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Title Images from the Arab world

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IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

*Fragments of Arab literature
translated and paraphrased
with variations and comments*

by

HERBERT HOWARTH

and

IBRAHIM SHUKRALLAH.

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FOREWORD

"each generation must translate for itself/"

T. S. ELIOT

IF a nineteenth century reader, who wanted to know what eastern poetry was like, turned up a well-known collection of translations from Arabian literature he found verses like this:

" Poor Puss is gone ! 'tis Fate's decree
Yet I must still her loss deplore ;
For dearer than a child was she,
And ne'er shall I behold her more."

This is one of J. D. Carlyle's renderings, of which the author wrote that " they will, I trust, be found as literal as the nature of two languages, so little resembling each other in their structure, will admit; in some few instances I have indulged myself in a greater latitude, and have given rather an imitation than a version ;—in such a manner, however, I hope, as not in any place to have lost sight of the original idea of the writer."

It may seem incredible that Carlyle should have believed there was any connection between such puerilities and the original Arabic; but it serves as a warning that all translations are limited by the time and place at which they are written.

The problem of translation varies with the nearness of the time and language to our own. With French or Spanish, for example, the difficulty is that the language is so close that one can easily take a false step. With Latin and Greek, we have a vast cultural indebtedness which acts as a screen between ourselves and the originals. But in the case of civilisations which have grown up largely separate from ours, the problem is one of effecting contact of any kind.

The oriental literatures stretch away from us to the other side of the world. But it is a shrinking world and we can expect in the next few hundred years new and surprising cultural cross-fertilisations. Already the impact of Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Persian and Arabian art and culture has modified our own patterns of perception to a marked extent. But we may be sure that the interpretations that have reached us so far are partial reflections only and that great riches remain to be assimilated.

The present volume is an attempt to convey the quality of the Arab world in terms of the language and ideas of recent western poetry. These versions are not afraid of being literal, if that helps to give a striking effect;

nor do they hesitate to paraphrase, to expand or to condense, if that will bring relief from flatness. The whole principle of selection and translation is to avoid boredom. The authors apologize in advance to scholars for the liberties they have taken. Their justification must be in introducing us to new elements of feeling and imagery which struck their fancy and are likely to strike ours. In fifty or a hundred years, another foray of this kind may be needed to stimulate the imagination of another epoch. In the meantime, these translations are comparable, as discoveries, with Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam* (though that was largely an original composition) with Ossian (though that was a forgery) or with the bringing to London of the Elgin Marbles (though the pseudo-classicism they engendered has since been superseded). No one can deny the vigour and excitement of these "Images," though philologists may question their accuracy.

Burton writes of early Arabic poetry; "The language, 'like a faithful wife, following the mind, and giving birth to its offspring,' and free from that 'luggage of particles' which dogs our modern tongues, leaves a mysterious vagueness between the relation of word to word, which materially assists the sentiment, not sense, of the poem. When verbs and nouns have—each one—many different significations, only the radical or general idea suggests itself. Rich and varied synonyms, illustrating the finest shades of meaning, are artfully used : now scattered to strike us by distinctness; now to form, as it were, a star, about which dimly seen satellites revolve." It is, in fact, a poetry obscure, ambiguous and bizarre : in this it resembles much of the poetry of our own period.

The seventeenth of Howarth and Shukrallah's images is a free translation of the first of the famous "Hanging Odes," dating from pre-Islam. Of its author, an Indian scholar wrote in 1893 "Imra-ul-Qais is best known for his clever and ingenious images, insomuch so that he has won the surname of 'the Creator of Images/ He deserves the honour amply and justly, since it is he who shewed the proper way to use the power of imagination. His similes and images are his own, and are always, as a rule, quite apt and suitable. They are generally selected from objects of daily sight, so highly coloured by his imagination as to surprise by their bright novel appearance."

The poem was also translated by the great eighteenth-century orientalist, Sir William Jones. It is instructive to compare his version with Howarth and Shukrallah's; the following is the equivalent of the last twelve lines of the latter:

"O friend, seest thou the lightning, whose flashes resemble the quick glance of two hands, amid clouds raised above clouds ?

The fire of it gleams like the lamps of a hermit, when the oil poured **on them shaves** the cord by which they are suspended.

FOREWORD

I sit gazing at it, while my companions stand between Daaridge and Odhaib ; but far distant is the cloud on which my eyes are fixed.

Its right side seems to pour its rain on the hills of Katan and its left on the mountains of Sitaar and Yadbul.

It continues to discharge its waters over Cotaifa till the rushing torrent lays prostrate the groves of canahbel-trees.

It passes over mount Kenaan, which it deluges in its course, and forces the wild goats to descend from every cliff.

On mount Taima it leaves not one trunk of a palm tree, nor a single edifice, which is not built with well-cemented stone.

Mount Tebeir stands in the heights of the flood, like a venerable chief wrapped in a striped mantle.

The summit of Mogaimir, covered with the rubbish which the torrent has rolled down, looks in the morning like the top of a spindle encircled with wool.

The cloud unloads its freight on the desert of Ghabeit, like a merchant of Yemen alighting with his bales of rich apparel.

The small birds of the valley warble at daybreak, as if they had taken their early draught of generous wine mixed with spice.

The beasts of the wood, drowned in the floods of night, float, like the roots of wild onions, at the distant edge of the lake."

Jones' version of the last two verses is unequalled. Another version by C. J. Lyall (1885) is as follows :

" At earliest dawn on the morrow the birds were chirping blithe,
As though they had drunken draughts of riot in fiery wine ;
And at even the drowned beasts lay where the torrent had borne
them, dead,
High up on the valley sides, like earth-stained roots of squills."

A literal version by F. E. Johnson (1893) runs :

" As if in the morning the small birds of the valley Jiwaa had taken a
morning draught of old, pure, spiced wine.

As if in the evening the wild beasts in it drowned in the furthest
parts of it (i.e., the valley Jiwaa) were the root-bulbs of the wild
onion."

From such comparisons, it appears to a reader unacquainted with the originals that these must have a high degree of allusive obscurity, capable of multiple interpretations. Each translator strikes his own spark from the stone. Of the Howarth and Shukrallah method of translation as a whole, one feels that even if it departs from an accuracy which in any case may be impossible, it does not superimpose an alien poem like the versions of

Carlyle, and that it has a speed and compression which perhaps conveys a special quality in the original, hitherto unrendered.

A glance through the " Index by Authors " at the end of this book gives some idea of the wide-ranging variety of Arab culture, from the 6th-Century Imru 'l Quais to the contemporary and cosmopolitan Arab intelligentsia. The writers represented lived in Damascus and Baghdad, in Sicily and Andalusia, in Constantinople, Cairo and Tunis. There are folk songs, proverbs and traditions, and also modern colloquial poems like " The Telegraph Wire and the Puffer Train "(28). To discover all this for the first time is an exciting experience, and the stimulus may provoke reactions of far-reaching consequence.

CHARLES MADGE

PREFACE

BECAUSE we are aware of the shortcomings of this book, we would like to state the aims with which it was begun, so that at least the failure may be measured against the hope.

The season of writing was an Egyptian winter, which imposed hurry before the hot days came back. The background was Montgomery's advance from Alamein, which, by removing the threat to Egypt, made one ready to attempt creative writing again in the odd moments that could be spared from work. Work was still intense, however, and did not leave the leisure which would have been necessary for accurate, as against creative, translation. Ideologically, Arab Unity was in the air, facilitating, even for the Egyptian often exclusively devoted to his own soil, the association in one volume of material taken from a diversity of sources in point of geography, time, and society. A growing Egyptian admission of the interest of the colloquial language helped, too, in giving licence to heterogeneous tastes. Moreover, the cult of the image had, after due time-lag, arrived in Cairo, lending merit to separate and spasmodic literary signals as against coherently-presented and protracted statements.

These were the current outside influences. Counter to them we called in three guides. The first was negative. The greater mass of translation into English from Arabic or like languages suffered, as it seemed to us, from the effort to reproduce the spirit and terminology of the original. Wonderful as a scholar and at the same time genuinely talented in handling verse, Gibb, for example, stimulated in his poetic Oriental translations ennui in the reader who sought fresh literature. During the last hundred and fifty years the English language had found, though not fully explored, a new field opened up by the *Arabian Nights* ; but since the later Middle Ages it had received little from Arabic poetry. Persian poetry had given it FitzGerald's *Omar Khayyam*; but this successful work had had its faulty aspects, especially in that it inspired an unusually large public with the belief that the sum message of the Near Asiatic mind was the passed cup, the ultimate black-out, and the contemplation of these things. We decided, while seeking specimens of very varied levels of writing and attitude, to refrain from trying to bring over to our English versions of them anything that was not susceptible of interesting the English reader.

Of our two positive guides, one was the direct corollary of the above. In the generation immediately preceding our own, English creative writing has drawn handsomely on the legacies of other tongues and ages, by **means**

ranging from close translation to remote allusion. Pound and Eliot unified the arts of creation and translation. They operated by eliciting from their sources what was relevant to contemporary events and emotions and omitting the rest. We wanted, if we could, to adapt this procedure in earnest contexts. At the same time, another criterion was brought to bear, a reference to the definition of poetry offered in the preface to the *Poet's Tongue*. "Memorable words" was a sanction on certain pieces, which might have been cut out by overstrict application of the contemporary relevance criterion.

In practice it sometimes happened that "personal" substituted itself for "contemporary" relevance. We did not attempt to prevent it, for the creative impulse had to be involved if the translation was to have a chance of escaping the ennui we feared; and the creative impulse could scarcely come to life without the admission of personal problems into the action or the decor. Some effort was made to ensure that the personal angle should still relate to that part of the Arab world in which we were living as we wrote; but that it did not preponderate is evident from such passages as that in which Oxford (and not only Oxford) is supermontaged on Cordoba, and the Cumaean Gates touch added to a poem from Abu Tammam's *Hamasa*, apart from many less tangible instances. Mood undergoes several shifts. Perhaps no one will forgive the alteration of the idiom of 'Umar Abi Rabiyya.

On the whole subject of idiom it is only too apparent to us that what we have chosen to do with the biggest of the poems will please neither the new poets nor the old. Even for those who do not want the mellow ways we shall still be short of the manners of the present. However, at the cost of being out of tune with both sorts, we have tried to set some of the best of the originals in the idiom of North English poetry. In northern poetry there is a sparingly-used but genuine tradition which has features congenial to certain Arabic poems, especially some of the most powerful of them: strong alliterative rhythms, a ready accommodation of obscenity, a love of places and place-names, the ability to take direct speech and to dramatise without departing from the prevailing formal framework. A time may come for a large-scale resuscitation of this class of poetry, though perhaps in these immediate years the urgency is rather for clear-headedness and a corresponding clarity of form.

At one time during preparation of this book it was contemplated adding a brief analysis and catalogue of the images it employed. A list so compiled would only incidentally illustrate the imagery of original Arabic poetry, and would really be an index to the personal factors influencing the choice of material; but even this latter result might have had its sociological point, and the index was finally omitted only because on the one hand the opportunity to complete plans had been nipped by the

posting of both collaborators to places three thousand miles apart, on the other hand the volume was obviously going to be slim enough for **the** reader who cared, to see at a glance what the main divisions and sources of the imagery were. He will still find in a fairly overt and preserved condition the *disjecta membra* of the modern Egyptian concern with the devil, the creation, original sin, woman physical, and die more vapid forms of philosophy. Interpolations, interpretations, and perversions of the original from the English side are equally easy to isolate: pictures of Utopia, the recoil from politics, vegetables before humans, sadism, and money and precious stones. It has to be remembered, as a check on these samples, that they refer to the predilections of an Englishman who has not been in England since 1939. Both partners gave way a good deal to one another in the course of writing, and the result is a mixture of overlap of incompatibilities with an effective fusion of aspirations.

Despite the fact that the book is not an anthology nor was ever meant to be, the choice of specimens has occasionally been dictated by the misintervention of the anthologising spirit. We tried, however, to restrict these occurrences to cases of special interest: to the recording of ancient patterns like the King and the Philosopher; to pointed comparisons like that between the Arabic spirit in two ages, reflected, say, in Abu Tammam's ode of conquest as against Mutanabbi's; and to the notification of styles that have not so often come out in previous English translations, like the Horatian element in the salon poetry of Baha, iz Zoheir.

Although believers in the standardisation of transliteration from the Arabic, we have not attempted to apply it here, considering creative work, especially poetry, not a suitable place for it. For the twentieth century western reader optical suggestion plays a leading part in an emotional context: we have yielded to that fact. In the Bedouin story from *Amali* 7 *Qali* the "ein in Zabra" is signified by the apostrophe in the prose section, but dropped in the incantation. Elsewhere consistency has been even less regarded.

In dealing with the more potent of such allusions as depend on the acquaintance of the reader with a backset of stories or beliefs, we have not often tried to find an English equivalent. Instead, where the material had sufficient interest and was sufficiently pliable, we sacrificed speed of reference to explain the situation within the text.

From the previous paragraphs it will be plain that we intend to stand by our general methodology, even though it produces no logic but only bunches of images, an exotic assembly comparable with

"The azure testicles of certain monkeys."

There must, though, be many straight mistakes, often glaring ones, on the pages to come, and the apology that these demand we offer with un-

reserved penitence. They are due to two major wants, ready capital of learning and the time to redress the deficits in learning by labour. We would repeat that now and again accuracy has been defied deliberately because something else was more in contemporary taste. Thus, for example, the phrase " the Most Spinning " in Mas'udi's account of the Creation. But for all the times we have misread and misreported great men we beg the indulgence of those who have the canon in their keeping. Such a vast body of Arabic literature holds so established a place among the triumphs of the process of civilisation that an essay like this, whatever wrong it does, can do little harm.

HERBERT HOWARTH
IBRAHIM SHUKRALLAH

*I saw the land
Crouched in a blackened boat
A fire between her knees.*

*A shrivelled stone salvaged from the great flood
Having done nothing this long time.*

The extracts are arranged in alphabetical order. For list, with authors and sources, see

INDEX BY FIRST LINES, on p. i37

There is also an

INDEX BY AUTHORS, on p. i4i

which gives dates of authors and -where they lived.

A brook, a bottle, a bench, a way of waiting,
The body sweetens, the ghost stirs,
Golden four.

[A deserted street. Only one house, a lamp burning at the gate. Music from the distance comes in snatches on the wind. The night is moonless.

The Magician comes forward, bringing a slave-girl back to the house. He is questioning her.]

THE MAGICIAN : That negro slave from abroad, what was he saying to you ?

THE SLAVE-GIRL : He was asking the reason of the celebrations in the city, and I told him it was the gala our virgins are giving in honour of the Queen Shahrazad.

THE MAGICIAN : Then why is your body trembling ?

THE SLAVE-GIRL (*in a whisper*): I don't know.

THE MAGICIAN : Time and again I've warned you. Keep away from that old slave. I see debauchery in his eyes.

THE SLAVE-GIRL (*whispering*): He's not old.

THE MAGICIAN : You mutter as if the devil possessed you. Give me your hand, and come inside. Perhaps it's his ugliness that's made you frightened.

THE SLAVE-GIRL (*whispering*): He's not ugly.

[They go into the house. The negro appears, following the girl with his eyes.]

THE NEGRO : The loveliest of virgins ! Her body is like a man's shelter.

A VOICE (*just behind him*): Or the devil's ! Or my sword's !

THE NEGRO (*turning round*) : It's you, is it ?

THE EXECUTIONER : You recognise me easily.

THE NEGRO : Where have you left your sword, executioner ?

THE EXECUTIONER : I sold it in exchange for dreams.

THE NEGRO ♣ Now I understand your extravagance yesterday

at the tavern. The smoke of perfumed hemp still lingers and proves how generously you spent on me.

THE EXECUTIONER : We like to do what's right with our guests from abroad.

THE NEGRO : And what are you doing at present for your employer in the palace ?

THE EXECUTIONER : I've lost my job. I'm no longer the King's swordsman.

THE NEGRO : Ah, I see.

THE EXECUTIONER : What do you see ?

THE NEGRO : Aren't the virgins holding a feast to-day ?

THE EXECUTIONER : That's it. The King doesn't need a swordsman any more.

THE NEGRO *{admiringly}*: And the body of Shahrazad did that!

THE EXECUTIONER : No. The King loves Shahrazad, but that wasn't what stopped him killing virgins.

THE NEGRO *{suddenly listening}*: Listen to the singing. Beautiful and strange I Whose is this house ?

THE EXECUTIONER *{furtively}*: The magician's. The King comes here secretly to consult him.

THE NEGRO : The magician ! Is he that slave-girl's father ?

THE EXECUTIONER : They say so.

THE NEGRO *{listening to the music again}*: A singing-bird safe from your blade!

THE EXECUTIONER *{turning to go}*: Anything I miss goes to the devil.

THE NEGRO : Here, don't go. You've nothing to hurry for, I think.

THE EXECUTIONER: I think I have. My intuition tells me of something red.

THE NEGRO : No, it's black if you look. Your intuition's colour-blind.

[At that moment a weird moan, long drawn-out, comes from a window of the house.]

THE EXECUTIONER : Did you hear that ?

THE NEGRO : Hear what ?

THE EXECUTIONER : A sound like an owl hooting.

THE NEGRO : Owl. I see no owl. Don't fill the world with bad omens, you unemployed swordsman.

THE EXECUTIONER *{moving away}*: Well, God help the deaf, I say.

THE NEGRO : Wait a minute. Don't go till you've told me about the beautiful Shahrazad.

THE EXECUTIONER : What more do you want to know about her. I told you everything yesterday. Anyone would think you

had travelled thousands of miles to this city for no reason but her.

THE NEGRO (*pointing to the distance and shouting excitedly*): Look at the bright bursts over there. Like an explosion, or a fountain of light.

THE EXECUTIONER That's the King's chamber.

THE NEGRO : And the Queen's too ?

THE EXECUTIONER No, the Queen has her suite on the other side of the palace.

THE NEGRO : Strange. The King no longer needs the Queen to tell him stories till she sees the sunrise and stops the tale at the exact moment.

THE EXECUTIONER (*whispering*): The King is going mad.

THE NEGRO : But it's the madness of her love.

THE EXECUTIONER : No. A true madness.

THE NEGRO : Miserable is the man condemned to wander in the darkness.

[The strange moan comes from the window, a prolonged " Ah "].

THE NEGRO (*starting*): Who is it ?

THE VOICE FROM

THE WINDOW : Somebody who sees you and sees the glimmer in your eyes.

THE NEGRO : Someone who knows me ?

THE VOICE : Yes : and knows that you came before your time, in desperate longing for the light of the sun.

THE NEGRO : Has not the hour struck yet to see her who is the sun ?

THE VOICE : If you desire life, escape in the darkness and try not to be overtaken by the morning.

THE NEGRO : Why is that, my virgin ?

THE VOICE : The man to be is still a child, who has not yet learned to spare the black man when he sees him.

