*, 39.

a collection of Persian poems.<sup>9</sup> Most of his purchases between 1900 and 1918 were Qur'ans, frontispieces from Qur'ans, and a few loose-leaf paintings. Initially, he mostly purchased from dealers; however, by 1921, he had settled on a few go-betweens, mainly of Armenian descent, to bid on his behalf at important auctions. His purchases were also becoming more varied, with increased interest in single-leaf paintings and important manuscripts, some from the Mughal Imperial Library. However, many items were newer than the sixteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Until 1919, Gulbenkian had shown no interest in European manuscripts. Indeed, in 1909, Joseph Duveen noted Gulbenkian's lack of interest: "The only thing I bought there was a missal by Gerard David, one of the most wonderful things I have ever seen but it is no interest to *you* of course."<sup>11</sup> However, a month before the first Yates Thompson sale on June 3, 1919, Gulbenkian asked E. H. Dring of Quaritch for his thoughts on the best manuscripts in the collection.<sup>12</sup> A year later, Gulbenkian approached Belle da Costa Greene to determine whether a plan existed to sell any of the manuscripts acquired before Pierpont Morgan's death in 1913.<sup>13</sup>

In January 1923, Beatty wrote to Gulbenkian, enclosing a letter of introduction from their mutual acquaintance Hermann Marx.<sup>14</sup> In his letter, Beatty wrote "If at any time you would like to see some of my books, it will give me great pleasure to show them to you." His reasons for wanting to meet Gulbenkian were probably three-fold. Beatty probably sincerely desired to show his collection to Gulbenkian as a fellow collector. Due to Gulbenkian's recent flurry of acquisitions, he may also have wanted to better understand Gulbenkian's interests to avoid bidding against each other and keep prices low. Beatty may have also wanted to meet Gulbenkian to explore potential business opportunities.<sup>15</sup>

The first indication of a meeting is a brief letter followed by a telegram sent by Beatty to Gulbenkian on December 27, 1923.<sup>16</sup> Beatty was coming to Paris and hoped to see Gulbenkian's treasures and items he was considering for purchase. By March 1924,

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**9** Reiza Khan Monif to Gulbenkian, November 26, 1907, CGF, MCG02155.

**10** At least seventeen items Gulbenkian purchased during this time dated from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including (in order of purchase): LA155, LA176, M50, LA179, M60, LA154, parts of M44, LA162, LA191, R24, LA163, binding of LA177, M9, M7, M16, M15, possibly M12, and M11, CGF, Inventory of manuscripts 1957.

**11** Joseph Duveen to Gulbenkian, April 1, 1909, CGF, LDN93.

**12** E. H. Dring to Belle da Costa Greene, June 11, 1920, PML, Morgan Archives, 156438. Gulbenkian acquired two manuscripts during the first Yates Thompson auction using the intermediary Devgantz: *Consolation de la philosophie* by Boethius, ca. 1450–1460 (LA136) and *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (RVF), *Triumphs* by Petrarch, ca. 1468–1470 (LA1299). See "A Passion for Illumination: European Illuminated Manuscripts in the Calouste S. Gulbenkian Collection," December 4, 2020, <https://gulbenkian.pt/museu/en/articles/a-passion-for-illumination/>, accessed May 12, 2023.

**13** Dring to Greene, June 11, 1920.

**14** Alfred Chester Beatty to Gulbenkian, January 11, 1923, CGF, LDN1169.

**15** Conlin, *Mr. Five Per Cent*, 177–78.

**16** Beatty to Gulbenkian, December 27, 1923, CGF, LDN500.

Gulbenkian and Beatty had become friendly.<sup>17</sup> Their meeting in January went well, and they were trying to arrange for their wives to meet. Gulbenkian wanted Beatty's opinion about a Book of Hours he was considering for purchase. Beatty praised the manuscript with heraldic devices, comparing the borders to a manuscript made for the Medici recently listed in the Yates Thompson sale. He concluded his letter to Gulbenkian by sharing his approach for valuing manuscripts: beautiful things in limited supply will go up in value, and excellent provenance is worth at least £500.<sup>18</sup> Beatty added that cropped pages take away from a book's appearance, as does inconsistency in skill level when more than one artist was involved.