THE NEGRO : Is my life in danger ?

THE VOICE : Go, before the King's eyes fall on you. The King still remembers that one day he saw his wife in the arms of a negro slave. Escape, slave. Disappear. Return to the darkness.

THE NEGRO : Allow me one word.

THE VOICE : Be quick with it.

THE NEGRO : I want to see her.

THE VOICE : Did you come because of her ?

- THE NEGRO : Yes, and I must know what she is.
 THE VOICE : She is everything, and nothing is known about her.
 THE NEGRO : And you ? Don't you know ?
 THE VOICE : I do not. They kept questioning me about her.
 They implored me to answer. But I know nothing.
 They may cut my head off and ask it—perhaps it
 will tell them. Now go.
- THE NEGRO : One word more.
 THE VOICE : Go. I said go.
 THE NEGRO : Are you alone in this house ?
 THE VOICE : With me is a man who has been soaking in a jug
 of sesame fat for 40 days. The magician has fed him
 on nothing but figs and walnuts, until now all his
 flesh has gone, and he is left with only his veins
 and the concerns of his head. To-night the magician
 will bring him out of the jug and let him stand in
 the air to dry.
- THE NEGRO : Why has he done this ?
 THE VOICE : So that he will answer everything he is asked.
 THE NEGRO : And who will ask the questions ?
 THE VOICE : The King.
 THE NEGRO : And what does the King want to know ?
 THE VOICE : Away, slave. Be off from this place. They are
 coming to put out the lamp.
- THE NEGRO : But your father has already put it out.
- [The virgin again moans her long drawn-out " Ah "].*
- THE NEGRO : Why are you always making that queer sound ?
 THE VOICE : If a green cloud passes you in the darkness, remember
 Zahida the mad.

A dolt's laughter trumpeted
 Through lands of cactus meriting tears
 Sceptic time wrecked a flagon
 Of antique and forgotten mould.

4

A few years ago a Persian came to this protected city and, presenting himself to the Prime Minister announced himself as the foremost savant of his nation, and probably the most erudite man in the world. The Prime Minister was much impressed by his style of conversation, and extended his patronage to him, with the promise of a high and confidential appointment. At the same time he asked whether he was prepared to wrangle with our university-men, and the Persian seemed delighted with the challenge, and asked that the Minister should personally attend the disputation; and promised to put a question which should be the test of which party was the wiser.

The Prime Minister called the University before him, and when a large assembly had gathered he rehearsed the Persian's offer and asked whether the dons were prepared to submit themselves to a question of their opponent's choice. They agreed, and the Persian placed himself in front of them and put a question without making a sound. At this they turned to the Premier and complained that signs were only for the deaf and dumb, and that naturally they could not follow his meaning. But the Minister preferred to favour his Persian, and insisted that the University should find an answer or confess themselves the losers. So they asked for three days' respite to go apart and confer with one another; and this was allowed.

After an exhaustive debate on the means of combatting the foreigner and driving him home with his tail down, one of them proposed the following plan, to go out and find a yokel from the provinces, " a fellow with a stout cudgel, who doesn't know the difference between heaven and earth and broad and long. We will rig him out in a doctor's gown, and parade respectfully behind him to the Premier's house and offer him as our chosen representative to meet the Persian. And so we escape by setting the dog on the pig."

A number of them went down town looking for somebody to fit the description. And they lit on a yeoman from the villages, tall and thick-necked, with hams like a horse's and a long beard, and an outsize cape over his head and a gabardine cloak down to his knees. He was sitting in a shop eating boiled eggs, and when they entered there was still one egg which he had not broken into, and he thought that they must mean to steal it. So he popped it under his cape, and tried to slip away, but they caught hold of him. Then followed a conversation something like this :

THE YOKEL : I'm your servant and friend, poets, so help me God. Play fair by me and help me out.

THE DONS : Now, countryman, don't be afraid....

THE YOKEL : I *am* afraid. I'm afraid you'll put me in front of the tax-collector, who will nick off my head. Never until this year did I spend a penny or come near Cairo. And now I was hungry and happened to have these four eggs. I boiled them and ate three, and the one that was left, I put it behind my ear because I was feared you wanted it. and I've paid His Majesty all my taxes but sixpence. . . .

THE DONS : In actual fact our intention is to do you a favour. Carry out our instructions, and we will pay you the necessary sixpence, and moreover we will give you a dinner and an excellent round of amusements.

THE YOKEL Instruct anything you like. I'll do it. I'll dig a well, or pull a wall down, or cart mud, or bake dung-bricks for your fire. I'll do it all in no time. Or I'll fight anyone you like—you stand out, just give me a stick and leave it to me, I'll break a thousand heads for you.

THE DONS : Indeed, we want something much simpler. We shall instal you as our chairman and conduct you to a certain foreign gentleman, who will ask you questions which you must answer and show yourself his superior. But be very careful not to employ words in your answers. Confine yourself to gesticulation, please.

THE YOKEL : Take me along to this namby-pamby. Just say the word, and I'll give him a cuff that will put paid to his account whether he's the Prime Minister's man or the Emperor's. Trust me, that foreigner will come off worst.

They took him and put a great swelling turban on his head, and wrapped him in a doctor's gown. And he slipped his egg inside the flap. They told him " Leave your egg behind till we come back," but he would have none of them : " Never on your life. I won't leave it anywhere. This is my hen's egg, the very first egg she laid, at that. I'm keeping it to eat when I'm hungry."

So they let him have his own way, and walked him before them to the Prime Minister's house, and the Premier rose and greeted them with due courtesy. The master chosen to answer the Persian was presented, and the disputation began. The Persian seated himself with crossed legs, like a humble searcher after truth, but the peasant flopped down and thrust his legs out arrogantly as if he were in the cowshed. The Persian was much put out of countenance when he saw his rival seated so, and began to

think himself up against the sublimest of sages who held an academic wrangle in contempt.

First the Persian pointed with a stretched finger. The yokel quickly pointed two fingers back at him. The Persian then lifted his hand to the sky, and the yokel furiously clapped a hand on the floor. Then the Persian put his hand in his gown and fetched out a box, and opened it, and a chicken jumped out which he threw at his opponent. But the yokel instantly flipped the egg from the inside of his gown, and threw it at the Persian, who waved his arms in amazement, and, turning to the Minister and the assembled divines, told them " He has answered each question I posed. Be witness all, that henceforward I am one of his disciples."

The Minister showed his appreciation of the dons and their delegate, and they departed with triumph shining on their foreheads.

Once outside the house, the countryman's supporters asked him to explain the questions and answers, " neither of which we understood." " God help you," said the man, " You are scholars, but any mortal can bepuzzle you. There I was sitting in front of him, and I saw his eyes reddening and his anger rising, and he pointed his finger at me, as if to say * Take care, I shall pick your eye out with this finger/ So I pointed two fingers at him to say ' Be careful I don't pick out both your eyes.' And he lifted his hand and held it upwards, meaning that if I didn't give in he would crucify me on the ceiling. So I put my hand on the ground, meaning that if that was his line I was ready to flatten him down until all the devils were squeezed out of his carcass. And when he saw I was winning, he fished a little chicken from his coat, swanking because he ate chickens every day and lived in great bliss of eating and drinking. So I took out my boiled egg to show that I was as good as he and lived in the bliss of boiled eggs. And like that I answered his questions and beat him."

They went next to the Persian, and he said " Your doctor is the first man in the world to answer these questions, which I have been submitting to scholars all my life." They asked what the questions and answers signified, and he said : " I lifted my finger, as if affirming ' God is one,' and he lifted two fingers, affirming ' And He has no second.' I lifted my hand to the sky, stating 'Without pillars He raised up the heavens.' And he laid a hand on the ground to respond ' On frozen water He spread the earth.' And I took my box and brought out a chicken, which means ' And He creates the living out of the dead.' And he took an egg and replied ' And the dead out of the living.' A greater scholar than this I have never met."

Age that makes my friends moody
 Is myth beside the steady stabs
 Dealt me by each incidental glass

This bald skull and coarse body
 For which I planned a discipline
 Of proximity with the feminine

Qualify me for solo study
 Of the strict hermetic sciences
 And worship in the wilderness

Shunning the mosque on Friday,
 The warm and rank assemblies.

A huge tree in one of the worlds mountains, and the nests of a thousand
 crows in it, and a thousand owls that lived in a cave.

A hunter went killing sparrows one cold day. As he carried on the
 slaughter, his eyes were streaming. Said *one* bird to another: Look at
 the man crying. Said the other: Never mind his tears, watch his hands.

8

A lock on a ruin.

9

Al Rashid laid tables and garlanded his halls. And at the height of the feast he sent for Abul 'Atahiya and commanded him " Describe our portion of joys on this earth."

The poet recited:

" Live as you like, long as you like, secure
In the cool shadow of a fluted tower."

" That's good," said Haroun. " Can you cap it ? "

He recited:

" At dusk they enter, bringing you your love.
They bring at dawn what you were dreaming of."

The Caliph said : " That's good, too. Can you still cap it ? "

He went on:

" But when the last decision locks the breath
And lungs are cracking in a cloud of death
The memory of all you have grows vile,
The vain reflection of a helpless smile."

Then the Caliph fell silent.

His great vizier rebuked the poet, saying " The Prince of Believers summoned you to entertain him, and you have made him unhappy instead." But al Rashid said : " He saw us feeding like gluttons on ignorance, and his soul willed that we be offered no more of it."

10

PICTURES OF DEATH

'Amr Ibn Ma'ad Yakrib sat with 'Omar Ibn Khattab, who asked: " 'Amr, tell me of the bravest man you met." He obeyed the Prince of the Believers and said:

" One day I went out looking for a fight; and on my way I sighted a well-caparisoned horse with a spear upright in the saddle and a knight of striking countenance riding with a sword bared across his knees. I shouted * Draw, I am on you.' He cried * Who are you ? ' and when I told him ' 'Amr Ibn Ma'ad Yakrib,' he gasped and fell dead.

This, Prince of the Believers, was the most cowardly man I ever met.

Another day I rode till I reached a village where I saw a well-caparisoned horse and an upright spear, and the rider in a narrow pit relieving himself. I shouted 'Draw, I am on you.' He cried 'Who are you?' and when I told him 'Amr Ibn Ma'ad Yakrib' he said: 'Then play fair. You are on horseback, I down in the trough. Take oath not to kill me till I am in the saddle and my horse drawn up ready for you.' I gave him the oath, and he came out of the pit, removed his sword, and sat down. I asked him 'What's this?' He answered 'I will not mount and I will not fight; and you know better than to break your oath.'

I left him and went on my way; and this, Prince of the Believers, was the slyest man I ever met.

I went out another day, and when easy riding had offered me no one, I spurred the horse and tried this direction and that, till a knight appeared, who proved, as he drew near, to be a boy from Yamama. He saluted me and I responded, asking 'Who is the lad?'

'I am Al Harith Ibn Sa'ad, Knight of Aleppo.'

'Draw, I am on you.'

'Woe upon you, who are you?'

'I am Amr Ibn Ma'ad Yakrib.'

At this he said, *The mean and contemptible Amr. I would kill you but you are not worth it.'

The sentence mortified me and swelled like a balloon in my head. I said 'Look to yourself, only one will leave this place.' 'Thus will your mother lose a son,' he said, 'for I belong to the House of the Prophet, and no knight has ever imposed his will on us. I stand by my words. Choose for yourself which of us charges first.' I took the offer and elected to charge first, and drove at him, promising myself to plant the spearhead between his ribs. But he swerved low till he seemed the girdle of his horse, and I felt his lance on my head, and heard him saying 'Amr, that's one stroke. Be satisfied; for by God if I did not hate to kill men like you I would have killed you.'

Then I despised myself, and verily, Prince of the Believers, I would have preferred death to what I saw and heard; and I shouted 'By God, no. Only one of us shall leave this place.' He said 'Choose for yourself which of us charges first.' I galloped till I thought my spearhead was between his ribs, but he swerved till he seemed like trappings to his horse, and he struck me on the head with his lance saying 'Amr, that's the second blow.' My shame was the greater, and I repeated 'By God, only one of us shall leave this place.' He said 'Choose for yourself again.'

And again I chose and attacked, and aimed to place my spearhead between his ribs; but he instantly swung to earth and my point mistook

him; and then he was back on his horse striking my head with his lance and saying 'Amr, take the third blow. If I did not hate to kill you, I would have killed you/ 'Kill,' I said, 'for death were better than what I see and feel and what the young men of Arabia will say of this.' He replied 'Amr, forgiveness is threefold. But if you come within reach a fourth time, I will kill you.

By my vindictive ancestors:—
A fourth charge, and my spear
Drops you like cinder.'

Then I detested death and shrank from its image. * I have a favour to ask,' I said, and when he asked me to name it, told him 'To be one of your liegemen,' and was ready to accept that humble state, Prince of the Faithful. But he answered 'You are not among mine.' Which was more bitter even than what had passed; but I urged him, until he replied * Miserable man, do you know what I am questing.' No, I said. He told me 'I want to look on death.' And I: 'I accept death with you.'

'Let us go.'

And we rode all that day, and the next night, and the next day, until we reached an Arab village. And he told me that in this place there was death, and pointed to a dome, saying 'Under this dome there is red death. Either you hold my horse while I go after my endeavour, or I will hold your horse while you go fetch it for me.' I told him 'No, you go. For you know better the thing you want.'

He tossed the bridle to me, and went, while I consented, Prince of Believers, to be his groom. He passed through a door, and came out with a maiden who was beautiful beyond all the women I saw in my life. He made her mount a camel and said 'Amr, either you protect me and I lead the camel, or I stand guard and you lead.' I said * You be guard, and I will lead the camel.'

He tossed the bridle to me, and we walked, him in the rear, till day broke. Then he asked 'Amr, do you see anyone?' I looked: 'I see camels.' 'Quicken your pace.' Again he said 'Amr, look again: and if the folk are few, we shall meet stubbornness, strength, and death. If they are many, it is nothing.' And he asked me to look again, and I looked and said there were four or five. He said 'Quicken your pace,¹ which I did, with hooves of horses in my ears. Then he told me to swing off the road to the right and stop and turn the animals towards the road.

I stood at the right of our cavalcade and he the left, while the people approached us, and they were three, one the girl's father, and two her brothers, young men. They saluted us and swung to the left of the road and took station there. The old man spoke: 'Nephew, leave the maiden,¹ And he answered ^c That I would never do, nor was it for that I took her/

So the man made his younger son go for him. And he came out trailing his spear, and al Harith charged down chanting

Easier to flush the pallid dead
Than to spear with the fast rider
Whose fathers taught him war
— And luck spurred me after her.

Then he beat at him and dealt him a thrust which rocked his frame ; and he fell dead.

The old man bade his other son charge—' For a life of disgrace is worth nothing/ As this son came up, al Harith drove on him chanting

I will not live alone
From my love, disgraced,
Measure my stride and test
My strength with the stubborn horn.

Then he beat at him and dealt him a thrust, and he fell dead.

And the old man said ' Take your hands off the prisoner, nephew. I am not like those you have tried.' He answered ' That I would never do, nor was it for that I took her.' Then the old man gave him choice whether they charged together or one charged first; and the boy's choice was to charge together and they both rode into position. The old man sang

I will make my blank extinguished years
Like months : an old man
At the lintels of the dormitories
Demonstrating patience
With an iron scourge.

Al Harith sang

After absence, long voyage, and trials
Ended in the hope of the heart
I ruin no tunic and twills
On the rot of your hearth.

As he approached, the old man called ' Nephew, if you like I'll duel with you, then while you have strength I'll let you charge me, and if then I still have means I'll have a blow, too.' But the boy said ' I will charge first.' And he said ' Do your worst.' Al Harith lifted his sword; and when the old man saw it coming down over his head, he stabbed him in the middle and slashed his stomach. And both fell dead.

And so, Prince of the Believers, I took four horses and four swords and approached the camel. But when I had tied the bridles of the horses together and started leading them forward, the girl said ' 'Amr, you are not my companion, and I am not what you see. Had you been fit for me,

Garnish with gilt hoods
 the gates : and an invert
 terrace of stalactites
 glows in a submarine recess.
 This specialist brocade
 is a mere hallucination
 its azure and sun and plantation
 ephemeral as fine skies
 Some with beasts in the wood
 some with the fowl in disaster
 are the antique lineal masters
 hunting their sperm down ornate galleries.

12

Ask the poet in the ruin wiping his eyes
 What harm it would do if he wiped his bottom
 Disease and death were the mode of dead centuries
 We write about the ferment of the atom.

THE PARTITION

At its outset the State is safe from quarrels for the power. It retains both that fanaticism which created it and inspired its victories, and that nomad spirit which is the badge of fanaticism. If the State has risen on the basis of religion, its religious character guarantees it from internecine disputes ; if it has established itself by conquest alone, the nomad energy which directed the conquests still gives the same guarantee, whether against personal ambitions or the struggles of dogma.

While the State keeps that primitive nomad character, its head, true to his nomad ways, is free from arrogance, close to his people, easily accessible. But as his power takes root and his magnificence begins to discriminate him, he requires the means of conferring with his generals and advisers apart from his people and the rank and file of his attendants ; he looks for the maximum seclusion in which to deal with confidential affairs. Accordingly he introduces a system of permits at the door, which

keeps out even members of his retinue and administration if they are such as he prefers not to trust; and he appoints an usher to operate the system.

As the importance of the State expands and synchronously it is beset by the growth of tendentious theories, the head of the State gradually assumes the strange and peculiar role of monarch, to which must be brought special and precise capacities. It may then happen that certain of those who meet him, ignorant of the peculiarities of his office, commit acts which displease him and draw his wrath, and perhaps vengeance on themselves. Therefore all but the closest of his favourites who have specialised in the correct form he partitions from contact, and seeks continuously to preserve himself from scenes that may provoke his displeasure and expose his subjects to punishment. He nominates a second usher, more intimate than the first; and while this person conducts his closest favourites to him and partitions off the rest, the other conducts officials to the councils and partitions off the common masses.

In Arab history the first usher is found under the 'Ummayyid Caliphs, who called him " Keeper of the Partition." When the 'Abbasids came and the empire waxed to its celebrated heights of luxury and magnificence, the monarchy, too, reached its apex, and there was a demand for the second usher, who more properly deserved the name. Moreover, the 'Abbasid Caliphs, as their annals record, had at their gates two establishments, one for their special officials, one for the general public.

Then a third usher comes, more personal than either of his predecessors, his presence necessary to meet attempts on the head of the State. For certain high employees and royal favourites begin to attach themselves to his son and to seek an ascendancy over the young man. In immediate reaction to their efforts the king throws' another screen between himself and both retinues, his own and his son's. He imposes the belief that contact with himself involves the violation of an awful veil and the transgression of the code of etiquette, and thus hopes to avoid intercourse with society. As he persists in this practice it gradually lays hold on him till self-seclusion is one of his essential characteristics. This normally happens when a State is almost at the end of its career. It is a symptom of senility and exhaustion of power.