Over the next several years, Beatty shared more criteria for evaluating European and Islamic manuscripts as he assumed the mentor role in the relationship. In mid-April 1924, Gulbenkian began corresponding with the dealer Joseph Baer & Co. of Frankfurt concerning a Book of Hours once owned by Henry VIII.<sup>19</sup> Baer believed the manuscript was a "really quite exceptional work by a first-class artist" and not an "Atelier book."<sup>20</sup> When Gulbenkian asked Beatty about the manuscript, Beatty responded "I think it is a coarse and poor example of a poor period, and neither myself nor my friend at the Museum would recommend you buy it."<sup>21</sup> His friend was probably Eric Millar at the British Museum, who assisted Beatty with his western manuscript collection.<sup>22</sup>

In May 1924, Beatty asked Gulbenkian to inform the dealer Fredrik Robert Martin that he was not interested in a manuscript.<sup>23</sup> Beatty's wife, Edith, was planning to give it to Beatty as a present, and he suspected Martin was playing them off each other to get a "big price." This correspondence is the first hint that one of Beatty's motivations for forming a friendship with Gulbenkian was to keep costs low. Similarly, in late 1926, Gulbenkian and Beatty were presented with a Persian manuscript by Mir Ali, "the greatest calligrapher of Persia," with miniatures attributed to Behzād, offered by the US-based dealer Ali-Kuli Khan.<sup>24</sup> Beatty thought Khan's price was ridiculous.<sup>25</sup> He also suggested that Gulbenkian avoid the deal worrying that interest by either of them would cause Khan to increase the price further.<sup>26</sup>

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**17** Beatty to Gulbenkian, March 31, 1924, CGF, LDN00535.

**18** Beatty to Gulbenkian, March 31, 1924.

**19** Joseph Baer to Gulbenkian, April 17, 1924, CGF, LDN546.

**20** Baer to Gulbenkian, May 23, 1924, CGF, LDN00535.

**21** Beatty to Gulbenkian, June 10, 1924, CGF, LDN00535.

**22** Cleaver, "Western Manuscript Collection," 461.

**23** "I have finally decided to take the Martin manuscript as my wife wants to give it to me as a present and she has offered Sassoon Six hundred guineas for it. Therefore, if you will let Martin know that you are not interested, he will probably close the matter. Personally, I think the price is a very fair one though Martin is trying to play us off one against the other in order to get a big price." Beatty to Gulbenkian, May 15, 1924, CGF, LDN00535. The manuscript in question is not known.

**24** Ali-Kuli Khan to W. Gedney Beatty, October 14, 1926, CGF, MCG02663.

**25** Beatty to Gulbenkian, November 18, 1926, CGF, LDN00636.

**26** "Personally I do not think it is worthwhile following up because the price to my mind is

In August 1924, Gulbenkian purchased a sixteenth-century Persian manuscript that had been in a British family's collection since 1689.<sup>27</sup> Soon afterwards, he sent it to Beatty for his thoughts on repairing the binding. Beatty responded positively, felt confident his "man" could restore it, and would be happy to coordinate the repair.<sup>28</sup> In November 1926, Gulbenkian considered a late twelfth-century German manuscript for purchase. Beatty discussed the potential purchase with "a friend...from the British Museum...who also had a friend who is an expert on German books."<sup>29</sup> They all agreed it was a fine example of German work but not in the same class as French or English works of the same period. Beatty felt the book was better suited for *his* collection and recommended that Gulbenkian "stick to the manuscripts of a period when the art of the country was at its highest."<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, Gulbenkian followed Beatty's suggestion and relinquished his option on the German manuscript, allowing Beatty to buy it.<sup>31</sup> Not only was Beatty dictating Gulbenkian's collecting focus, but his hesitancy to share the names of his experts and museum friends demonstrated his desire to maintain control of his network of contacts at the start of their relationship.