At last it became clear that the ambition of happiness in the other life was idle unless I abandoned self-gratification and gave myself up to piety ; and that there was only one way to do this, to turn my back on fame, wealth, and the concerns and associations of the world. When I examined myself I saw common business thick upon me. I looked at my best work, my teaching and lecturing, and found it neither important nor helpful on the road to the other life. I had to ask myself why I was occupied with education, and I realised that it was not all for the glory of God. And with a certainty beyond all doubt I saw that I was on the lip of a dizzy abyss, and that unless I laboured to repair my condition the inferno would claim me.

Day and night I meditated this problem, deciding every hour to leave Baghdad and the life I led there, and the next hour wavering in my resolution, and falling back a step for every step I went forward. Whenever I was confirmed in my affection for the other life, the army of lust made a new inroad and by the afternoon I was tepid and faint. The wants of the world constantly threw shackles on me and held me fast, although the crier of faith was singing out " Depart. You have little time remaining to live, and there is a long voyage in front of you. All your work, scholarship and effort, all is hypocrisy and dream. When will you prepare for the other world, if not now ? When are you going to cut away the moorings of this world, if not now ? "

My heart was thus resolved on escape, and I prepared my flight. But the devil came back, whispering " Don't succumb to a passing fancy. These thoughts wear off quickly. If you give way, and desert your great reputation and your regular routine, what will you do ? What will you do if you lose this good life free from anger or bitterness, distinguished by honours beyond the reach of envy ? You will be thrown on your own resources. You will never be able to return' So I still hesitated, torn between the warring hosts of this world and the appeals of the other life. The struggle raged for about six months, after which the frontiers of choice were overrun and I was submitted to obligation. For God locked my tongue and I was unable to lecture. Not a word would come from my throat, and despite violent efforts I could not lecture a single day to sweeten the hearts of those who resorted to me. That was a grievous impotence, and I lost the power to take food and drink and digest. And so I declined, and my capacities began to disintegrate, and the doctors

who attended me finally despaired, analysing my weakness as something troubling the heart and thence affecting the whole body:—" And our medication cannot touch this disease unless the secret of the fundamental affliction is cleared up."

So feeling that my happiness and power of choice had lapsed, I turned for refuge to God, be He praised, and sought Him, as the man who has no alternative must. And He who answers the call of the compelled, answered me. After that it seemed easier for my soul to forego status, wealth, relatives, children, friends. I announced my intention of going to Mecca, while secretly determining to travel to the Levant where I would stay unknown to the Caliph or my friends. By this strategy I meant to leave Baghdad and never return. My flight was a mystery and the topic of long debates among all the religious leaders of 'Iraq. They could not understand a man turning his back on the highest ecclesiastical office in the world—of such pitiable measure was their knowledge. People at large were bewildered by the many conflicting accounts of my action. Those distant from 'Iraq and out of touch with events, thought I must have fled in fear of the government. But those on the spot, who knew by the evidence of their own senses that the rulers depended on me and were closely attached to me while I in return avoided and ignored them, could only ascribe what I did to a celestial origin, permitting of no explanation but that an eye had afflicted the people of Islam and the company of knowledge.

I left Baghdad, having distributed all the money I had ; except that I retained enough to keep body and soul together and feed my children. For to this use I considered the money could be not improperly put, since it came from the national fund specially set aside for public use among the Moslems. I could think of no coinage in the world which was more appropriate than this to be taken by a scholar of God for the needs of his dependants.

I reached the Levant and stayed there some two years, and undertook no occupation, but stayed apart from men, disciplining myself and accepting struggle and labouring to confirm the spirit, elevate the morals, purify the heart, and empower these for the contemplation of God according to the Sufi doctrines. For a period I confined myself in the mosque of Damascus, and stayed on the minaret all day long with the door barred.

IS

A young girl, only twenty years old, still not a bride. She stumbled as she was going into a dark room and fell over the step, and no one uttered the name of God to save her. While she lay there unconscious an affliction gripped her body and paralysed it. For two or three months she sickened; and though her friends brought doctor after doctor, not one of them could give her healing or a cure.

Then came her aunt on a visit and told her mother "Perhaps she's possessed : take her along to the saints." Without ado the mother took her to Sidi Nigm id Din, took her three times, and another three times to Abul Su'ud. On the last visit the girl dropped into a swoon, and her people saw that she had a demon in her.

They went and brought the Wise Woman who performs the Zar, and she instructed them: "Get ready a pair of pigeons, one male, one female ; a pair of fowl, one a cock, one a hen; a pair of Sudani ducks; and either a pure brown sheep or a white sheep with brown ankles. Get three Alexandrian candles, coloured red, green, pink, milk, and yellow; and two pounds of nuts—walnuts, almonds, hazel nuts—and raisins. Buy her amulets for the heart, the head, the arms, and the wrists, and two embroidered rings of Hegazi ware, and a silver necklace, a white cloak and a white veil. I will come on Monday in the afternoon."

On Monday the Wise Woman came to the afflicted girl at her house, sat on the floor, and lit a fragment of charcoal to burn the incense she had brought—pieces of black incense and sandalwood and four pieces of mastic. Then she showered incense on the guests. Then she sat beating a drum, and all the women who had come to help her beat on tambourines. They sang to the demon. First a song of the Hegaz. Then one from the Sudan. Next one from Morocco. Soon they were like an assembly in a trance, nodding dizzily. The Wise Woman next put the candle, the nuts, and the sick girl's trinkets on a stool; and the girl was brought in and showered with incense, while the Wise Woman sang in the Hegazi and other dialects.

Yet still the swoon was on the girl and her demon had not yet spoken. So the guests had supper and afterwards went on beating their drums till midnight; but still the demon did not speak. When they were tired they slept. Till daylight; when they breakfasted, and began drumming again ; and fetched the sheep and mounted the girl on its back and rode her seven times round the stool. Then they slaughtered the animal under

her, splashed her with the blood and smeared it on her cheeks. And a profounder swoon settled on her than before.

It occurred to them that her demon might be a Christian, and they tapped out a Christian measure, and sang this song to it:

O monastery, o monastery men,
 Sweet are the child Nazarenes,
 O prince and son of a prince
 What brought you to Nazareth lane ?
 O the monastery men, George and John,
 I have heard you are Nazarenes,
 I found on a Monday morning
 The monastery all Nazarenes.

At that moment the demon spoke and declared his name. The woman jumped up and shrieked for joy, for the demon was speaking and making his claims. The Wise Woman took her pay and collected her tips from the guests. She took two or three cones of sugar and two pounds of coffee and such candles and nuts as remained. She took one of the pigeons and the hen and a quarter of the sheep and two boxes of cigarettes. And went walking to her house—dizzy as a chicken with all the nodding, the swaying to left and right, the disheveling of hair, the ripping of garments, as now she stood, now danced, now rolled about the ground. And every woman went away in the same state. For when the demon passes into one of them, she no longer knows herself, and the demon in her does it all, she feels no tiredness till the Zar is over and her body is rung out. Then

Mulberry dale
 Told is the tale
 Was it matter or chatter ?
 He who says matter
 Shall sing down the dale
 And he who says chatter
 Shall tell a tale.

16

" Be loyal to your brother, whether he does wrong or suffers it."

They said: " We are loyal when he is wronged, but how may we be loyal to him if he is the wrong-doer ? "

He answered : " By preventing him doing wrong—that is the definition of loyalty."

I7

THE FIRST GOLDEN BALLAD

Beyond that reef of sand, recalling a house
And a lady, dismount where the winds cross
Cleaning the still extant traces of colony between
Four famous dunes. Like pepper-seeds in the distance
The dung of white stags in courtyards and cisterns,
Resin blew, hard on the eyes, one morning
Beside the acacia watching the camels going.
And now, for all remonstrance and talk of patience
I will grieve, somewhere in this comfortless ruin
And make a place and my peace with the past.

There were good days with the clover-smelling wenches.
Best by the pool when I caught a clan drenching.
I brought them in file to beg their things back,
Playing for one that hung back ; and paid them,
All but her, with fat like tassels of satin,
Chops from the fast camel I slaughtered. But her
I forced to ride in a topheavy howdah,
Tilting along with me by her, her tattling
Of illegal burdening of beasts, and I tickling
Her senses, and dropping the reins, and cropping the quinces.

And sweet as her were the more complex raps
At pregnant wives and mothers giving pap.
An infant would scream, a woman half turning
Roll an eyeball in a lolling head.
There were jilts on spines of sand, a coquette
Who carved my heart in brow-beating range,
And no sauce of tears, till I disengaged
The clung tissue. There was the pure ovoid
In boudoir and ward and a watched ring.
I went in at leisure and kept her happy.

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

I passed the assassins and found the Pleiades.
They surfaced round her with sash and beads.
She from her screen and chill gauze of shift
Turned and turned a phrase on bawdy men.
But we skirted the yards, she twitched her train
To a tail switching the sand on the tell-tale trace.
And under a whorl of crested dunes I pressed
Her temples back with her ankles and slender
Waist and shearings of flame for breast and sift
Of yolk for skin, a flamingo fledgling from the seas.

On account of laden trees I lost my friends,
Took their rebukes against beds with chips of incense,
Their cold looks for arms of eucalyptus
And snake fingers, meaning social intercourse
Such as I changed for other. Was not seduced
The eyeless way to totem bands. But pain
Came with a night like seawaves, a brine curtain
That moored its sting of stars on mountain masses.
Night lay long, I longed for it rising, it rose
With denser dawn between the thighs untensing.

I strapped a pouch, I walked where times of fire
Had gorged the passes. The wolf like a player
Was roaring the packs his losses. I answered :
" Our trades line no pockets. You and the lover
Thriftlessly eat what you win. We are leaner
By this ploughing/* Next day the birds shut still in
The hills I rode early a roan stallion,
A new thing, fluid and sheen as a sliver,
A cataract thing, a flux dancer,
After my cracked vases a crucible of the air.

The herds ripped away like cowries. I whipped
With my hands this turning top. We outstripped
The first riders and lunged at the buffalo
And the ruffled mates. Clashed till henna flecks
Of their blood, but no tired ooze, dashed his neck.
The cooks were busy that night jointing and broiling.
I sat watching his limbs as sleek as rollers
Of bridal oil. He stayed in my eyes, decked out
All night in his trappings, not sent away,
And webbed with decent tail his stride and dip.

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

My stretched arm burns in a flash, between shoals
Of crowned cloud, that lean on both flanks of the hills.
Rain pours on Katheitha, kisses the big trees
On Kanahbil, seizes the uplands of Qanan
Chasing the ibex, erasing the less than stone.
Only the major peaks, the bare spindles
Cap the deluge. Till dawn, and dwindling
It leaves tendrils like gay wares of Yemen
In sands where, drunk at the rims of vallies,
The thrushes tell the sun spiced folly.

Till evening, and far-off like sprigs of wild onion
The drowsy leopards at the limit of the vallies.

i8

Bodies of water like horses
Breaking from the starter's rope
Hit the bath with a white
Roll of fluid ingots. Wind
Warms overhead creasing it.
The sun doubles it grimacing
Like an uncle. The rain adds
Gum and sorrow to the flow.
But at night the stars descend
In silent order, and you see
The cosmos standing on its hands.

19

Born of prime heat, those epic sons excelled.
We, born of dotage, are their thin remnants.
O might we be like moons, impelled
In lustrous series to new vehemence.

20

Corners conceal treasures.

AZRAEL

Count Azrael came to me from Europe in a trance
His English nails were leonine and scalloped
From his French dental-plate a thousand elephants
Dived in an Austrian tunnel when he swallowed.

He wore the black shirt of a Roman politician
Beside him was a scythe of German brand
He dipped into a pouch of Spanish ammunition
He had a Greek stiletto in his hand

He stopped the traffic with Hungarian bravado
He steered towards a pit of Belgian slack
And staring through a pair of lenses ground at Oslo
He wondered when the robot world would crack.

I crossed myself, he made a motion in Bulgarian
I spoke, he spoke to me in Portugese
I waved my hand, he waved goodbye in High Bavarian
I woke, and rummaged for my fleas.

Daughter of the sheikh trimming ribbons round your neck
You had better tell your father to stop you going for water
I shall change my favourite hack for the butcher's snicker-snack
And learn the art of slaughter on your slack ungodly father.

23

PARIS DANCINGS

Down in the fug a drum gathers
Darkies and living moons
"With shots of stammering phrases
Sweeter than chloroform

The short asbestos pipes
Sweat among the damned
The long hoot like fans
At the locked arena
Where trunks bend for love

Original woman shuttles
To the stretched black horn
The shells clack and angels
Come down like catherine-wheels
In the pit where every vein
Froths in Mlle. Josephine

Throttle the fool who confused
Brevity with wit
Her waist winds and unwinds
Three hours and not a fidget
Cheapen your best precious
Hashing all in all
And by God, dead matter crawls
And a raw egg for the poets.

Frizz of the Cameroons
And the Sorbonne shingle
Step through Leagues of Nations
Spend and drop palpitating
Into nature's geography
While the thermometer burns
And the world goes carbon.

Europe learns a fashion
Brings back her stokers
Who had all been paid off
Heaps up the bunkers
With fuel of the slave trade
Right and left he stamps
A piece of universe
Limbs clapping limbs
And muscle drilled in dough

The girl from Berlin
Rubs in the thickets
Steel is plied and bent
Along Somali basins
As she clowns in a dress
Of a dangling alphabet
And those who don't feel
See both come off well.

If your heart's still lofty
Stick to Robin Hood
And the sweet chariot
If your head's still soft
There's always the harlot
And the feet run wild.

24

NARCISSUS

Drinkers at evening, drunkards at dawn,
Pass this bowl of narcissus on the stairs,
The air quivers with the marriage
Of two distillations.

Pause for this flower, on whose buds
Drops of dew are clinging like tears
Before eyes shed them. Then pass on
Kindled to drink.

During the reign of Nahoud, King of India, backgammon was invented. This game interpreted the world as a place where profit and livelihood can be gained neither by ability nor by cunning, but where men are subject to vicissitude and their affairs to contradiction. The board is divided into twelve compartments according to the number of months in the year; and there are twelve dogs, or pieces, according to the number of days in the month. The dice represents fate. On the luck of its fall depends success or failure. Thus it is implied that however intelligent or resolute a man may be, he is helpless unless he has chance and fate on his side. Only good fortune produces welfare and opportunity in this world.

Later followed King Balhit, in whose time chess was invented, a game which promptly superseded backgammon because it brought a new symbolism by which the resolute man was sure of his triumph and the ignorant man bound to fail. The king, who played with his counsellors, codified the rules of the game, and his book on the subject was widely circulated throughout the nation. The pieces were shaped in the likenesses of human beings and certain animals, and varying degrees of importance were assigned to each, beginning with the shah, who stood for the government and administration, and working thence downwards. There was synchronously a second line of symbolism, by which all pieces stood for the supreme bodies, the seven planets and the twelve signs of **the zodiac**.

Chess now became the criterion of action throughout the national life. If, for example, an enemy attacked the land and advanced in a certain pattern, Balhit's government would use the chess-board to determine from what direction, at what time, and with what speed they would counter-attack.

Moreover, the Indians have a secret integrated with the formula of chess and the multiples of the board. It is their key to the sublime motions of the planets and the first cause. The sum of the multiples is 18,446, 740, 073, 707, 551, 615. Each group of the configuration has its particular meaning, affording an explanation of the march of time and its cycles, the compulsion of the celestial bodies over this earth, and the links that connect them with the human soul.

The Greeks, Romans, and other peoples have different routines and explanations of chess, described by experts like Souli and 'Adli in their treatises on the game.

26

TO A LATE COMPOSER

Every day another reception and garlands of rhetoric over a tomb.
 This man taught the nation nothing, planted no desert swith pylons.
 We remnants are enriched, but his friends and family were impoverished
 Slander arrested him in kennels of aphrodisiac and hashish

But beams make tears of what they play on. He filled ears and throat
 With the turmoil of his presence first, then with his stiff quiet.
 Unthought stresses of voice and instrument replaneted his firmament
 Beyond the mason on the site he built for duration
 Set for perpetuity more than the seedsman, explored properties
 Rare in the luckiest tendril or the talented stone.

The sands were dry and ready for the fall.
 An Alexandrian nightingale with a sky-nest
 Lighted on the shore from a dark flowering hill
 He chose where only the kites circled in a cleft
 An hour when the food-gatherers were away busy
 He chose to struggle with the two horizons
 And alert as a parrot he intercepted
 The surprise of the world's shouts and whispers.

A frenzy in the sands was fretting
 For his harangues and elegiac speech
 For soliloquies on the reed
 And sighs which through gaping notches
 Achieve the slopes and parapets
 In continents of the pure dead.

The house of earth was opened, down its corridors of art
 Consolation was blown from the cool belts. And do not lament
 For art. There is always nourishment streaming in the crevices of air,
 The calendar's quickening restores the corpses, and the meteors
 In the shafts of Karnak make bonfires among the pillars
 And what washes through Egypt is tired and brilliant as wax.

The master, relaxed : the end of his blaze was disaster.
 He quitted his disquiet, even the random and epileptic
 Revelations, by which he committed more monuments to us
 Than legions have left banners in this sand.

Still in the lay kingdom chants a boy,
 Frail as bamboo, pink with tossing
 The ball of twine that cradles space

He clings to the suburbs, restless, locking his hands
 — And the premise of art is an alabaster blush.

Every summary has a trend
 Every question has an answer
 Every event has an hour
 Every action has its account
 Every ascent has its limit
 Every man has his book of fate.

Every guarantee is a symbol of death
 Every building a promise of destruction
 Every king and his domain the original of dust.

Upheavals and insurrection
 And more than sweet surfeit provoke
 Twitches of the eye. At beauty thrown
 The fist clenches on itself.

Every day is a stage to death
 You die while you play with arts and towers
 Every door of the world you shut for safety
 Opens a door on a new fang
 You thought you were a husk when you found
 The milk of life meant endless churning.

But you are not lust's conqueror
 To hold it with effort and fret
 All you see was planned by a dear king
 Whose operations are like a presence
 And he accessible with an excuse.

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

We have grown so old, old friends
We might never have been young
Though our days were stalks of basil
Wet and waving and beaming
We spent long wanting a house
A place of violence and theft
We shall spend longer trying to be young
Tinkering with juvenilia
And a steady hole in the scalp.

Youth went out despite everything
There should be no cause when youth wears out
But death and the mountain.

28

THE TELEGRAPH WIRE AND THE PUFFER TRAIN

First praised be ancient God who knows how pinched we are
Next praised be the good Prophet whose light has appeared from far
Whose light has shone from far over river and hill
O listen all you sweethearts to the perfect tale I tell.
I call it " A breeze for the brain, the wire and the puffer train "
And may God help me sing it till the moon dies again.