In October 1924, Gulbenkian again considered purchasing a European manuscript. Beatty suggested he compare the manuscript to another version in the Bibliothèque nationale de France and recommended he only buy it for £5,000–£6,000.<sup>32</sup> Beatty's suggestion that Gulbenkian study the collection at the Bibliothèque nationale was something he did many times himself.<sup>33</sup> Gulbenkian did as instructed and decided that the version in Paris was superior; the manuscript under consideration ultimately went to the Morgan Library in New York.<sup>34</sup>

In October 1928, Beatty and Gulbenkian considered buying manuscripts from the Soviet Union, but they had concerns about the provenance, and the pricing was not

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ridiculous and the trouble is that if we show too much interest, it will simply mean that we put the price up against ourselves." Beatty to Gulbenkian, November 18, 1926.

**27** Colnaghi Art Gallery to Gulbenkian, August 27, 1924, CGF, MCG01317. Now LA180.

**28** Beatty to Gulbenkian, October 6, 1924, CGF, LDN00535.

**29** Beatty to Gulbenkian, November 8, 1926, CGF, LDN00636.

**30** Beatty to Gulbenkian, November 8, 1926.

**31** Beatty to Gulbenkian, November 18, 1926. The only German manuscript recorded in Beatty's collection purchased in 1926 is W MS 62, Conrad of Saxony, *Speculum Beate Marie Virginis*, acquired at Sotheby's on May 5, 1926 (Brollemand-Mallet sale), lot 155, Cleaver, "Western Manuscript Collection," 474.

**32** Beatty to Gulbenkian, October 27, 1924. CGF, LDN00535.

**33** Cleaver, "Western Manuscript Collection," 449. "Am having a very interesting time at the Bibliothèque nationale. I am going through their Oriental Collection systematically and seeing practically all the Manuscripts illustrated in Blochet's book." See also Abbas, "We Want Quality and Condition," 99.

**34** *Livre de la chasse*, PML, M.1044.

competitive.<sup>35</sup> Gulbenkian offered to send an expert to explore the origin of the manuscripts and test the dealer's willingness to negotiate. In a follow-up letter, Gulbenkian wrote to Beatty "You know how very much I rely on your comradeship, and I feel sure that by proceeding shoulder to shoulder, we shall ultimately succeed."<sup>36</sup> Beatty agreed with this assessment of the relationship, believing their constant search for perfection, coupled with their unique access to experts (presumably he meant museum employees), ensured the pair would acquire a "fair share of the fine things" at a reasonable price.<sup>37</sup> That same month, Gulbenkian received a Persian manuscript from the dealer Emil Hirsch for inspection. Much to Hirsch's annoyance, Gulbenkian would only decide on the manuscript after receiving Beatty's opinion. Gulbenkian wrote to Beatty, asking, "is this something *we* [my emphasis] should not miss?"<sup>38</sup> Gulbenkian and Beatty almost seemed to be building a single collection, each responsible for their own parts instead of separate ones.

After a few years of correspondence and meetings, Beatty and Gulbenkian had a genuine friendship. They freely discussed European and Islamic manuscripts being auctioned and items they sought for their collection. Each confirmed that the other was not interested in a particular manuscript before buying it and relayed details of their purchases, including prices. For example, in 1926, Beatty wrote to Gulbenkian about a tenth-century Bible which Quaritch had bought for £2,050 and let him have for a commission of 10 percent.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, in 1935 Gulbenkian told Beatty:

Rosenthal began by asking £3800 and myself basing my counteroffer on the price I had paid for the Ayala Hours (£800), I proposed £1500. At first, Rosenthal refused, but gradually he came down to £1750 and finally, yesterday, we concluded the bargain, and I purchased the book for £1650.<sup>40</sup>

Beatty and Gulbenkian realized these conversations benefited them and gave them an advantage over other collectors.<sup>41</sup> As they became more acquainted with each other's collections, Beatty and Gulbenkian searched for items for each other. When Sir Edward Denison Ross sent Beatty a lacquered mirror, Beatty informed Ross that he did not collect such objects but had a "friend" who did (not mentioning Gulbenkian's name).<sup>42</sup>

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**35** "Everybody has been influenced by the great sham campaign of stolen goods about which so much propaganda is being made." Gulbenkian to Beatty, October 4, 1928, CGF, LDN743 or LDN793 (file name is illegible).

**36** Gulbenkian to Beatty, October 26, 1928, CGF, LDN743 or LDN793.

**37** Beatty to Gulbenkian, August 5, 1925, CGF, LDN00593.

**38** Gulbenkian to Beatty, October 30, 1928, CGF, LDN743 or LDN793.

**39** Beatty to Gulbenkian, June 9, 1926, CGF, LDN00636.

**40** Gulbenkian to Beatty, February 19, 1935, CGF, MCG02160.

**41** See Beatty to Gulbenkian September 7, 1925, CGF, LDN00593; Gulbenkian to Beatty, November 30, 1927, CGF, LDN702.

**42** Beatty to Ross, December 24, 1925, Chester Beatty Papers, number 1283.

## Becoming a Gentleman Collector

Initially, Beatty and Gulbenkian maintained a low-key friendship, providing opportunities for both men to hear comments about each other. At the beginning of 1925, Beatty wrote to Gulbenkian that a prominent dealer in Cairo was spreading rumours that Gulbenkian had purchased the “MacGregor book for a very big price.”<sup>43</sup> Beatty noted “he does not know we are friends.” Gulbenkian’s reputation may have been another reason Beatty was not keen to advertise the friendship. Four years before the two met, Beatty told Dring that he had never heard anyone say a good word about Gulbenkian.<sup>44</sup> At the time Dring was making remarks about the “extremely mean bullying Armenian financier” to Greene.<sup>45</sup> When Greene inquired about Gulbenkian’s reputation, Dring responded “Should you decide to deal with him directly, he is a very disagreeable man to have any transactions with, and if you offer a \$100 note for \$75, he will offer you \$50 for it.”<sup>46</sup> Perhaps Beatty’s comment was his way of trying to rise above the general gossip and keep an open mind. Nevertheless, Gulbenkian needed public relations assistance to be accepted into the London rare book market, and his reputation was thoroughly sullied amongst the contacts he needed the most.

Ironically, after Gulbenkian met Beatty, and perhaps at Beatty’s suggestion, Quaritch became one of Gulbenkian’s primary intermediaries at London auctions. Beatty made sure Quaritch represented Gulbenkian well on the auction floor. On one occasion, when Gulbenkian asked Dring to bid on an Armenian Bible, Beatty was concerned the opening offer was too low and recommended Dring start higher, fearing Gulbenkian would lose it.<sup>47</sup>

Beatty also set an example of how Gulbenkian could build goodwill with museum curators by helping improve their holdings. Eleven months after meeting Beatty, Gulbenkian donated three small Indian paintings of the Rajput school to the British Museum.<sup>48</sup> In 1929, Gulbenkian supported the British Museum’s campaign to acquire the Luttrell Psalter.<sup>49</sup> He also matched Beatty’s donations to help the Museum buy the Bedford Book

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**43** The letter is dated 1925; however, the only recorded manuscript purchase from the Sir Malcolm MacGregor collection occurred in November 1926. It was for an Armenian Bible (LA152), purchased through Quaritch at Sotheby’s (lot 552). The year “1925” appears to be written in a different hand on the letter and may have been added later, erroneously. Beatty to Gulbenkian, February 10, 1925, CGF, LDN00593.

**44** E. H. Dring to Belle da Costa Greene, June 11, 1920, PML, Morgan Archives, 156438.

**45** Dring to Greene, June 11, 1920.

**46** Dring to Greene, June 11, 1920.

**47** Beatty to Gulbenkian, November 18, 1926, CGF, LDN00636. Now LA152, acquired in London through Quaritch at Sotheby’s November 15, 1926, lot 552, CGF, Inventory of manuscripts 1957.