A wonderful iron thing comes pounding out of the blue
A fire is red in its heart, sparks are red on its brow
I will give you marvellous words for it, open your ears wide
I call it the puffer train with the telegraph wire by its side
The telegraph wire beside it, dear, I name it in words of old
Words like an orphan jewel, a ruby or emerald.

They quarrelled once for four hundred and four and forty days
Till their cursing troubled knowledge and birds dropped dead on the ways

The puffer train boy said " Beware, you shall be the talk of the town
My wrath shall tower over you, I shall pound your bags of bone
Until you accept my order and recognise me as the high
Knight of the puffer train that comes in the wink of an eye.
I am the train, as I go I shriek like an enraged ass

The blind man knows I am coming and dodges down till I pass
 I am the train, my secret is strange, I slide like a snake
 I clatter along the line and the trees begin to quake
 And quake the lordly castles that know my true degree
 And the mortal sin it is that you should stand above me.

" You stand on dizzy trestles that tremble in every gust
 In every gust they tremble and tumble in the dust
 But I race stark and black never looking back
 Worth a thousand purses of gold as I pace along the track.
 Men jump to their feet and run, warriors turn and flee,
 Warriors die, and their wives shed tears deep as the sea
 Or at least as deep as rivers, and their old enemies stroll
 With smiles of satisfaction to view the burial-hole."

So the puffer train boy was conceited and swollen with his glories
 And the wire replied indignantly " O tempora, o mores.
 When a train abuses a wire the world is bad indeed.
 If there be scholars among you they know my vigour and speed.
 In speed I surpass horses and any peer of the land
 My elegant trestles do duties a train cannot understand.

" With Tom, Dick, and Harry on board you lumber on like a beast
 If the coal runs out you stop in the uninhabited waste
 If the coal runs out you flop like a cow to be dragged along
 You were once prostrated, I hummed, I fetched help two hundred strong
 I fetched two hundred intelligent folk to repair you when you went wrong.

" But long you lay there mouldering, your captain died in disgrace,
 The village sold out round you, the squire sold his estates,
 And no one came except couples fretting for somewhere to sleep
 And the goats who made you their trough and the wandering sheep.

" Why is this wire humming ? It is carrying swifter than birds
 Reliable news to cities, truth at a penny a word.

Mine is the pure movement, me all men exalt
 You are the clumsy hack snorting from halt to halt
 Between one halt and another you lose an age of time
 Your skin is rusty iron and the snuff you take is grime^o

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

The puffer train boy was abashed, but said with a bold face
" The wire has a warped mind and misrepresents the case.
I am the secret of kings, from desert and field they mount me
The train is gliding, gliding for the heroes of the country
Every ticket is stamped with a separate number in stone
I am the train, I bellow my splendid way alone.
Girls with cheeks like wine and delicate bosoms ride
They carry musical instruments and play to please all inside
And mighty is my engine, I could turn a hundred bales
Of flax or wool in a jiffy as I drive along the rails
I knead and bake and puff, darlings, a powerful anthropoid
My clever driver touches a key and I vanish in the void."

The telegraph wire replied " I have seen you perform these tricks
Grumbling from Upper Egypt under a load of bricks
Grumbling at the merchants, quarrelling through the night
Going by the honey villages your frame shaking with fright.
I do my work with dignity and a sense of its importance
I flash to Damietta and you set off in accordance
With the message I deliver, and if you do otherwise
You ramble into your brother and disaster tears the skies
And disaster twists the skies and shrieks appal the Nile
Like the shrieks of the jungle at evening, and I stand by and smile."

Then the puffer train gave in to its master and said " It is true.
You are the beautiful one. I am nothing without you.
To you I shall turn for counsel. And on the iron path
I shall call for assistance from you, comrade the telegraph."

And now the story is over, walk in the shadow and pray
That the Prophet who rules the peoples may wipe our tears away.
Pray by the chosen Prophet from whose hands the waters sprang,
To whom the mute stone talked, and the lizard came and sang.

A STORY OF THE DOLLS

God said: " And He inspected the birds and asked ' Why do I not see the hoopoe among you ? Is he one of the absentees ?' "

Those who are versed in the stories of the ancients say that when God's Prophet, Solomon son of David (peace be on father and son alike), had finished building Jerusalem, he decided to journey to the Land of Taboos, and made ready to set out with such a company of men, djinns, demons, birds and beasts that the caravan was a hundred miles long. He summoned a breeze, and it came and carried them to Mecca, where he stayed performing ceremonials and sacrifices. And he told the people the good tidings of the coming of the Prophet, Mohammed, and that Mohammed would be lord of the Prophets and their seal.

He thought next of proceeding to Yemen, and leaving Mecca in the morning marched for a month through the wilderness of San'a following the star of Suheil at sunset. And he saw a beautiful white land of shining pastures, and desired to camp there and pray and eat. But when he looked for water he could find none, and called for the hoopoe. For Solomon always relied on the hoopoe to find water, since it could see the springs under the earth as clearly as you see the cup in your hand, and would peck through the soil until the water was visible and its depth could be measured; and then Solomon would send the demons to peel away the remaining earth and draw the water. And this is so despite the incredulity of the scholar who asked how the hoopoe, who could not see the net under a finger's layer of dust, could see water under the earth. That sceptic was well answered by another scholar: " O wretch, when fate comes eyes are blinded."

Solomon called for the hoopoe, but could not find him, and was angry and uttered threats. And at last the hoopoe returned and said "I am coming from Sheba with news for you. I have seen a woman ruling a nation."

When Solomon's caravan had halted, the hoopoe had said to himself " Solomon is busy at the moment. I will take a trip to the upper skies." And he had flown upwards, and surveyed the length and breadth of the world to right and left. And seeing the garden of Queen Bulqais, he had dropped among its trees, and there met the hoopoe of Yemen. Solomon's hoopoe was called Ya'fur and the Yemen hoopoe 'Afeer.

"Where do you come from?" asked 'Afeer, "and where are you making for?" "I come from the Levant," said Ya'fur, "with my master Solomon, son of David, peace be upon him." 'Afeer asked "Who is Solomon, son of David?" And Ya'fur told him "King of djinns and men, of demons and beasts, and of tempests. And where is your home?" 'Afeer said "I belong to this country." And when Ya'fur said "Who is its king?" he was told "A woman." He asked her name, and was told that she was called Bulqais, and her kingdom was no less magnificent than Solomon's, for she was queen over all the Yemen and her generals numbered twelve thousand each with a hundred thousand troops under his command:—"Will you come with me to see her kingdom?" Ya'fur shook his head: "I am afraid Solomon will need me to look for water at prayer time, and will find me absent." But 'Afeer assured him that news of the queen would delight his master and they went together till they had seen Bulqais and her kingdom. And it was the hour of sunset prayer before Ya'fur returned.

Now when Solomon dismounted for the sunset prayer, he asked the people for water, and the djinns and the demons, but none of them knew where to find it, and therefore he turned again to ask for the hoopoe, who was not there. And Solomon was angry and uttered threats against him. Or, according to another version of the story, a fragment of the sun fell on the king's head, and he looked up and saw the hoopoe's place empty. Then he called for the bird-master, the eagle, who, being asked about the hoopoe, replied "Righteousness be the lot of the king, I do not know where he is, nor have I sent him on any errand." And Solomon was enraged and swore either to slay the bird or submit him to violent torture—over the nature of which scholars have differed, some considering that the king meant to pluck his feathers and tail and toss him naked on an an-f-hill to be bitten, some that the king was going to pluck his feathers and tie his legs and expose him to the sun, and others interpreting the punishment as exposure to the sun under a coat of tar, imprisonment in a cage, separation from his mate, or dismissal from the royal service. But whatever the exact intention, Solomon added the stipulation "unless he returns with a convincing plea." Then he ordered the eagle, master of the birds, to bring the hoopoe back on the instant. The eagle lifted himself to the very margins of the air, and surveyed the earth (which looked to his eye as a bowl in your hands looks to you) and gazed right and left till he detected the hoopoe coming from Yemen way. With death in his heart he fell on him, but the hoopoe saw the evil in his glance and invoked God on him, saying "By Him who gave you strength and power, have mercy on me and spare me harm." And the eagle swerved away, but said "Better your mother had not delivered you. God's Prophet, Solomon, has vowed your torture or your death." But the hoopoe asked

" Does not God's Prophet make any stipulation ? " And the bird-master said " Yes, he will allow a convincing plea."

The hoopoe and the eagle flew side by side until they reached Solomon, to whom the eagle said " I have brought you the hoopoe, Prophet of God." The hoopoe came to the king hanging his head, and his tail and wings ignominiously dragging the ground, and Solomon clutched him by the neck and picked him up roughly, and said " Where have you been ? Great torture is waiting for you." And the hoopoe said " Remember the Day of Judgment when you will stand before God whose Prophet you are." And at these words Solomon shuddered, and pardoned him, but asked him " What kept you late ? " Then the hoopoe told him " I have learned a thing hitherto outside even the embrace of your knowledge. From Sheba I come bringing you news. I have seen a woman ruling the land and possessing some portion of everything in the world. And her name is Bulqais, daughter of Bashrakh.

" Her father was a great king, who ruled all Yemen, and told the kings at the earth's poles that they were not his equals and unfit to offer him a bride from their houses. He chose a woman from the djinns, called Rayhana, daughter of Shukr, for at that time men and djinns mixed and intermarried. Out of the marriage was born BaTama: who is Bulqais, but there were no other children, neither sons nor daughters. When her father died, and there was no boy to succeed him, she aspired to his title, and called on the nation to enthrone her; and some were willing to obey, but others refused, preferring a man, whom they enthroned. Then the Yemen was divided between the two parties, each seizing a portion of the land.

" The new king conducted himself wantonly and molested the women, and those who had elected him wished what they had done undone, but were now powerless. And Bulqais, who jealously watched every development, wrote proposing herself in wedlock. And the king answered that only despair of her had prevented him making the same proposal; so she wrote a second time, saying * I do not dislike you, for you are deserving and have done much. Assemble the men of my family and ask them for my hand.' He gathered them and asked ; and when her kinsmen doubted whether she would accept, he told them that the first move came from her and showed them the documents. They repaired to her and mentioned the matter, and she said, ' Yes, though I do not love him, I love motherhood. And I love fortune, which has smiled on him.' So they were married. And when the bridal procession was over, she fetched a great multitude of her suite and retinue until his buildings and palaces overflowed with them. And she gave the king wine and made him drunk, and cut off his head, and retired by night to her house. In the morning the people woke to find the king dead and his head fixed on the palace

gates, and realised that the marriage had been a stratagem. Messengers were sent to offer Bulqais the kingdom, seeing that she deserved it more than another, and she told them ' Overwhelming shame made me kill him.' Then she was crowned. And her affairs prospered and time went smoothly for her."

When the hoopoe had finished, Solomon said " We will discover whether you tell the truth or are numbered with the liars." And he penned a letter and wrote : " From the slave of God, Solomon, son of David, to Bulqais, Queen of Sheba. In the name of God, the merciful and compassionate, peace be on him who follows guidance. Do not be proud. Come to me a Moslem." Ibn Garaig and others record that there was not one word more in the message, for of all writers his phrases were the best-turned and most succinct, as were these of the whole band of Prophets, the prayers and peace of God be on them. Once they had dictated a sentence they would never lengthen or expand it.

And when he had finished the letter, Solomon powdered it with musk and stamped it with his ring, and told the hoopoe " Take this letter and drop it by her, and be near in case she sends back an answer." And the hoopoe took it and flew to Bulqais. Now she was staying three days, journey from San'a, in a country called Ma'rab, where she had a palace, the doors of which she bolted before she slept, taking the keys with her and guarding them under her pillow. And at this moment she had withdrawn and closed the doors. In Qitaba's version, the hoopoe came to her when she was stretched on her back and let the paper fall on her breast. Muqatil says that the hoopoe carried the letter in his beak and flew over her head, and hovered there beating his wings an hour or more, and the people watching him ; until at last she lifted her head, and he dropped the letter in her lap. Wahib Ibn Munabbih, however, tells differently, how the queen had a slit in the wall above her, so placed that the sun glanced through at the moment it rose, and the beams struck the bed, and the queen was wakened and knelt to them. The hoopoe came to this slit and covered it with his wings, and when the sun rose, the queen did not know, for the rays were blocked. And at last she woke and thought that the sun was late in rising and rose to look for it. And at that moment he dropped the letter in front of her. And she took it, and when she saw the seal she trembled . . .

30

Haroun al Rashid had a young slave-girl, with the build and grace of a boy. One day when she was standing and pouring water over the Caliph's hands from the spout of a beaker she had brought, her master's son, a

still unbearded youth, was seated at the rear of the throne, and flashed a sign to her, pressing his hand to his lips in the motion of a kiss. She replied only with a scolding flash of the eyes, but that was enough to make her quiver for a moment as she poured, and al Rashid noticed: "What is this?" he said. "Put down the vessel." She did so. "Tell me the truth," he demanded, "or, by God, I will kill you." "Lord," she said, "the prince made a gesture as if he were kissing me, and I disapproved of the gesture."

The Caliph turned to his son, and when he saw him looking now as pale as a corpse, he pitied him, and put an arm round him, saying, "Do you love her, 'Abdulillah?" He answered "Yes, Commander of the Faithful." "She is yours. Stand up and take her under that archway"—and he pointed to an alcove. And he added "Have you no verses for this occasion?" "Yes sir," said the prince, and recited

A stag, at which I aimed my hope with a motion
 And kissed it from far, its soft lips were broken
 It sharply defied me by a furl of its brow
 I stood like a stone but I have won it now.

Have patience over a bad neighbour: either he'll move, or a calamity will come and shift him.

WRITTEN IN PRISON

He breathed the dawn wind with all his body.
 The memory of the first paths, the good hills
 Of childhood, came back; and finding himself
 Only another of the world's bereaved
 He wept, while the lightning burned.

You would not blame me for shaking.
 If I were calm you would think me bronze.
 Time grieved me with a sentence
 Virtue fell in with adversity
 And rather than wonder at the usual thing
 Let us drink to-day, and to-morrow do business.

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

The nights peppered me with barbs of trouble
The carriers of mischief never ignored me
My day was mortgaged on illusion
And when I went for cover to the dark
The stars were slow, and the best star
Parted on an errand to the world's end.

Is no hope or petition valid,
No return of the sick to the city,
Cordoba of the shining evenings,
Where desire has a gracious conclusion
And the five senses are tangibly advised
Of the breasts of earth exposed for trampling on.

By our strange capacity to endure
I go on living as if I had not lost
Your enclosing breeze. As if at no
Point in time our tracks had intersected,
My birth not been a flash in your dust.
And all after it a persistent demand

On the ducts of your light and lit darkness,
Of dew and damp suburb branches,
Raimented soil and air naked,
While the water in the ditches ran sweet
And simple as falling petals,
Unsealing the pent intoxication
Of this city's shadow, the sum of hopes.

Often for sustenance I recapitulate
Those braggart days, the times
At the Eagle and the Pavement,
The spouts of life, the bosoms and locks
At Vizier's Brook, the gardens
And the waterfalls, and the years extruding
Cherub heads after a thousand years.

O for the rooms of the Carnelian
Everyone sitting by the sliding stream
Dangling their feet in the bubbles
That wink narcissus eyes,
Levels of air and alternating
Currents of despair and love,
And winedrip like sun in sultry weather.

We met at the Honey Pool, coming home
To the creation scene we started in.
Deeps on deeps of eye made rings
Piping the bride of enjoyment in
With wreathed lip and rose cheeks and
Splashes of grape darkening her hand.

And as if we resumed a story
We ran up the slope the bridge
The unforced hills to the pavilion
And by the dunes by the river we ran
Where the flowergirl wind was leaning
Lifting and lighting the pollen rods of gold.

A man's country may tire of him
His office decays, his name vilified,
And he goes. But I caution the gloaters
The sun clouded is still the sun
I am sheathed but still the angry blade
Behind the dark bush I am the lion
And the sting secreted in the unguent bottle.

But regret holds me, who once belonged
To the school that hates passionate love.
And wine and the cascading lute
Bring fever and no peace. The fear of
Censure cannot silence this crying room.
No word has come from you since I left
Only chance news traversing the horizons.

You praised some days to a soft glory.
You exacted a daintiness from the world's service
And immune from the tedium or abuse of time
You sit in eternity's cool smock
To work out love and your first hopes
Like a jeweller for the pleasure of the rich of time.

33

Here is the final stretch, the instrument
 That cuts short the reminiscence
 The chatter of what they did to death, the coil
 Of it, and the paternal tube of it
 And snakiness. At a long paean
 The corpse turns over, quicker than hands,
 Whose horns state the pain of earning,
 Do for time and his slip. He passes
 Imperiously, owning the air
 And filigree of limbs and soul,
 A trap in beauty's structure, that no lover
 Could fathom and keep the manacles.
 Galenus with his atabrine, the fluting moron
 With his goats, went after him. They counted
 A similar tally of hours, and the quiet
 Was sweeter for the fool. Unbroken drive
 Even for welfare is only warfare
 And the metal weights on the lungs
 Deny the blossoms to the stretch of need.

POSITIONS

THE POSITION OF THE SEA

He stayed me in the sea, and I saw the ships sinking. There were planks still afloat, but then they too sank, and He said to me " Who takes a boat is in peril."

And He said to me " He imperils himself who throws himself into the sea, and takes no boat."

And He said to me " He is lost who takes a boat and takes no risk."

And He told me that part of a man's salvation is imperilling himself. And the waves came, lifting what was beneath, and cast it on the shore.

And He told me that the surface of the sea is unattainable light, and its bottoms unfathomable darkness, and between are the perilous whales.

And He said to me " Never sail on the sea, or I will conceal you with the instrument, and never throw yourself into the sea, or I will conceal you in it."

And He told me that there are frontiers in the sea: " Which of them will carry you ?"

And He said to me " If you offer yourself to the sea and are drowned in it, you are as much as one of its beasts."

And He said " I would deceive you if I showed you other than Myself."

And He said " If you perish in other than Me, you are his for whom you have perished."

And He said " The world is for him whom I have made turn away, and made it likewise turn away from him ; and the other world is for him whom I have made turn that way, and made it likewise turn towards him."

THE NATURE OF THESE TWO

He stayed me and said " Who are you and who am I?" And I saw the sun, the moon, the stars, and all the lights.

And He said " There remains no light in the currents of My ocean which you have not seen." And everything came to me until there was nothing and kissed me between the eyes and hailed me and stood in the shadow.

And He said " You know me but I do not know you." And I saw the entirety of Him clinging to my garments and not clinging to me. And He said " This is My worship." And my garment inclined, and I did not incline. Whereupon He said to me " Who am I?" The sun and moon darkened, the stars fell, the lights were quenched, and shadow overwhelmed everything save Himself. And my eyes did not see and my ears did not hear, and the power to feel departed. And everything spoke and said " God is greatest." And everything came on me with a sword in its hand. When He said " Escape " I asked " Whither ? " And He said " Fall in the darkness." And I fell in the darkness and saw myself. And He said " Never see any man but yourself, and never come out of the darkness unless I take you out; and if I take you out, I will show you Myself, and you will see Me ; and if you see Me, you will be the furthestmost of the furthest."