**48** Laurence Binyon to Gulbenkian, December 18, 1924; Binyon to Gulbenkian, December 27, 1924, both CGF, LDN00535.

**49** Gulbenkian to Beatty, July 1, 1929, CGF, LDN796; Frederic Kenyon to Gulbenkian, August 23, 1930, CGF, MCG02852.

of Hours.<sup>50</sup> The two men were recorded as “jointly” giving £1,000 to the fund for both manuscripts.<sup>51</sup>

In 1925, Beatty entered into a joint purchase agreement with the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) to acquire the Minto Album (a set of forty album pages originally part of several imperial Mughal albums), with Beatty donating the single-leaf paintings he did not want to the museum.<sup>52</sup> To create more incentive for the joint purchase, Beatty paid twice the standard commission to Quaritch, who acted as their intermediary in the bidding process.<sup>53</sup> Four years later, Gulbenkian followed Beatty’s example: buying coins at auction and presenting half to the British Museum, writing:

I received a letter from the British Museum asking me to assist them in purchasing coins to the extent of 980 pounds, either in whole or in part. I do not know whether I did something against etiquette, but I replied that I would be willing to buy the lot and present half to them. I thought I would follow your example because, if I’m not wrong, you told me some time ago that you had purchased manuscripts with the V&A, that they had taken part and yourself another part.<sup>54</sup>

Gulbenkian wanted confirmation that he followed the protocol of a gentleman collector navigating relationships with museum curators. Gulbenkian also followed Beatty’s example by loaning objects to the 1931 International Exhibition of Persian Art and providing Arthur Upham Pope with colour plates from his collection for *A Survey of Persian Art* (in both instances, Gulbenkian acquiesced reluctantly).<sup>55</sup> Beatty seemed to enjoy sharing his gentleman collector know-how with such a teachable and appreciative student as Gulbenkian, who readily applied his learning and mirrored Beatty’s actions at every turn.

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**50** J. Theys to Kenyon, August 21, 1930, CGF, LDN985.

**51** “The Luttrell Psalter and the Bedford Book of Hours,” *BMQ* 5.4 (1931): 129.

**52** Charles Horton, “Prelude to the Albums – Imperial Splendor: The Mughal Library of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty,” in *Muraqqa’ Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin*, ed. Elaine Wright, Susan Strong, and Wheeler M. Thackston (Alexandria: Art Services International, 2008), 8; Susan Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor: The Art of the Book, 1560–1660* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2002), 148–49.

**53** Horton, “Prelude to the Albums,” 7–8.

**54** Gulbenkian to Beatty, July 6, 1929, CGF, LDN796.

**55** Edward Herbert Keeling to Gulbenkian, November 7, 1930; Keeling to Gulbenkian, December 5, 1930 both CGF, MCG01504; Gulbenkian to Arthur Upham Pope, December 31, 1930, CGF, LDN1025; Pope to Gulbenkian, March 4, 1931, CGF, MCG01504 and LDN1087; Gulbenkian to Pope, March 13, 1931, CGF, LDN1087.

## A Cooling Off Period?

In December 1928, the Parisian dealer Ispirian offered Gulbenkian an Indo-Persian astronomical book and an astronomical instrument.<sup>56</sup> Gulbenkian was not interested in the book but thought Beatty might be. Ispirian admitted Beatty had seen the book. Gulbenkian was probably surprised Beatty had not mentioned the manuscript; perhaps Beatty pre-emptively decided it did not meet their exacting conditions. However, Beatty's withholding of this information was an early warning sign that perhaps their relationship was not as transparent as Gulbenkian thought. Gulbenkian continued to write to Beatty, asking for advice, but Beatty did not always respond. He also managed to pass through Paris occasionally without meeting Gulbenkian. Perhaps sensing things were starting to unravel, in July 1929, Gulbenkian wrote to Beatty, thanking him for helping to enrich his manuscript collection.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, now that Beatty was more focused on Islamic manuscripts, he hoped Beatty would have more time and inclination to assist him with his European manuscript collection. In March 1932, Gulbenkian received advance notice from Quaritch that Beatty planned to sell his entire collection of European manuscripts.<sup>58</sup> Five days later, Gulbenkian wrote to Ferguson at Quaritch requesting details about the collection. Gulbenkian acknowledged his friendship with Beatty and his knowledge of the collection, but he had never examined the collection with the eyes of a buyer.<sup>59</sup> Gulbenkian probably thought it was odd that Beatty had not mentioned his plans to sell his European manuscripts. Nevertheless, Gulbenkian wrote to Beatty, offering to host an exhibition of the collection, and commenting that there were some big buyers in Paris.<sup>60</sup>