THE POSITION OF STRAYING

He stayed me in straying, and I saw all the highways under the earth. And He said to me " There is no highway over the earth." And I saw all the people over the earth and the highways empty. And I saw that

who looks up to the sky never leaves the earth; and who looks to the earth goes down to the highways and walks in them.

And He said to me " Who does not walk in the highways does not find Me"

And He said " Seeing that you know my place, never reveal me." And I saw Him veiling everything and connecting everything.

And He said to me " Go with the veiled and quit the connected, and come in to me without permission, for if you ask permission I will veil you. And if you come in to me, depart without permission, for if you ask permission I will imprison you." And I saw each time he bared a needle and each time he concealed a thread.

And He said to me " Sit in the eye of the needle, and never leave it. And when the thread enters the needle, never hold it. And when it passes through, never stretch it. And rejoice, for I love those who rejoice. And tell them ' Me alone He accepted, and turned you all away/ And if they accompany you, them I will accept and turn you away. And If they stay behind, them I will excuse and blame you." And I saw that all persons were free.

And He said to me. " You are My friend. If you do not find Me, seek Me in the strongest who revolts against Me. And when you find Me, never disobey him. And if you do not find Me, seize a sword and smite him, but do not kill him, for I hold you accountable for him. Between you and Me clarify all, but between the people and Me make nothing clear. Let there be war declared between you and Me, and take the part of the people against Me. And if I give you what you ask, make it a sacrifice to fire, and stand in the shadow of a poor man among the poor and ask him to ask it of Me. Never ask Me yourself, lest in giving you your desire I deprive another, and thus you become an enemy to Me and I forsake you." Then I saw that throwing all away is victory.

And He said " If you throw all away, you will be bankrupt, and I love only the rich and hate only the poor. And I see you with neither the rich nor the poor. For I do not use nomenclature."

THE POSITION OF KNOWING THE KNOWING

And He said to me " Hear one of the tongues of power. If I come to know a slave and he repulses Me, I go back to him like a man seeking a favour: and in this I act by My generosity and he by his stinginess with himself (which I control for him, not he for Me). And each time he repulses Me I still go back to him. Yet still he repulses Me, though he finds Me most generous of the generous, and I go back to him knowing him the stingiest of the stingy, but finding excuses for him when he

comes, and forgiving him even before I find, the excuses. Until at last I tell him in his secret self ' I have afflicted You.' All this I do to make him feel less estranged when he sees Me.

" If he agrees to live in that part of Me which I revealed to him, I become his friend and he Mine. If he repulses Me, I do not abandon him on that account, for I know that the wrong is compounded with ignorance; but I say to him ' Can you repulse Me, who am God ? Have you no desire for Me or the knowledge of Me ?' If then he answers * I will not repulse You,' I accept that profession, and every time he would repulse Me I speak to him until he says ' I will not repulse You ' ; and I accept that.

" But if he affirms ' I repulsed You,' and persists in his falsehoods, I will wrench My knowledge out of his breast, and it will revert to Me, and will recall My knowledge from his heart. And when his Day comes, I will make the knowledge that was between us two a fire and fan it with My hand till the fire of Hell cannot compare with it. For I will Myself exact of him a retribution and torture such as the very guardians of the fire cannot bear to hear described in all their detail. His body I will make as vast as the wild lands, and I will give him a thousand skins, between every two an expanse no less than the globe. All the tortures the earth knows will be ordered to assault him, and in each of his limb's there will gather at a single moment of time all the varieties of agony in the world. Then besides the tortures that are practised all those ever imagined shall be ordered to come; and the practised tortures shall be bidden enter the first skin, and the imagined tortures the second skin. After that the seven strata of fire shall be bidden live in all his skins. At last when every torture of every world shall have penetrated the pairs of skin, I will show that man to whom I revealed Myself and was repulsed, the personal torture that I administer; and when this is disclosed, its shape will terrify the practised tortures and the imagined tortures and the torture of the seven strata. And their terror will endure until torture and I make a compact that My torture be not used on the man, given that they continue their torture upon him ; and they will acquiesce. And he will beg Me to mitigate the torture of all the worlds and to blank from his mind the image of what I disclosed. And I will say to him ' I asked you *Will you repulse Me ?* and you said *Yes, I will repulse You'* And that will be the last of him with Me. Little by little as I reveal My knowledge torture will pursue his affliction.

" Knowledge and knowing are beyond the account of words.

" But I will be otherwise to those who, when I seek their acquaintance, embrace Me and stay steadfast and loyal till I bring their day of reckoning. Before them I will set the blisses of this world, both those that are tried and those only imagined ; I will offer them all the delights of the people

of the gardens, and My own bliss, which rejoices those friends and lovers whom I choose to prefer."

He was preaching to the people and admonishing them from the pulpit of the mosque, and came to this sentence : " God descends to the heaven of our earth as I descend now." And he moved down one step of the pulpit stairs.

A clerk of the established church rose to cavil at that saying and deny it. And as he protested the mob turned on him and thrashed him with bare fists and the soles of their slippers; and as he struggled his turban fell, and there was revealed on his head a silken hair-net.

Honour lives in the manes of horses.

37

Hurry, for the beergardens are blooming.
 The war still a hill away. Earth
 With all its aviary is sitting
 In amity with the natural voices.
 They sing, till your veins are strings
 And a friction begins like recovery.
 The soil has come into flower, and wine
 (From the bed where an intact leek
 And a Roman endlessly reproduce her)
 Looks out. If you catch the instant
 You will see her nodding.

38

" If I told you all I knew," said the Prophet, " you would flog me with thongs of leather."

If **the** devil broke his poe, how could he do Number Two ?

40

TIME OF MEETING

If there is rain may it enrich you
She has consented to
The Andalusian hour

Which drifts through sleep vaguely,
Your meeting, remote profit
Of prying irises

The time is flying pennants,
Tatters of wishes,
Pointing a track for you
Where driblets of lovers skip in the season.

Hesitation like a beam
Opens the lip of flowers

The anemones repeat the lessons
Of the water between clouds
Talking the language of classrooms
Dear to the few who gathered from far

Framed by dark, the garden still is lit
By luminous stones within. A star
Brimms out of a black cup. Falls
Felicitous, sheer, unacquainted
With any unchastity but haste.

Here what is sociable is still sweet
Mornings still career like lancers
And out of caves the meteors gashed
Steam is just climbing, the eyes
Of flowers just turning into queens.

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

A garden broader than the hills
Found enough fidelity in the world
To hide itself there.

4*

If you punish it you encourage it
It's a pharmacopoeia against itself
The yellow virus never lodged in it
The stone it touched maddened with delight
Came down the yards a sleepy bitch
With two lovers behind transpiring it
From flagon neck and turbid night
And around the house a glitter
Easy as sleep at first light
It was thinner thinner than water
Brittler and more delicate
And all light dipping under it
Made ingots and fire of it
And like time it circulated
From boy to boy and transmitted
His secret and itch

So my poems are always about it,
Motion's conduit,
Whose consistent simplicity
The agon and cathartics
The elegiacs of evening cattle
The fury of griffins and politics
Should be forbidden to contaminate

Tell the severe master of dialectic
You have learned something and we honour it
But your power exterminates itself
As long as you omit
Passion and compassion and charity,
The berry in love with itself.

THE BEARDED BOY

I heard the spike of a hundred clusters
 Shrieking as the stone wheels drew still
 To the far Atlantic master
 Or a contrite organ in the mill
 To throw the gear and flaunt the sails ahead
 To its perennial dread.

In an ironmonger's shop a cat found a saw, and began licking the edge with its tongue, till the blood flowed. The cat thought the saw was bleeding, and swallowed the blood, and went on licking, till it lost its tongue and died.

44

- I. In the beginning God created the white pearl from His dear secret, and made Anfer, the bird ; and putting the pearl on its back He lived there for forty thousand years.
11. The first day of God's creation was Sunday, on which day He formed an angel named Azrael; who is the peacock angel, the principal of all.
- III. On Monday He made the angel Dardael, and he is Sheikh Hassan.
- IV. On Tuesday He made the angel Asrafael, and he is Sheikh Shams.
- V. On Wednesday He made the angel Michael, and he is Sheikh Abu Bakr.
- VI. On Thursday He made the angel Gabrael, and he is Sigad id Din.
- VII. And on Friday He made the angel Shammael, and he is Nasr id Din.
- VIII. And on Saturday He made the angel Nurael, and he is Fakhr id Din.
- IX. And God appointed the peacock angel lord over these.
- X. After him He made the image of the seven heavens and the earth and sun and moon.
- XI. Fakhr id Din made man, animal, bird and beast; and He put them in the pockets of the cowl, and came out of the pearl together with

Mis angels, and made a great cry on the pearl, till it was torn in four pieces, and water pouring from its womb became the sea; and the world was round without hollow or incision.

- XII. God moulded Gabrael in the image of a bird and despatched him, and with his hands he set the four corners of the earth. And He created a ship and went down below where He stayed for thirty thousand years ; after which He moved and lived in Lalish. He cried lustily through the world and the stone grew rigid and the world became earth and began to quake. Gabrael called for two fragments of the white pearl, and laid one under the earth and one in the gate of heaven. Quiet fell; and putting among them a sun and a moon, he created stars of the scatterings of the white pearl and hung them in the sky for decoration.
- XIII. He created fruit-bearing trees and stems on the earth, and mountains for its decoration, and on the carpet He raised a throne.
- XIV. Great God said: " O angels, I create Adam and Eve, creating them mortal; and from them of the secret of Adam will be Shahr ibn Safr ; and from them will spring a community on earth called the sect of peacock Azrael. It is the Yazidia sect."
- XV. And He sent Sheikh'Adi ibn Musafir from the land of the Levant and came to Lalish.
- XVI. God descended on the black mountain, and cried and created thirty thousand angels, and divided them into three legions. They worshipped him without pause for forty thousand years, after which He delivered them to the peacock angel, who rose to the heavens with them.
- XVII. God descended into the holy land and summoned Gabrael to bring dust from the four corners of the world. And he brought dust and air and fire and water, From all this He created the first Adam, and by His power seated a soul in him. He ordered Gabrael to enter Paradise with Adam, and there make him eat of the fruits of every tree but not the grain of the wheat.
- XVIII. After a hundred years the peacock angel said to God " How can Adam be ? How can he multiply and increase ? Where is his posterity ? " God said-" Henceforward that shall be in your power and authority, surrendered to you." So he came and said to Adam " Have you tasted the wheat ? " And " No," said Adam, " God forbade them me." He said " Eat. It will be better for you." And after he had eaten, his stomach swelled. The peacock angel withdrew him from Paradise and, mounting to the heights, left him.
- XIX. And Adam's stomach constrained him, for he had no passage. And God sent him a bird, which came and pecked him and opened him a passage ; and he was relieved.

- XX. Gabriel kept away from Adam a hundred years; while Adam was a hundred years distressed, and wept.
- XXI. Then God ordered Gabrael to create Eve, and he came and created her from Adam's left armpit.
- XXII. And the peacock angel descended to the earth for the sake of our created sect and established kings for us. Beside those of ancient Assyria, we had Nasruk, who is Nasr id Din, and Kamush, who is the angel Fakhr id Din, and Artimus, and he is the angel Shams id Din : and after them two kings, Shahbur the First and Shahbur the Second, the reign of which pair endured a hundred and fifty years. From their sons comes our race down to the present day.
- XXIII. And we were made hateful to four kings.
- XXIV. Lettuce was forbidden us, because it resembles the name of our prophetess Laetitia. Butterbeans and dark-blue were also forbidden. We do not eat fish, out of respect for the Prophet Jonah, neither do we eat the gazelle, since those herds belong to one of our prophets. The sheikh and his disciples abstain from the flesh of the cock, in deference to the peacock angel. (For the peacock angel is one of the seven scheduled gods because his image is in the cast of a cock). And the Sheikh and his disciples abstain from pumpkins. It is forbidden us to make water in the standing position or put on our underclothes in the sitting position, or to be alone in the privy or to wash in the bath. It is impermissible to pronounce the word " devil," which is the name of our God, or any word that is near it such as " evil " or " shovel " or " snivel." Neither may we say " curse " or " accursed " or any words near them.
- XXV. Before the advent of Jesus Christ in this world our religion was called idolatry, and the Jews, Christians and Moslems have warred against it, likewise the Persians.
- XXVI. One of our kings was Ahab, who ordered each of us to call him by a particular name. He was called " Ahab the God " and " Beelzebub " ; and now they call him " Peerbub."
- XXVII. And we had a king in Babylon called Nebuchadnezzar, and in Persia we had Ahshubersh, and in Constantinople Agricolas.
- XXVIII. Before the creation of the heavens and earth, God was found on the seas, and He had a boat with which He sailed their middle regions, taking recreation in His own being.
- XXIX. He created a pearl from the boat, and ruled from it for forty years, after which, becoming displeased, He spurned it.
- XXX. And O for the marvellous marvel! There rose from its bluster the mountains, and from its uproar the hills, and the heavens from its fumes. And God climbed the heavens and hardened them and erected them without pillars.

XXXI He closed the earth and took a pencil in His hand and began writing the whole creation.

XXXII Then He created six gods of His being and His light, and their creation was as when a man lights one lamp from another.

XXXIII. The first God said to the second : " I created the sky. Go up to the sky, if you can, and create something." And He went up and was sun. And in turn He challenged the first, who went up and became the moon. The fourth created the horizon. The fifth made himself the morning-star. The sixth created the spaces of the air.

4J

[Isis: " I am all that has been, all that is, all that will be. No one has ever lifted my mask."]

- SHAHRAZAD : Has sorcery or science explained a single one of those secrets you are burning to understand ?
- SHAHRAYAR Be quiet, woman.
- SHAHRAZAD Am I torturing you ?
- SHAHRAYAR For God's sake, leave me alone.
- SHAHRAZAD Look what happens when you mix with magicians and priests :—you get into wild states like this.
- SHAHRAYAR What do you want me to do ? I despair of you.
- SHAHRAZAD Do you still want me to reveal myself to you ?
- SHAHRAYAR Shahrazad!
- SHAHRAZAD Why do you look at me like that ?
- SHAHRAYAR Don't mock me.
- SHAHRAZAD (*looking hard at him and whispering*) : You don't deserve even to be mocked at.
- SHAHRAYAR What do you say ?
- SHAHRAZAD What is it you want to know about me ?
- SHAHRAYAR You know what I want.
- SHAHRAZAD You want to know who I am ?
- SHAHRAYAR Yes.
- SHAHRAZAD (*smiling*): I am a beautiful body. Am I anything but a beautiful body ?
- SHAHRAYAR (*shouting*): Blast the beautiful body.
- SHAHRAZAD : I am a great heart. Am I anything but a great heart ?
- SHAHRAYAR Blast your heart.
- SHAHRAZAD Can you deny that you loved my body once ? And loved me with your heart once, too ?

- SHAHRAYAR : All that has gone. Gone ! *(speaking to himself)* To-day I am a miserable man.
- SHAHRAZAD *(going towards him)*: Don't despair, Shahrayar, my darling.
- SHAHRAYAR : Go away, you hypocrite. You care for no one but yourself.
- SHAHRAZAD Do you think that ?
- SHAHRAYAR : A deceitful woman.
- SHAHRAZAD *(smiling)* : Why do you keep me alive then ?
- SHAHRAYAR : What devil has brought you here now ?
- SHAHRAZAD You let me live because you don't know me.
- SHAHRAYAR *(wearily turns his face away from her)*: I no longer mind about you or anything else.
- SHAHRAZAD You turn your face away, blind man. If you could see just a little !
- SHAHRAYAR : I have seen more than I should.
- SHAHRAZAD : On the contrary, you miss everything.
- SHAHRAYAR *(wearily)*: There's only one thing I ask for.
- SHAHRAZAD : What is it ?
- SHAHRAYAR : To die.
- SHAHRAZAD : Why ? What's distressing you ?
- SHAHRAYAR : There's nothing new in life. I've exhausted everything.
- SHAHRAZAD Isn't there a joy in the way of nature that makes you want to stay with her ?
- SHAHRAYAR : Nature's only a dumb captive with a stranglehold tightening round her throat.
- SHAHRAZAD : You have gone mad, racking your mind till it's unhinged. What mystery are you driving after, stupid ? Are you going to spend the rest of your life struggling and striving with a fallacious curiosity riddled with illusions ?
- SHAHRAYAR : What value is there in living any longer. I have tried everything and dwelled on everything to excess.
- SHAHRAZAD : And do you think you have gone the right way to what you're seeking ? Whose word have you that what you are seeking exists ? Look in the water of this pool. What do you see ? Clarity. The same clarity you may see in my eyes. Can't you read any of the great secrets there ?
- SHAHRAYAR : Curse clarity and everything that's clear. This clear water terrifies me. The man who drowns in clear water is damned.
- SHAHRAZAD : You are damned.
- SHAHRAYAR : Clarity! Clarity is her mask !
- SHAHRAZAD : Whose?
- SHAHRAYAR : *Her* mask ! *Hers* ! *Hers* !
- SHAHRAZAD : I am afraid for you.

- SHAHRAYAR : Her mask is woven of clarity ; of the clear sky, clear eyes, clear water, the air, the void, all that's clear. What is beyond clarity ? The thickest curtains are more transparent than clarity.
- SHAHRAZAD : The whole trouble is, Shahrayar, that you are an unhappy king who has lost his humanity and forfeited his heart.
- SHAHRAYAR : I have finished with humanity. I have finished with the heart. I no longer want to feel, I want to know.
- SHAHRAZAD : Know what ? There is nothing worth knowing.
- SHAHRAYAR : A lie and deceit. Give me the answer to what I'm always asking you. That's all I want from life now.
- SHAHRAZAD : Ask whatever you like.
- SHAHRAYAR : Who are you ?
- SHAHRAZAD (*smiling*): Shahrazad.
- SHAHRAYAR : Stop going round in the same circle. I know you are called Shahrazad :—but who is Shahrazad ?
- SHAHRAZAD : The daughter of your ex-Minister.
- SHAHRAYAR : I know my ex-Minister fathered Shahrazad. Just as God created nature—so that Shahrazad might not be thought a bastard or nature be imagined the child of accident. But you know these explanations won't satisfy me.
- SHAHRAZAD : Why ? Why aren't you willing to see me as a woman like other women, with father and mother and the usual way of coming into the world ?
- SHAHRAYAR : Because you are not a woman like the others. For all I know you may not be a woman at all.
- SHAHRAZAD : See how far your madness has gone.
- SHAHRAYAR : Perhaps she is not a woman. How could she be ? I ask you, who is she ? She has been imprisoned in a boudoir all her life, yet she knows about everything on the earth as if she were the earth herself. She never went further than the summerhouse in her garden, yet she knows Egypt and India and China. While she was a virgin she knew man like a woman who had lived among men for a thousand years. She knows the whole character of men, from the sublime to the sordid in them. She is young, but she climbed, unsatisfied with the knowledge of earth, to the skies and can tell of their designs and hidden things as if she were the adopted child of angels. And she went down to the depths of the globe to tell of its giants and demons and their strange underground kingdoms, as if she were the daughter of the djinns. Who could she be, who spent her twenty years, and no more, in rooms with

drawn curtains, and yet— ? What is her secret ? Is she twenty, or is she ageless ? Is she limited to one place or does she belong to all places ? My mind is like a boiling kettle. It wants to know Can she be a woman, when, she knows everything in nature as if she were nature herself ?

SHAHRAZAD : Stop it, Shahrayar. Your hands are trembling. Your face is marked with a terrible fatigue.

SHAHRAYAR : Yes, I feel exhausted. But my mind will not be quiet till I know.

SHAHRAZAD : I told you not to think of all that. Leave things alone.

SHAHRAYAR : You are my wife whom I love. Aren't you my wife ? How long do you suppose I can bear to have this curtain keeping us apart ?

SHAHRAZAD (*to herself, almost*): Do you imagine that if this curtain were drawn aside you could bear to look at me for a moment's duration ?

SHAHRAYAR : What do you say.

SHAHRAZAD : Nothing. Go off to bed now. You need rest.

SHAHRAYAR (*shouting*): I won't go. I must know now. I've waited long enough.

SHAHRAZAD : Don't be childish, Shahrayar. You know that if you persisted twenty centuries you wouldn't get another word out of me. Because it's not mine to give away. You are asking something impossible. And you are a sick man.

SHAHRAYAR : You know. You know everything. What a mystery you are. You do nothing and say nothing that is not planned beforehand. Nothing happens by accident. Nothing comes by caprice. You live according to an exact calculation which is never out so much as a hair's breadth. It is as exact as the sun and moon and stars. You are only a tremendous mind.

SHAHRAZAD (*smiling*): You are describing me in your own image, Shahrayar.

SHAHRAYAR : I am describing the truth.

SHAHRAZAD (*mysteriously*): Always the truth !

SHAHRAYAR : Won't you tell me it ?

SHAHRAZAD : You should go and sleep and rest. And if you won't do that, go back to torturing your mind or to the magicians and priests.

SHAHRAYAR (*under his breath and staring hard*): The curse of God !

SHAHRAZAD : Why are you looking at me like that ?

SHAHRAYAR : Come here

SHAHRAZAD : What do you want ?

SHAHRAYAR : To kiss you.

(He takes her head between his hands, lifts the black hair away from her neck, and draws his dagger.)

SHAHRAZAD : God help you, what are you doing ?

SHAHRAYAR *(in a queer voice)*: I see a grey hair, like the thread of dawn in a beautiful night.

SHAHRAZAD *(struggling from his grip, then bending down to look at her reflection in the pool)*: Where is it ? *(She pulls the grey hair out.)*

SHAHRAYAR : Why have you taken it out ?

SHAHRAZAD *(coming back to him)*: What made you act like that ? I shall begin to think your madness really dangerous. How could you have endured my loss ?

(She arranges her hair and exhibits the beauty of her body. Shahrayar stares at her.)

Why do you keep looking at me like that ?—as if you had never seen me before.

SHAHRAYAR : No. No. I don't want to see you like that.

SHAHRAZAD : What do you mean ?

SHAHRAYAR : She does that, too—always exhibiting her beauty and hiding her secret.

SHAHRAZAD : Who is she ?

SHAHRAYAR : Nature.

SHAHRAZAD *(pityingly)*: You poor thing.

SHAHRAYAR : You hypocrite.

SHAHRAZAD *(taking his head in her hands)*: I pity this fatigued head and this pale forehead and these twisted lips

SHAHRAYAR : My face is pale like the faces of the dead.

SHAHRAZAD : Don't say that.

SHAHRAYAR : Yes, Shahrazad. I shall die.

SHAHRAZAD : No, don't let weariness and despair have the better of you. No, Shahrayar, you will live.

SHAHRAYAR : I don't want to.

SHAHRAZAD : You are not old *(caressing his hair)*. Look, your hair is as black as night.

SHAHRAYAR : Stroke my hair as you used to do. Let me hear your soft compassionate voice I never realised you were so beautiful. Is this your mouth, Shahrazad ? It's like a cup of pearls. Is this your hair ? It's like clusters of grapes.

SHAHRAZAD : **Come and rest your body a little while.**

SHAHRAYAR : Let me put my head in your lap, as if I were your child or your husband. Am I really your husband ? Sometimes the thought seems quaint and false. Tell me it's true. Put your arms round my neck. They are silver arms, Shahrazad. I want to know that all these treasures are mine. Talk to me about your love for me, if you have ever loved me a little But you have no feeling for me

SHAHRAZAD (*slightly mocking*): So you are coming back to love and the heart.

SHAHRAYAR (*in a sleepy voice*): Shahrazad, I feel now as if I were a happy man. I want to know what place you have for me in your heart. Sometimes I become anxious I feel that you are great very great . . . and could never descend to the love of a person like me . . . an ordinary man

SHAHRAZAD (*slyly*): Don't you still want to know who I am ?

SHAHRAYAR : I want to kiss your beautiful silver body.

SHAHRAZAD : So you are coming back to the body, I see.

SHAHRAYAR (*struggling with sleep*): I want you to recite poetry to me . . . Shahrazad ... tell me one of your stories ...

SHAHRAZAD (*looking towards the doors*): Play something, slaves. Some music.

SHAHRAYAR (*asleep*): ... sing me a song ...

SHAHRAZAD : Shahrayar

SHAHRAYAR:

SHAHRAZAD : Shall I sing for you ? ...

SHAHRAYAR: ...

SHAHRAZAD (*half to herself*): Sleep . . . sleep . . . sleep . . . Child whom playing has exhausted.

46

I understand from Mohammed Ibn Abu Taher al Bathar that 'Aly Ibn il Muhsin related a tale of his father's heard from Abu Hassan 'Aly Ibn Nazif, the conversationalist; who said that the chief of the Imamiyya sect of Baghdad, Abu Bakr Ibn il Falas, used to sit with him and once told him the following:

" I called on a certain man who, popularly thought to be a Shi'a, at least indubitably entertained a belief in reincarnation, I found him with a black cat on his lap, fondling it and stroking it between the eyes. As is

often the case with cats, the creature's eyes Were watering ; and the master was weeping profusely. When I asked what was the matter with him he cursed me and said, ' Look at this cat crying as I stroke her. I'm sure that she's my mother and cries because she's glad to see me.' Then he went on talking to it, convinced it understood him. And it me-owed gently. I asked him if it understood what he said to it, and he said it did. Then I asked him if he understood its wailing, and he said no. ' In that case,' I replied, ' she is *homo sapiens* and the transmigration is on you.' "

47

Ja'far was in al Rashid's closest confidence, influenced all his decisions, and acquired a status permitted to no other before or after him. Indeed, the Caliph ordered the tailoring of a special garment which was two suits in one, so that he and Ja'far could wear it together and become like one man.

Al Rashid could scarcely bear to be separated from his Minister for a moment. But he was also deeply attached to his sister, el 'Abbassa, daughter of el Mahdi. She was the dearest of women in his eyes, and like Ja'far she should never be absent a moment or all his happiness was imperfect. Therefore he married his two friends to one another, in order that it should be lawful for them to meet; but before the ceremony was undertaken he made Ja'far swear never to be with 'Abbassa when he was not their third.

A day came when al Rashid changed and brought disaster on his former favourite, executing him and imprisoning his brother and his father, Yahya, and holding them in prison till they died. Historians have advanced conflicting explanations for this reversal of the Caliph's behaviour, and some have connected it with the *manage de convenance*. Ja'far, they say, kept the condition which al Rashid had imposed, but after some time el 'Abbassa fell in love with him and tried to seduce him. When her many and varied efforts at persuasion had broken on the barrier of his fear, she determined to approach her object circuitously, and went to Ja'far's mother, 'Itaba, and asked to be submitted to him as a virgin slave-girl such as she knew 'Itaba sent every Friday evening when he was in his cups. The mother refused, but 'Abbassa threatened to communicate certain secrets they shared to the Caliph ; and, mixing inducements with threats, added " If I bear a child to your son, it will bring you great honour. And even if my brother finds out about it, what will he do ? " Ja'far's mother consented, and began to work on her son by hinting, every time she met

him, that she had a slave-girl in readiness whose looks and wit **were equally** commendable. At last he began to remind her of this promise, and to ask when it would be fulfilled, and she knew he desired the girl. She sent word to 'Abbassa to arrange herself for that night; which she did, and was brought to Ja'far, who did not know her, for all their previous meetings had been in the presence of al Rashid, and before the Caliph he did not dare to raise his eyes to her face. After he had slept with her that night, she asked him "What do you think of the deceit of the daughter of kings?" and when he asked "Which king's daughter are you?" she said "I am your mistress, el 'Abbassa." Then the drunkenness flew from his head, and he went to his mother and said "By God, you have sold me cheap."

El 'Abbassa gave birth to a boy, which she at once entrusted to a nurse and servant; and when he grew older, and she was afraid the secret would become known, the three were sent away to Mecca.

Now the Caliph's palace and the women's apartments were administered by Ja'far's father, Yahya, who used to lock the gates and put the keys in his pocket, and exercised a severity which annoyed the women. Zubeida, the favourite wife, complained to al Rashid, who asked Yahya "My father" (that was the title he regularly used when addressing him) "Why is Zubeida complaining of you?" And he said "Am I accused of a breach of your honour, Prince of Believers?" The Caliph told him he was not. "Then," said Yahya, "do not accept the complaint." And after this episode he was rougher than ever and strict to the point of violence. Zubeida again went to complain to al Rashid, who replied "Yahya stands before me guiltless of staining my honour." "If that were so," she cried, "he would have prevented his son doing what he did." When he asked her to be clearer, she told him about el 'Abbassa, and when he demanded proof she answered "What proof could be more convincing than the child? There was a boy in this palace, till they were afraid he would be discovered, and he is now at Mecca." He asked whether she was the only one who knew, and she replied "There's not a single slave-girl in the palace that doesn't know." And he was silent.

He expressed his wish to make a pilgrimage, and set out, Ja'far with him, for Mecca. 'Abbassa wrote to the servant and the nurse to proceed to Yemen, so that when al Rashid, on arrival in the city, sent his investigators out, they did not find the child. But they found that the story was **true**. Then the Caliph secreted evil for the Ja'far family.

Abu Nawwas has a couplet on the story:

"The king who would eliminate a twister
Buries the axe and weds him to his sister."

Other writers explain Ja'far's fall as follows. The Caliph handed over

the rebel Yahya Ibn 'Abdullah 'Abdu Hassan to Ja'far under orders to hold him in prison. Yahya asked to see the Minister, and said " Fear God, Ja'far. Don't make my grandfather, the Prophet Mohammad, your enemy on the day of resurrection. For God knows I have done no wrong." Ja'far had mercy on him, and told him he could depart where he wished* and when the rebel expressed the fear that he would only be recaptured and sent back again, assigned guards as his escort to a distant refuge. This action was reported to al Rashid, who summoned Ja'far, and exchanged a quite ordinary conversation, but at the end asked " How is Yahya now ? " Ja'far turned the question with " As he is, sire," but the Caliph persisted. " Can you swear to his security by my life ? " he asked. Then Ja'far's face darkened and he was silent a moment: after which he said " No, by your life, I released him when I discovered he was innocent." " You were right," said the Caliph, " You did nothing that I would not have done myself." But when Ja'far rose and left, he followed him with his eyes till at last he was out of sight, and then he said " Now God murder me if I do not murder you."

It is on record that when Sayyid Ibn Salim was asked the reason of the Barmeki tragedy, he said " God knows, parts of their downfall are utterly beyond explaining. But their days had lengthened, and everything that is long is tiresome. Men who were the best of men grew tired of the days of 'Omar Ibn Khattab, which were of all days the most just and secure and rich in conquests, and even of the days of 'Osman. And they killed both these good men. Moreover, al Rashid heard the great praise paid to that family and saw what hopes men centred on it; and kings have been jealous for less than that. So he grew hard and looked for matter to their discredit, and their enemies like al FadL Ibn Rabiyya exaggerated anything that was brought to light against them."

Another story refers to an anonymous poem left in al Rashid's way; which he opened, and read :

Tell God's deputy
Whose hands untie and tie
That Yahya's son is king too
And no distinction left for you
Your orders wait on his, his travel without halt
He has built a house which neither Persians nor Indians built
Its bricks are pearl and ruby, and amber and incense are its silt
And we tremble that if you leave him to thunder when you and death
combine
Felicity will strain the slave's gross stomach and he will stretch at the
divine.

It is also told how 'Aliyya, the daughter of al Mahdi, said to al Rashid one day in the time after the assassination : " Sire, since the day you

killed Ja'far, even your best happiness has been tainted. Why did you kill Ja'far, my lord ? " He said " My life, if I found that the shirt of my body knew the reason, I would tear it to pieces."

48

Knowledge will be entrusted to neither the timid nor the haughty.

49

Know, o Man, that you are created and that you have a Creator, who is the creator of the world and all that is in it. And he is One. He was in the beginning and He is without end. He stands with eternity, and endures and suffers no decay. It is a necessity that He exist in the beginning and through eternity, and His non-existence would be impossible. He exists of His own Self. All life depends on Him, but He is dependent on none. He is the source of Himself and the source of everything.

He is omnipotent. His power and His rule are at the zenith of perfection beyond possibility of lack or decrease. The seven heavens are in the power of His hand, and under the compulsion of His levy and order. He is the owner of the owned, and there is no property but in His domain.

He is omniscient. His knowledge encompasses totality. There is nothing between the heights and the hollows but His knowledge comprises it. Everything came forth by His knowledge and was propagated by His power. He knows the number of the sands in the deserts and the drops in the rains and the leaves on the trees and the obscurities of thought. The particles of the winds and the air are in His knowledge clear as the number of the stars of heaven.

Not a thing scarce or abundant, small or great, exceeding or deficient, passive or dynamic, healthy or diseased, save by disposal of His wisdom and will. Though mankind and the angels and devils all banded together to work on the world and move one particle, or turn it from motion to rest, or increase it or decrease it, they would be impotent and fail so long as they lacked His will and influence and power. What He willed was ; and what He did not will was not. Nothing resists his wish. All was and is by His preparation, His order, and His requisition.

He created man of two portions, form and spirit. He gave the soul a house in the body that it might take from this world provision for the next.

For every soul he decreed a period of residence in the body, a period beyond extension or foreshortening, and this is the term of the soul. When the term closes, the soul and body are severed.

Live as you like, for you are dying. Love what you like, for you are parting from it. Do what you like, you will be paid.

jo

" Let there be four beds in every house : one for the husband ; one for the wife ; one for the visitor; and one for the devil."

Jl

. . . light . . .

. . . injects the wafers of its perfections into the body which is ready to receive it . . .

. . . that light, which is self-propagating, has by nature a love for its cause above it, and a hatred for its offshoot below it. Such is the pattern in the macrocosm. It must be so too in the microcosm, man . . .

. . . the self-propagating light is the human soul, hating the body and the dark shapes below it, and loving its generic God, the Holy Ghost above it, which possesses the spell of the human kind . . .

. . . to the light of lights in the sunset fortresses which are the dark bodies . . .

. . . and in the middle of its love is its passionate impulse by which what is profitable is pursued and demanded and obtained . . .

. . . the light sees the images of the dividing tunnel between this world and resurrection. Corporeal images. Perceives rationally by abstracting them . . . and generalising their sequences . . . and generalising their phases until they are darkly luminous . . .

. . . the procreative faculty, by which the existence of the species is maintained, though the immortality of an individual is outside imagination . . .

. . . also in the origin of light is that it should be augmented by accidental lights that issue from the light of lights and attain perfection through the luminous shapes that overflow from the abstract lights, harvested by observation . . . but there is as much difference between them as between the coming of sunbeams and the seeing of them . . .

- . . . advancing from stage to stage, from power to action . . .
- . . . but artificial increases are . . . countered by shrinkages in other parts . . .
- . . . the difference between the faculties of nourishment and growth, is that the first mutates the food it receives into a congenial substitute for the decaying parts, the second enforces increase in space and distributes food. Both serve the procreative faculty . . . Since the perfection of persons comes in quanta the faculty of growth was necessary, and by reason of decay the faculty of nourishment was necessary, and by reason of corruption it was necessary to have the procreative faculty, which ensures the continuity of the species through its generations . . .
- . . . they can do no action without using this light . . .
- . . . and the fortress is in the keeping of this light, but not in the keeping of the Holy Ghost, which keeps the talisman . . .

J2-

Like the faithful in their love and pity and care for one another:

When one member of the body is sick, the others answer it and keep awake in the heat of fever.

Like you and me :

A man made a fire and built it up till it lit the place round him. Then the moths and insects came over the fire and were scorched ; but as they dropped, he would catch them and blow them away. Yet they were continually coming back and flying into the blaze.

And I am continually driving you away from the inferno, and you always drive towards it again.

J4

Lord, is there nothing in the cup for me ?
While you were drinking I was singing to you.

Many doors open on God.

S6

THE CHESS CHAMPION

Mild-handed, dandified, cerebral, arcane,
Typhooning the giants, putting the shrewd on pins
With schemes finer than the composition of winds,
Your record wrecks your man before the game-
Closer than lovers whom one indiscretion
Cautioned to dumbness, you evolve machines
And file them for the tactical moment in
Your cabinet of swift assassination.

You play with your opponents' souls for pieces.
The red board is awash with blood. You move
Like extinction through the shanks, ennui through love,
Strokes through silence at chosen sacrifices.

Like grey hair under the night of youth advancing
On unspoiled cheeks you progress. You distil
A foreign bubble in a misty cell
To make the serum of the seven adventures.

Unnatural organs at your centre function
And so control your poise of hand, that though
Your eyes are in the gallery, you throw
The king and all his knights into confusion.

57

My baby, my baby, make the veil shyer,
Avoid your cousin's audacious eye.
My baby, my baby, pull the veil higher
Your cousin's an impudent boy.

58

My friend who dabbled in analysis
Suddenly asked me " Do you like that tart,
Priscilla so-and-so ? " "I feel," I said

" Like you feel about water when you're dry.
The other day I begged a favourite aunt
To help me to un-ice that female sky.

" My aunt approached and argued. She pretended
With an indifference that broke my heart,
Not to know whom the agent represented.