On three separate occasions in 1935–1936, Gulbenkian asked Beatty's opinion about Islamic items he was considering for purchase. Beatty felt the large Persian miniature of a queen undergoing a caesarean operation was a "little tired and not worth adding to his fine specimens."<sup>61</sup> In response to Gulbenkian's concerns about a manuscript that might have later added miniatures, Beatty felt many of the pages were perfect and the manu-

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**56** Ispirian to Gulbenkian, December 19, 1928, CGF, LDN743 or LDN793.

**57** Gulbenkian to Beatty, July 1, 1929, CGF, LDN796.

**58** In a later dated letter, Gulbenkian mentioned he received a letter from Ferguson dated March 18 announcing the sale. Gulbenkian to Ferguson, March 23, 1932, Quaritch Archives.

**59** "Je connais un peu la collection de M. Chester Beatty, mais je ne l'ai jamais examiné avec des yeux d'acquéreur ; ma connaissance est donnée imparfaite, et je vous serais très obligé de me dire quels sont les livres que vous croyez pouvoir m'intéresser." Gulbenkian to Ferguson, March 23, 1932.

**60** "Vous ne m'avez rien dit de vos intentions de vous défaire de vos beaux manuscrits. J'ai reçu les avis précurseurs et des offres de service, de divers côtés. Il me semble que ce serait une bonne chose à l'instar des Allemands, de faire un petite Exposition à Paris, avant l'exposition de Londres. Comme vous savez, il y a quelques gros acheteurs à Paris, et cela jetterait peut-être un nouvel éclat en tant que publicité. Si je puis vous être utile en quelque chose, je suis tout à votre disposition." Gulbenkian to Beatty, March 25, 1932, CGF, LDN1103.

**61** Beatty to Gulbenkian, May 17, 1935, CGF, PRS361.

script was “well worth buying.”<sup>62</sup> He suggested Gulbenkian dismember the manuscript and keep only the choice folios, a practice he also employed.<sup>63</sup> For the final manuscript, Beatty responded “the binding is of no value at all, and you have such a perfect collection that I would be very sorry to see you put it with others.”<sup>64</sup> Beatty seemed open to advising Gulbenkian, but he almost always discouraged him from adding to his collection. Significantly, Beatty was buying an enormous quantity of Islamic material at the time and told his librarian about the ease of purchasing Rajput and Indian paintings in Cairo.<sup>65</sup> However, in a letter to Gulbenkian, Beatty jokingly assured him not to worry—he had not found any Behzāds or European manuscripts in Paris, Turkey, or London.<sup>66</sup> Another time, when Beatty was on holiday in Cairo, he wrote to Gulbenkian “I suppose by the time I return; you will have bought up the fleeting supply of MSS in Europe.”<sup>67</sup> In the same letter, Beatty downplayed the availability of manuscripts in Cairo:

Here there does not seem to be very much. The Persian MSS I have seen here are all rubbish; many of them have new miniatures. I have one nice Arabic MSS, not very important, simply calligraphy with two miniatures at the beginning, the date about 1400. It would not interest you as you are not collecting that kind of MSS.

PS. There are some very elaborate fake sixteenth-century Persian Bindings in the market here.<sup>68</sup>

This friendly banter demonstrated that while Beatty misled Gulbenkian about the availability of manuscripts in Cairo, he also viewed him as a rival for items back home. Most interesting is the evaluation of what Gulbenkian purchased before and after he met Beatty (Figure 11.1). After meeting Beatty, Gulbenkian’s collecting focused on bindings and frontispieces from Qur’ans and Armenian Bibles. Single-leaf paintings and calligraphy, areas of focus for Beatty, are almost absent from Gulbenkian’s later purchases.