" She came later at bridal pace with five
High-breasted girls, and golden moisture shot
The surface of her cheeks. Being in youth

" And beauty grown under her crystal neck
She bridled in burnish of the adder's coat
And walked in adder's rings to the happiness

" Of the sun. And wardens came cantering past us
Asking me if I liked the sun they brought,
Their model love. I said my love surpasses

The number of the pebbles and dust and stars.
They wound her jewels and clover for her heart
And what a garland all that was."

My host was kind and affable and entertained me
 At the high table. But when cups had gone round
 He signalled for the stained rug and the scimitar.
 It is like that, drinking with the dragon in summer.

60

My love is ascending with the Yemen caravan
 My body is in Mecca in chains.

But once she came eddying towards me
 The bars were fast but she came
 Came and gave me greeting, and rose
 And turned and pivoted my life that way

My head is bent not for death or anything.
 I am not tired of the gyves, my soul
 Is immune from the loud promises

Only a longing for the days has disarmed me
 The days when we met and I was free.

61

My songs gave eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf
 Set the critics flapping like nightbirds
 Set me at rest all night on my bed.

And pay me well if I write you a eulogy
 The flatterers will come to you mouthing it.
 And desert every voice but mine, for I
 Am the singing lark, the rest are echo.
 Time is my scribe and my register
 It follows me singing the words I drop.

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

From safe harbours they sailed away
Pre-occupied because of my poems.
The throats that had never spoken trilled
My scale, the moment before landfall.

62

Never mind the grey on my cheek. It's not age
Brightens there, it's the light of a girl's lips
Hanging on the tips of the hair. But that slender
White-shouldered and witty wife of everyone
Whose work the patches are, wondered and shunned
Me for them, moaned " Strange, Zoheir, strange,
A trunk wet as a boy's, but a hoary thatch."

It is grey hair. I'm proud to be public dog,
A rake, a libertine, a frolic dissolute.
I've washed out paint and the hypocrite,
Proclaim myself candidly what I am, love
Her who lets me, hate who prefers it.
The only life is prolific association
Of mouths in a glass or bed. And for lady
Piety, I leave a brief card of regret
On her, and pass on.

You who love to pardon,
Would mortify if there were no omission
To meet of your charity.

Not the acorns, not the turtles, can
Compute the pent of Colorado,
The periods of an aerial face.

By green elders out of the desert cradle
Hustled to the loom of loftiest span
Eve mourns the abyss and the small people,

Certain that in arboreal colonnades,
 Wrestling by the beeches, there began
 The original and dauntless race.

SONG TO A REED INSTRUMENT

No weeping, eye, lest you always weep and soak me
 Till the sight is sore and the people mock me.
 And the eye answered : My master, let me.
 I am not weeping for cash or the world that has left me
 Mostly I cry for a friend, a dear man,
 Who made my time run softly.

" O messenger of God, shall we see our Lord on the Day of Resurrection ? "

He said " Do you doubt the moon on a night when it is full and no clouds cover it ? "

" No, messenger of God. "

He said " Do you doubt the sun on a cloudless day ? "

And they said " No. "

And he said, " Thus will you see Him on the day when people come in throngs, the day of resurrection. Then He will say ' Let each man follow whatever he worshipped/ And the others will follow the sun and moon and idols, but this nation and its associates will remain. They say * This is our station till the Lord comes to us, for when He comes we shall know Him.' And the Lord comes upon them and says ' I am your Lord.' And they say ' You are our Lord.' And He takes them unto Him, and stretches the thread from side to side of the valley of Hell. And I will be the first of the apostles to walk it with his nation. And no one shall speak that day except the apostles, whose appointed words are ' Give peace, give peace, O God. '

" Now in Hell there are manacles like the prickles of gorse—have you ever seen those ? " " Yes, " they answered. " They are like the prickles of gorse, but the thorns have a sting known only to God, and

they twine round people in the measure of their deeds. Some men they destroy, some they torture and then release. But when God wills He picks some from the fire to receive His mercy, and these are the ones who always worshipped Him; and the angels are commanded to lead them forth. And the angels, performing the order, recognise the chosen by the marks of praying on their knees—for God has forbidden the fire to consume these marks. But the fire devours every son of Adam unless it finds the marks.

" The chosen are led forth and God drenches them with the water of life, and they blossom like seed after the floods.

" Now when God completes His judgment of the world, there remains one man midway between paradise and the fire, but his face is turned towards the latter and he cries ' O Lord, turn my face away from the fire. The smell has poisoned my face, and the tongues of flame have scalded me.' God says ' If I do that, will you ask for more ?' And he swears by God's glory that he will ask for nothing more; after which undertaking God gives him what he desires, and turns his face away from the inferno. He sees Paradise and its happiness and is silent a long while. At last he says ' O Lord bring me nearer to the gate of heaven.' God reminds him of his promise, saying ' Have you not given your word to ask for nothing more ?' ' Lord,' he says, ' do not let me be the most miserable of your creatures.' And when he has pledged himself to ask for nothing after that, he is brought nearer to the gate of heaven. And standing before the gates he looks through the bars, and sees the burgeoning and the happiness and bliss beyond. After a long silence he says ' Lord, let me enter paradise.' And God, be He exalted, says ' Poor son of man, how quick you are to perfidy. Have you not promised Me to ask nothing more ?' ' Lord,' he says, ' don't make me the most miserable of your creatures.' Then God laughs, and admits him into paradise and tells him to wish what he wants; and he wishes until he can think of no more wishes. And God says ' You shall have them all, and twice all of them.' "

66

One marvel among His blessings is that, having created women from water, He bound them with locks of blood and marriage. He gave lust power over them and compelled them to plough in order that their generations might be maintained. He made regular heritage of first moment, banned adultery, and emphasized his ban by injunction and admonition that made the act ugly of feature. The rapture of the act He condemned as a major crime, urging and ordaining true marriage. So

Glory be to Him who issued death for His slaves and humiliated and ruined and broke them by it.

And He scattered the seed of sperm in the earth of the wombs, wherefrom a creation came which forcibly shattered death:—a symbol of how the oceans of the inevitable overflow the world with profit and harm, right and wrong, dearth and prosperity, folding and unfolding. And prayers and peace be on him who was sent with a warning and a gospel to his people and friends, prayers beyond the art of arithmetic or the usher with his roll.

Marriage is the support of religion, and for the devils it is humiliation, and against the enemy of God it is a fortified castle. It is a reason for glory before all the prophets of the Master of Messengers.

The divines have differed much concerning its place. Some have ranked it with the worship of God. Others, while acknowledging it to be of high grade, have nevertheless put it second to the worship of God, saying that the self which is eager for intercourse will perturb the condition of the whole man and threaten a fall. Others claim that in our day marriage should be abandoned. It may have been a virtue once, they say, in an age when gain was not forbidden nor the morals of women degenerate.

BY LUNAR RECKONING

On her twelfth birthday went upstairs
 Carrying her maternal face for forty years
 A tin was opened that night at ten
 That will not shut again.

68

On the sea I stayed for you
 On the land you left me
 For gold-dust I did not sell you
 For straw you sold me
 I was a rose in the garden
 You uprooted me
 In the house I was a candle
 You snuffed me
 If I come back this time
 Favour me with the glass of gall.

69

Over one of the lands of the elephants the years had grown weary, and it became barren and its waters failed. Its springs sank, and its plants and trees withered and cracked. A fierce thirst afflicted the elephants, and they complained to their king.

The king despatched his messengers and scouts to every region to search for water. And some came home and reported the discovery of a certain place where a fountain bubbled up called the Fountain of the Moon and the water was plentiful. So the king and his company made that way to drink at the fountain, and the whole herd followed.

Now the fountain was in the land of the rabbits, and when the elephants came these were trampled in their burrows, and many perished. Then the rabbits gathered round their king and spoke to him of the harm the elephants were doing; and he asked for opinions and counsel. At this a rabbit called Firouz, whose learning and wisdom the king knew of old, stepped forward; and she said "If the king wills, let him send me to the elephants accompanied by one he trusts to see and hear all that passes and report it to him." To which the king replied "We trust you, and we approve your offer. Go forth to the elephants, conveying to them, in my name, what you wish. And remember that the judgment and wisdom, the mildness and courtesy of the messenger, convey the character of him from whom the message comes. Be mild, generous, patient and politic. Hearts are softened by the courteous messenger, but hardened by the coarse."

On a moony night the rabbit started, and came to the elephants; but hated to approach them for fear that even unintentionally they might trample her under their feet. But she ascended a high mountain, and shouted to the king of the elephants, and said "The moon has sent me to you; and the messenger should not be blamed for the words he carries, if even they are uncivil." "What is the message?" said the elephant-king. She said "The moon tells you that when a creature knows his strength over the weak and takes pride in his superiority and swaggers about it, he may find his strength his bane. Now the moon has observed that you know your strength over creeping things, and are swollen with it, and that you have resorted to the fountain which bears his name, and have drunk from the waters and troubled them. Therefore he despatched me to you. And I give you warning that if you persist in your conduct, your sight will be darkened and your life destroyed. If you doubt my message, come to the fountain this hour, and the moon will meet you there."

The **king** of the elephants **marvelled at the speech**, and went to the fountain with Firouz the messenger, and looked in the pool and saw the moon gleaming. Then Firouz said to him: " Dip your trunk into the pool and draw water to wash your face, and kneel to the moon." So the elephant lowered his trunk into the pool, and at once the water rippled. And the elephant believed that the moon shuddered. " Why did the moon shudder ? " he said. " Can he be angry with me for putting my trunk in the water ? " The rabbit Firouz said " Yes." Then the elephant knelt down again, and did penance to the moon for his sins, and undertook that neither he nor any of his herd should repeat the misdeeds done in that place.

70

Plato possessed not only the gift for exact research and the exploration and elucidation of new principles, but also a perfected power of intuition and a technique, which has never been equalled, of self-abstraction from matter. These were the qualities which made him highpriest of the theory and practice of philosophy. Of all the philosophers from whom he derived descent, the remote Hermes, Empedocles, Pythagoras, and others, he was the most intuitive, exceeding even the Egyptian Adris, the Prophet, who himself out-Hermesed Hermes. He set the finest and final seal on the storehouse of intuitive philosophy. When he went, intellectual philosophy became the mode, and shot out ever-increasing roots of superfluity, until the vital earth was overgrown.

Hermes was called the Father, because he was the first to make a written record of philosophy, astrology, incantations, and many of the marvels of nature ; and thus to hand down his wisdom to disciples, who propagated it until in due course it reached the last great man. The venerable masters of this school established and cemented the foundations of knowledge, and curved their shoulders under the weight of wisdom and supported it as the cylinder supports and upholds ceilings and the framework of mansions. Therefore they were called the Pillars of Philosophy.

The text of the philosophers of this school is wholly symbolic. Hermes, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato chose a symbolic language which, calculated to stimulate the comprehension of the student by taxing his brain, was also an imitation of the utterances of the All-Righteous and of the bibles of the holy lawgivers ; for these latter, it will be seen, employ a symbolic technique which introduces synchronously a patent signification easy for the common masses to understand, and an inner meaning

accessible only to the initiate. The meaning as it reaches the people at large is sometimes sufficiently influential to deter them from certain forms of evil, sometimes teaches them to embrace certain illusions which inspire a superficial happiness. It would be idle to tell them the pure truth. They would neither understand nor accept it, and would be destroyed; or it might reach the unworthy and be exploited in the interests of profit, evil, and outrage, and thus the world would be corrupted. But the esoteric presentation of truth forbids the devoted seeker to slacken in its acquisition, compels him to extract all its power, urges him by its obscurity to put his whole being to the task; while the lazy, the stupid, and the unworthy retreat before the obstacles and the maze they find there.

Blamed by Plato for his overt exposition of knowledge, Aristotle replied " Although I brought knowledge to the light of day and laid it bare, I nevertheless introduced into my presentation of it such traps and conundra that the meaning is available only to the exceptional scholar who possesses the courage of exploration." This reference to the ellipses which characterise his writing indicates a misconception of the work of his predecessors, whose postulates it appreciates at their surface value. Aristotle misses the object of the symbolic technique, and the fact that the symbol can only be understood if the intention behind it is understood; and failing also to realise that the symbol is more than a conundrum, he fails to grasp the intention behind it. The apparent surface significance, of which Aristotle was thinking when he spoke, is not the significance purposed.

Yet even Aristotle mentions in the course of his controversy with Plato the word *surianis*, meaning that the symbol cannot be answered. On this turns the great principle of the apocalyptic glow whether through light or darkness, the principle that underlies the system of the Persian philosophers, like Gamasif and Mishadishur; who in their propagation of religion postulating two origins, light and darkness, meant these to be symbols of the MUST and the MAY BE :—light stands for compulsory, darkness for possible existence. They did not, as is often assumed, believe literally in two first causes, an error which would be entertained by no reasonable man, least of all by the splendid Persians bathing in the deep waters of knowledge.

71

FOR HER BROTHER

Premonition like dust lined my eyes,
Unsettled and drew them, and all night
I shepherded the stars in provinces not my own
I pulled halves of things round me for dreams.

Then I heard. The story brought no laughter
With its ripple and recoil saying
" He is stretched on a grave. He writhed
In a cemetery between the stones."

Go. But your memory should move homewards
Always, and order how the man's wrongs
May slide, but not a people's. How
The good heart comes unquailing to its origin.

And like a lance-head his image catches
Lights even in the dark. This free man
Meant sour spleen to some, but I and the doves
Will wash him perpetually in our sweetness

Grieving for him. O stars who talk
To the travellers, I will make no peace,
Nothing but war, where he was riding,
Until black lacquer turns to white.

7-2

WRITTEN IN FLIGHT FROM HIS ROYAL PATRON

Promiscuous tags and liberal lip I hate,
That gutter currency that swamps the state
Where slaves who knock their master down and clear
The till, are certain of a great career.
I went there as the guest of liars, who
Would neither entertain nor let me go,
Liars for whose putrid frames death would not function
Unless equipped with a carbolic truncheon.

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

I saw the land an orchard, the foxes creeping
Between the crumbling walls and watchmen sleeping ;
On grapes perennial the foxes thrive.
I saw what I hoped never to see alive,
The dog that fouled me pampered and well-fed,
The nigger king in plumes, the good men dead.

I saw the cult of slaves, the rites imposed
On jailbirds by a eunuch in priest's clothes,
From which peeped out his servile origin :—
The best-dressed leper cannot change his skin.
A local proverb : when you buy your slave
Buy a stick too, and teach him to behave.

I saw the hole in the black lip that rules
The poltroons and the gluttons and the fools.
The nation governed by a pregnant pathic
Is either lunatic or astigmatic.
He picked my brain, forbade me to depart,
Postured abroad as patron of the arts.
I shouted death to escort me from pain
And would have relished it like sugar-cane,
But found a simpler way, this camel crupper,
And ride, damning his midwife and his mother.

What howling sires, what genteel baboon set
Taught the tawny eunuch etiquette ?
Did he learn manners from his auctioneer
When sold for twopence (discount for the tattered ear
Supremely sordid sir, in your defence
I'll be an advocate, and plead that since
The great white bulls at moments fail to rise
To the occasion, eunuchs can't do otherwise.

73

Rain, trickle down
On my niece's bald crown
My niece has twenty bald playthings
The wolf took her and went grazing

He took her to the stream
 It tasted like a dream
 A bearded sheikh lived in the tank
 And stroked her as she sank

One drop drizzles, one sizzles
 One says to the soldiers fine
 Get up and drink the king's wine
 Fetch your mother an ounce of leeks
 In a knotted rag and a minced bag
 And chop the silk on ladies' cheeks.

74

Salama was one of the half-slaves of Medina, where she grew up, learning singing from the masters Ma'bad and Ibn 'Aisha and Gamila and Malik Ibn Abu Samh, until she excelled. She was generally called "Salama of the Priest," and this on account of the great and celebrated love cherished for her by one of the scholars of Medina, whose piety had won him the name of "The Priest."

She was bought by Yazid Ibn 'Abdel Malik, but survived him. She was, in fact, one of the slaves whom the Caliph al Walid inherited from his father and with whom he was accused of concubinage. His murderers, as they struck home, said "Take that for treading your father's slave-girl."

Another slave-girl singer of Medina who became famous at the same time was Hababa. Both these artistes were talented and witty. Salama was the better singer and Hababa had the lovelier face. Salama wrote poetry, but Hababa's efforts at composition were not really successful. A writer said of them, regenerating an obvious metaphor:

"One like the sun struggling up
 The other like the riding moon."

" The Priest " said in one of his poems about Salama :

I wronged and lost myself for you
As the quick heart had me do.
Until stealth grew long and difficult
And the mortified heart burned out.

" The Priest" was living in Mecca, and the way in which he came to love her was this. He was sitting with her owner, ' Ata ' Ibn Abu Rabah, and heard her singing, and was deeply moved. The host observed his reactions and said " Shall I bring her out to you, or shall we go inside to listen to her ? " But he refused. Then her owner said " I will put her in a place where you can hear her singing without seeing her." But he refused. Her master persisted, and took him inside, where he heard her sing. After that the host asked " Shall I bring her out to you now ? " And though he again refused, she was brought out and seated before him. She sang, and he fell deeply in love with her and she with him. And all the people of Mecca came to know of it.

She told him one day " By God, I love you." He answered " I love you, too." She said " I would love to put my mouth on yours." He said " By God, I too." And she said " What prevents you, for the place is empty." He said " I heard God say ' Emptiness will rise against you, making you enemies.' And I would hate our friendship to be enmity in the next world." And he left her and returned to his devout life.

Twenty thousand crowns was the price paid by the agents of the Caliph Yazid to buy Salama. At the moment of her departure, her people came to the agents and begged them to allow a few days' grace to buy robes and trousseau. But everything was already prepared, and the departure could not be delayed. They went out of Medina as far as a public hostel, and there looked back ; and a great crowd was following them, in which Salama saw many she knew. And she told the agents that these were friends who used to visit or salute her, and that she must say farewell to them.

So they were allowed to enter the inn, and crowded the courtyard, and she went down carrying a lute, and stood in their midst and sang :

Time should not be blamed again
They left me for death although they knew
None comes back from tasting that
The streams left me and went wild
Chasing lovers beyond the streams

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

The houses left for death's adventure
Time should not be blamed again
In graves outside the town are lovers
Of truth and age and youth living
And time has never troubled them.

And the chronicler says " She sang this verse several times, until she was lost in an ecstasy. And the people wept. Every man I ever wanted to see weep wept that day."

79

Scissors here and scissors there
Scissors clipping effigies
Here's a lady from Hegaz
Lambkin fleeces in her hair
Which she tethered to the mare

But my mare is in the strongbox
And the strongbox is short of ladders
And the ladders are at the carpenter's
And the carpenter wants a nail
And the nail is at the blacksmith's
And the blacksmith wants an egg
And the egg is in the chicken's hole
And the chicken wants a speck of corn
And the corn is at the merchant's
And the merchant wants the cash
And the cash is with the paymaster
And the paymaster wants red dye

And the red dye was on their hands
May a pimple block their eye.