On May 27, 1941, Gulbenkian’s representative in London, Avetoom Hacobian, wrote to Beatty, asking his opinion about an upcoming sale of Persian and Indian miniatures and manuscripts.<sup>69</sup> Still waiting for a reply, Hacobian sent a second letter on June 5.<sup>70</sup> Beatty and his acting secretary attempted to call Hacobian several times, but telephone

**62** Beatty to Gulbenkian, September 5, 1935, CGF, MCG02641.

**63** Catherine Yvard, “Minute Masterpieces: Study of a Late Fifteenth-Century French Book of Hours CBL WMs 89,” 2 vols. (PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2005), 1:24; Sheila Powerscourt, *Sun Too Fast* (London: Bles, 1974), 220; Horton, “No Duds!,” 216.

**64** Beatty to Gulbenkian, May 1, 1936, CGF, MCG02219.

**65** Abbas, “We Want Quality and Condition,” 114.

**66** Beatty to Gulbenkian, November 25, 1924, CGF, LDN00535.

**67** Beatty to Gulbenkian, February 10, 1925, CGF, LDN00593.

**68** Beatty to Gulbenkian, February 10, 1925.

**69** Avetoom Hacobian to Beatty, May 27, 1941, CGF, LDN2100.

**70** Hacobian to Beatty, June 5, 1941, CGF, LDN2100.

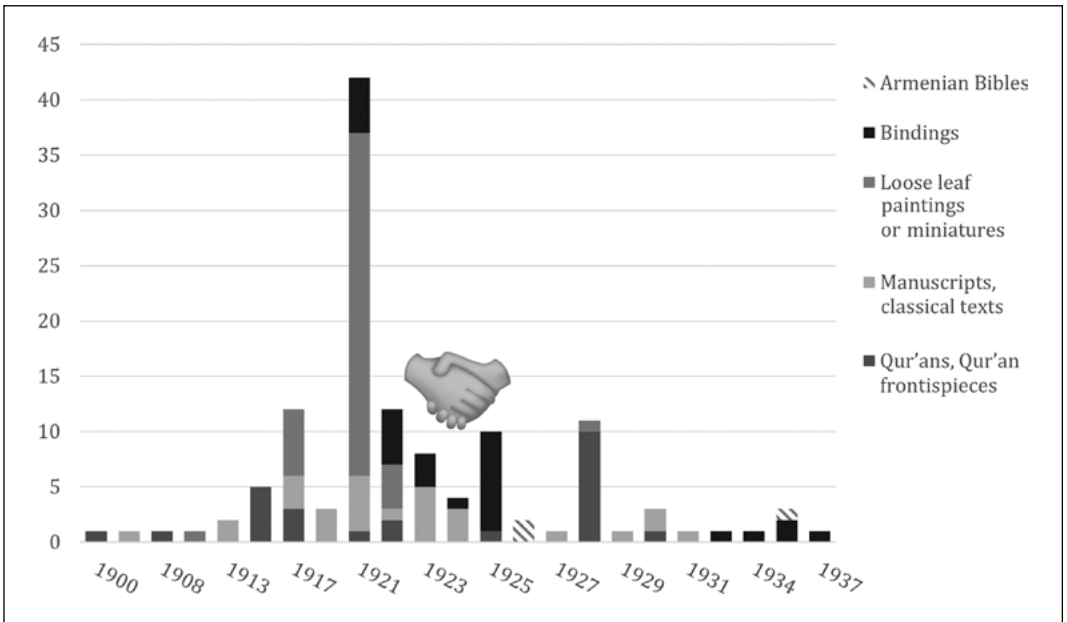


Figure 11.1. Caluste Gulbenkian's Collecting Strategy Before and After Meeting Alfred Chester Beatty in 1924. Diagram by author.

lines were down due to bombing raids in London.<sup>71</sup> The following day, Beatty's acting secretary F. H. Wright wrote to Hacobian "Mr Beatty greatly regrets he is not in a position to advise him as he is also a collector of Persian manuscripts and may be a bidder at the sale himself."<sup>72</sup> With Beatty unwilling to advise Gulbenkian, Hacobian turned to Ferguson at Quaritch. Ferguson responded "most of these manuscripts are not, I think, important enough to be considered by Mr Gulbenkian."<sup>73</sup> Whether Ferguson truly believed this to be the case or whether he represented Beatty in the auction is unknown. Nevertheless, the sale revealed that the nature of the advisory relationship between Beatty and Gulbenkian had changed.

In 1942, Gulbenkian considered purchasing farmland in the United Kingdom. Hacobian asked Beatty his thoughts. Beatty responded "I cannot see why Mr Gulbenkian is bothering himself about it; with luck, we will probably be on this planet for about another ten years. If he and I could carry our savings to the next world, then there might be some argument in favour of his suggested project."<sup>74</sup> Gulbenkian did not pursue the farmland idea. Instead, Gulbenkian and his wife left France for Lisbon after Russian

<sup>71</sup> Hacobian to F. H. Wright, June 6, 1941, CGF, LDN2100.

<sup>72</sup> Wright to Hacobian, June 6, 1941.

<sup>73</sup> Ferguson to Hacobian, June 7, 1941, CGF, LDN2100.

<sup>74</sup> Beatty to Hacobian, January 1, 1942, CGF, LDN2102.

and British forces' joint occupation of Persia in 1941 had made his diplomatic status in France untenable.<sup>75</sup>

In 1950, Beatty sent a copy of his *Rubiyat* publication to Gulbenkian, writing "I am sorry that our paths do not often cross, as I remember so well our many meetings in Paris."<sup>76</sup> In 1952 when Gulbenkian's wife Nevarte died, Beatty sent a telegram expressing his deepest condolences.<sup>77</sup> Two years later, Gulbenkian sent a telegram of heartfelt congratulations to Beatty for his knighthood.<sup>78</sup> These two telegrams would be the last of the pair's known correspondence, a friendship lasting over thirty years.

While Beatty may have initiated contact with Gulbenkian to form a bidding alliance, the two formed a genuine friendship based on their interest in manuscripts. It was unusual for British gentleman collectors to have such revealing discussions about their collecting strategies—but Beatty and Gulbenkian were not British. Beatty not only served as a mentor to Gulbenkian, but also set an example in the ways of a gentleman collector. Beatty encouraged Gulbenkian to donate items and help fund acquisitions for public museums. Beatty's involvement in the 1931 Persian Art Exhibition may have influenced Gulbenkian's decision to loan items. He also helped Gulbenkian refine his collecting strategy, which conveniently did not include items of interest to Beatty. On several occasions, Gulbenkian stated he was only looking for the highest quality works from the best periods and was not a comprehensive collector like Beatty. He seemingly came to this conclusion with Beatty's encouragement. Gulbenkian was naive about their relationship. He believed they were two men cut from the same cloth—sharing a common pastime and having similar resources to acquire anything they desired. Acquiring manuscripts was easy. Getting them for bargain prices made the quest exciting. However, several hints exist that Beatty liked maintaining the upper hand in the relationship and was not always forthright about his purchases. Several years into their friendship, the letters are much more one-sided, with Beatty responding less frequently.<sup>79</sup> In 1953, Gulbenkian claimed his collection was "always and exclusively guided by his own taste and judgement."<sup>80</sup> And while he admitted seeking advice, he felt his collection was truly his "after my own heart and soul."<sup>81</sup> Whatever guidance Beatty had provided years earlier had become a distant memory.

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**75** Conlin, *Mr. Five Per Cent*, 238.

**76** Beatty to Gulbenkian, July 25, 1950, CGF, PRS4037.

**77** Beatty to Gulbenkian, September 7, 1952, CGF, PRS4037.

**78** Gulbenkian to Beatty, December 6, 1954, CGF, PRS4037.

**79** Material in the Chester Beatty archives was unavailable during my research and might help to clarify their relationship further.

**80** Gulbenkian to John Walker, February 10, 1953, CGF, MCG02324.

**81** Gulbenkian to John Walker, February 10, 1953.