76

Seeing no remission of the Abyssinian plague against his people, and his wife and son in the hands of the enemy, Seif Ibn Dhu Yazan, last prince of the Himaerite dynasty, fled from Yemen. First he went to the Roman Emperor and offered to give the Romans entry into Yemen if they would expel the Abyssinians. But the Emperor made the pretext that he could not champion a Jewish nation against a Christian, and would not make war on the Abyssinians.

Next he went to Hira and appealed to Nu'man Ibn Munzir, Persian Governor of the Arab territories in that area, where he found shelter until Nu'man was due to return to Persia with his annual report; at which time he took Seif with him and presented him to Kisra, the Shah, with a recommendation that the Abyssinians should be expelled from the Yemen and the land be made a Persian protectorate under Seif's administration. Kisra replied that the Yemen was too far away and too poor to interest Persia; in his opinion it reared only sheep and camels, and he needed neither. To soften his decision he offered Seif gifts of garments and coins; and Seif, to demonstrate that his land was rich beyond requirement of such gifts, took and scattered the coins among the mob, who scrimmaged for them. Kisra was obviously offended, but Seif told him "Our mountains at home are gold and silver. I come here only to ask you to liberate them from oppression." This was more pleasing; and Kisra suggested that Seif should wait a while, and he would consider the matter.

He waited long, nothing was done, and eventually he died. But in time his son, Ma'ad Yakrib, who had heard about him from the queen and had escaped to join him, came to Kisra, with whom he re-opened the question and pressed the old demand for help.

Kisra consulted his advisors, who suggested that an army should be recruited by mobilising the condemned men in the prisons; for these, it was argued, would suffer no unmerited fate if they were killed, while **if they** carved out glory for themselves it would mean a new addition to **the** Persian empire. The plan was put into effect, and some eight hundred men assembled, whom Wahzar Dailani, who appeared to be the noblest of birth among them, was chosen to command.

Wahzar moved his division in a convoy of eight ships. Two were **sunk**, six made a landfall at Aden. As the troops crossed the frontier **into Yemen, Wahzar asked Ma'ad Yakrib what forces he could throw in**

to their support, and was told "Every Arabian sword you need. My men will fight beside yours till we win or die." Ma'ad then rallied his supporters, while on the other side, Oburaha, the Abyssinian king, came out to meet the invaders with his own battalions to the number of a hundred thousand and levies of the dregs of Yemen sorted in among them.

Wahzar's son, who had been ordered to lead a reconnoitring party, was killed. When this news was brought in, the father took it bitterly and said "Show me their king." They pointed out Oburaha, who was wearing a Crown on his head and a red ruby between the eyes and constantly changing his mount, using first an elephant, then a horse, and then at last a mule. "He is riding the donkey's daughter," said Wahzar, "Here goes bad luck to him and his kingdom "; and he fired an arrow, Which hit the ruby between the man's eyes and split his head. As he dropped on the mule's neck and his grooms rushed him away, the invaders charged and put the Abyssinians to rout on both wings.

When Wahzar reached San'a he said "My banner shall not enter stooping"—and pulled down the gate and went in with his standards aloft. He took over the government of Yemen, expelled the Abyssinians, and despatched a report and rich booty to Kisra. The Shah replied ordering that Seif's son should be crowned and be charged an annual tax. A Persian delegate and a number of assistants were left with him in Yemen.

Ma'ad Ibn Yakrib, established as sole ruler, set up his residence on 'Ghumdan cliff in the royal palace which was called Venus and was one of the seven Arabian castles named after the planets and their influences. All seven became ruins during the Caliphate of 'Osman.

Among the Arabs who came to congratulate the king on his coronation were ten delegated by the chiefs of Quraish and the Arab potentates of the Isma'il family. Ma'ad gave them due honour and respect, and offered particular distinction to one of them, who was 'Abdul Muttalib; and asking him about his children, he was told of the birth of the Prophet (prayers and peace be accorded him) who on the death of his father, the tenth son of 'Abdul Muttalib, had passed to the grandfather's care. The king urged 'Abdul Muttalib to give unusual attention to the boy and do all he could to help him and protect him from the hostile races; and taking him aside he told him the good tidings of the boy's prophetic mission, one result of which would be the supremacy of the Quraish over all the Arabs.

After Wahzar's return to Persia, Ma'ad resumed the war against the Abyssinians, taking the initiative with such success that he was able to disembowel the women and execute the men, except for a few whom he chose to castrate and retain as his private guard of honour. These lived in great dread of him, but one day, escorting him on an outing, they got him alone in their midst and beat him with their flagpoles till he died;

and one of them succeeded him on the throne. At this the Persian commission which Wahzar had left behind went over to the Abyssinians and put their armour at the enemy's disposal. The events in the Yemen being reported to Kisra, he ordered Wahzar to take four thousand Persians and put every negro or half-caste in Yemen to the sword. Wahzar obeyed, massacred the Abyssinians wherever he found them, and sent home news of the completion of his mission. Kisra nominated him King of Yemen, and he regularly forwarded tribute to the metropole until his death.

By thus acquiring the kingdom of the Himaerites and appropriating to themselves an ancient Arab heritage, the Persians gained a notable advantage over that competitor who had been continually jostling on their flank in 'Iraq and who had at times succeeded in infiltrating over their border. Every shred of the old Arab rule in the Yemen was stripped away, except that here and there, in Hamain and Qahban for example, a few barons retained the overlordship of their Bedouin villages.

Al Tabari has a story that at the time of his conquest of the Yemen Kisra equipped one of his admirals with an armada which sailed to Sarandib in India and brought back trophies of a great victory, including sacks of money and jewels. The same authority says that Wahzar used to send Kisra money and spices by camel convoys, which were routed sometimes by way of the Bahrein road, sometimes through the Hegaz. Once the Banu Tamim attacked one of these caravans in the Bahrein passage, and Kisra, furious, wrote to his regent demanding and obtaining revenge in the shape of a murderous expedition against the tribe. On another occasion the Banu Kinana attacked his camels on a stage of the Hegaz road which lay near the domains of a noble of the tribe of Qais, with the result that there was war declared between the Qais and Kinana; and in this the Prophet, who was then a boy, took part, collecting the arrows for his uncle.

When Wahzar died his son, Murzuban, was Kisra's new nominee ; but he, like his predecessors, came to a sudden end. He was followed by Wahzar's grandson, Khurra Khisru Ibn il Taiban Ibn Marzuban. This youth earned Kisra's displeasure and was carried to Persia in chains. One of the emperor's sons interceded and obtained his release, but he was never allowed to ascend the throne again, and Bazan was appointed in his place. Bazan retained the power until the Gospellers reached him, when he embraced Islam, which asserted itself throughout the Yemen.

With him ends our material on the Tabae'i dynasty of the Yemen and the Persians who came after them. Mas'oudi puts the number Of their kings at 37 ; they ruled for 3,i90 years or, according to another account, much less. Their capital was Zafar, sometimes known as Zamar, and over the city-gate was a black stone engraved in primitive characters with the following:—

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

" Whose are you ? "
they said the day she was built
she inclined to the good people
" Whose are you ? "
prostrate under the hulk
of malicious Ethiopia
" Whose are you ? "
she dreamed her kingdom
was for the knight of the free
¹¹ Whose are you ? "
changing talents with
the merchant fathers of Islam
" Whose are you ? "
in desert shells she heard
an old name singing

She liked only brief nations
they built her for ruin
there was fire in her roofs
and butting at the sea
a black ram.

The city continued under Islam to be the house of kings.

77

AT THE FAYOUM

Seven waterwheels cry but the fires spread
My love told me what the houses said
Eyes consider eyes and bones flare red
Waves are my house and the shores of the sea my
And seven waterwheels cry and the fires spread.

78

Several of the inhabitants of Ikhmim in Upper Egypt have told me about the mystic, Abu 'l Fa'id Dhu Nun Ibn Ibrahim al Misri, a scholar who had developed his own esoteric discipline, and who was widely read in the history of these derelict regions and their buildings. He had examined many of the extant pictures and inscriptions, and claimed to have discovered in the course of his researches a book which, after long study, had yielded the saying "Beware of enfranchised slaves, boy favourites, proseletysing troopers, and Nabataeans turned Arab." In another of his discoveries he unknotted a sentence which read "Man designs and determines and Destiny laughs." In this same manuscript and in the same hand he made out a verse towards the end :

" You study the stars, which tell you nil.
The god of the stars does what he will."

The nation that peopled these wildernesses could read the decisions of the stars and laboured to disclose the secrets of nature; and they found that a great cataclysm would strike the earth, but could not distinguish whether it would come in the form of a fire that would devour the land and all its substance, or of water that would deluge the land, or of a sword of extermination. They grew afraid that their sciences would perish with themselves. Therefore they came out to these solitudes and deposited here manuscripts recording all their knowledge in pictures or images or writing. And they put up buildings, for half of which they used wood and for the other half stone ; and all they had written was duplicated so that there might be copies of everything stored in each type of treasury. For they argued that if the cataclysm were fire, the mud dwellings would harden as they were roasted and would survive and their learning with them. If the coming deluge were of water, it would sweep the mud away but the stone would stand firm. If it were a sword, both would survive.

A sword it proved to be, which swept through the land and smote the people down. The evidence of it is visible to this day at Tenis, in swelling mounds of corpses, male and female, young and old; and throughout Egypt in the caves and mausolea where bodies are laid on bodies. It is not known what people these are. Neither Nazarites nor Jews will acknowledge them as ancestors, the Moslems cannot name them, and history is silent over them.

Among their relics **are the Pyramids, with their odd giant figures and**

their inscriptions in a forgotten tongue which have defied interpretation. But the engravings and replicas inside them relate to the understanding of nature's secrets and the science of magic. The following passage is included : " We built them. Whoever thinks himself our peer in sovereignty or imperial achievement, or conceives that our dominion languishes, let him destroy them or obliterate their shape. For destruction is easier than construction, and division than composition."

It is said that certain kings sought to demolish the pyramids; but found that the combined budgets of Egypt and her neighbours were inadequate for the commission.

79

FROM MAGNUN LEILA

QAIS : Silence and night and desert are a vault
 In which like winds my passion and verses blow.
 You filled the sandy levels, Lord, and the sky
 With love, and put all the load on me. I go
 Gathered like sand to Leila's tents, and no
 Guide but an inner violence, and no convoy
 A step away the night strokes her canvas,
 But I halt on imaginary rims,
 A dry coward craving for streams beyond
 The old and unsealed clefts.
God forgive Leila
 For what she burdened me with, and the ash
 That clogs the heart.

QAIS : I stayed indoors till the fire failed
 For winds and guests and neighbours have rolled away
 The abundant logs from our yard.

AL MAHDI : Wait, Qais.

(he calls) Leila.

LEILA *(replying from the back of the tent)* : Yes, father.

AL MAHDI : Here is your cousin wanting fire
 For his house.

(LEILA appears at the opening of the tent).

- LEILA : Qais, my cousin, here ? Welcome !
- QAIS : May you be happy, and have all you desire.
(As AL MAHDI retires into the tent, LEILA tells her handmaid):
- LEILA : Go quickly, get wood for my cousin's house.
(Exit LEILA with the maid)
- QAIS : She has gone to her chamber, fetching fire,
A burning ember, milder than my burning
Verse that she fills, and easier to touch
Than true pretexts for my visits here.
(LEILA comes back carrying a burning branch, and gives it to him.)
- LEILA : An hour has joined us, and done well, surpassing
A lifetime.
- QAIS : Are you in earnest ?
- LEILA : Ask your own
Heart to decide if mine is porphyry
And tell the whole story, how I have borne
More than people can.
- QAIS : Shall I burst, Leila, or moan out my love ?
Or annotate it ? or abbreviate it ?
- LEILA : Explain what marvel you see in the sand, Qais,
That made you its poet, and gave your poems
The way to cities. Or the craft of stags,
That each you met you made its neck jewels,
And sick of us you ran with different stags.
- QAIS : You envy the stags, which do not envy you.
The sand is lovely by reason of your print
Dyed on infinite dunes. You are no stag
And the moon is not you.
(LEILA sees the fire about to catch his sleeve.)
- LEILA : A horror to my eyes ! Look !
- QAIS (*unaware of anything but what he is saying*) :
I met the dawn and asked if you breathed there,
The musk exposed the wind's knowledge of you,
I went with the gazelles, because their pupils
Were startling with what they had thieved from you.
- LEILA : Drop the branch, you are burning. The fire
Is hold of your right sleeve.
(QAIS throws the branch down, but still goes on)
- QAIS : And wolves humaner than your jealous people

Came to me, nuzzling their sharp snouts and claws
In my hand.

LEILA : My pity for Qais. He feels nothing
But the flesh is shredded off his palms.

QAIS : Can you who kindled and charred my body
Cry if a brown coal just eats the skin ?

(He staggers, almost collapses : she supports him.)

AL MAHDI : Away, Qais, away! Did you come seeking fire,
Or bringing a stick of fire to thrust under the house ?

QAIS : Where is the sky, where is the dying man
On whom earth trampled a grave ? A sleeplessness
Has long scourged me that one wink would appease.
And if they came with eternal tidings for
Travel, I would set out, and not alone.
And, rest or punishment, the conclusion
Would be the same in that company. Leila
Is paradise, and to-day I shall possess her
When we bed down together on the native
Rock, which I honour though it tore me.

(He hears a faint voice which seems to rise from her grave).

THE VOICE : QAIS.

QAIS : Whose is the voice and the sorcery ?

THE VOICE : Qais.

QAIS : Listen.

THE VOICE : Qais.

QAIS : I heard the grave pronounce my name. ,

THE VOICE : Qais.

QAIS : From the grave she calls, remembering my name.
Here I am, Leila, spirit and flesh.

(He sinks into the final phase of death)

Does death moisten our wounds ? Does it pitch
Our nomad tents close again, and compress
Distance to a hand's touch ?

VOICES : Qais . . . Leila . . .

QAIS : A gong in my ear and the names reverberating,
Qais and Leila of the wildernesses.
We are in the world though it will not see us.
Leila and the madman are not dead.

80

Sleep, and let the night sleep, leave wrestling
 With metre. We had the same father, the first
 Orchard prince, and always the shame
 Of our joint begetting turns my face
 To the corner. If it were not for one pearl,
 One globule of live water in the bone,
 A beast might have melted on the rug of prayer.

81

Some say that the Devil exhibits the world to the people every day, asking " Who will buy a ware that will do him harm and no good, and bring him care and no delight ? " Those who frequent the world and adore it reply " We will." He tells them " Its price is not pence or pounds but your share in paradise. I purchased it with four things : the curse, the wrath, the fury, and the persecution of God. And I sold paradise for it." They say " We accept the same." He tells them " I am trying to rook you." They answer " So be it." Whereupon he sells them the world, commenting " A bad bargain."

82

A MAN IN KHATH'AM SAID

Something came to the country and gulped
 Twice from its stomach's bed. Those whose free
 Hands had practised charity, the several guilds
 Went under, all except me. The walls
 And thatches withered in the black wind
 Blowing unseasonally. To-day the herds
 Of death range where the tribes did.
 Some hurried away, some tarried
 Till sundown. The houses are empty.
 I who was lowest am now lord,
 A poor monarchy, without peer or minister
 Or man. But the birds and cracked casemates.

83

Teach us the process and the secret
 What is the precious stone in the sea ? they ask

Here are the rising planes of our light
 Whose settings and soaring all happen in us
 We gathered on the white pearl, and were
 Prior to the throne and fashioned world

We left the deep seas behind us
 In tacit wonder setting out
 The people will not know where.

34

The first creation of God the Glorious was water, and on the water was God's Throne, Then when He desired to create man, He made smoke issue from the water, and the smoke ascended over the water, and He made it sky. And the water dried, and He made it earth. Then He rent it and made it seven earths. And that took two days, Sunday and Monday.

And He formed the earth on a whale ; and that was the whale which God, be He praised, mentioned in the Qoran, when he spoke of " Nun, the fish, and the pen and what they write." And the whale was in the water, and the water was on a stone, and the stone was on the back of an angel, and the angel was on a cliff, and the cliff was on the wind. It was this cliff that almighty God mentioned in the Qoran in the speech of Luqman to his son " O My son, verily God will bring everything to light, though it were but the weight of a grain of mustard-seed and hidden in a cliff or in the skies or the earth ; for God is subtil, informed of all." Then there was a stirring in the whale and a quaking in the earth, so God weighted the earth with mountains, and it stood firm. And thereof is his saying " He made weights for it lest you be engulfed." He created mountains on the earth, and sustenance for its folk, and all it lacked. This took two days, Tuesday and Wednesday, as He mentions in His glorious word : " Say, do ye indeed disbelieve in Him who created the earth in two days, and do ye set equals up against Him, who is Lord of the worlds ? He made the mountains that anchor the earth and blessed it and appointed sustenance for it, sufficing the needy, all in four days. Then He bethought

Himself of the sky, which was smoke, and said to the earth and the sky ' Come, whether ye will or no,' and they said ' We come willingly/ ''

That smoke was of the breath of water, and He made it uniform sky, then rent it into seven heavens. And this took two days, Thursday and Friday; and Friday was called the Day of Assembly, because that day God assembled the creatures of the skies and earth. And to each heaven He imparted its order, that is, in each heaven was created its meed of creation, its angels, oceans and chill mountains. The heaven nearest earth is of green emerald; and the second heaven of gleaming silver; and the third heaven of red ruby; and the fourth heaven of white pearl; and the fifth heaven of red gold ; and the sixth heaven of yellow jacinth. And the seventh heaven is all radiance, which God has overlaid with angels standing on one foot magnifying God because they are near Him, and their legs pierce the seventh earth and extend below it five hundred years' journey; and their heads are beneath the Throne, though they may not touch the Throne. And they say " There is no God but Allah, who sits on the Throne of Glory/' And they have done that since the day of creation and will do it till the day of resurrection.

- Beneath the Throne is a sea from which pour the beasts of the earth. And God breathes upon it and it rains, as He desires, from heaven to heaven till it comes to a place called The Most Spinning. And God breathes into the wind, which carries it to the clouds where it is sieved. And below the sky over this earth is a sea of water brimming with creatures like those in the oceans of the earth ; and this sea is tethered fast by Will.

And almighty God, when he had concluded the creation of the earth, peopled it with Djinnns before Adam, and made them of a medley of fire. And the Devil was among them. And God cautioned them against spilling the blood of the animals and displaying rancour one to another. But they spilled the blood of the animals and warred among themselves. And when the Devil saw them stubbornly set on that path, he asked God to raise him to Heaven. And he was put with the angels in the ecstasy of their worship. To the Djinnns of the Devil's party God sent a squadron of angels who drove them forth to the ocean islands and slew some as God willed. And God appointed the Devil treasurer in the sky of this earth, that his breast puffed with pride.

Then God the glorious willed the creation of Adam. He spoke to the angels saying " I am forming a deputy on the earth." And they asked " Lord, who may that deputy be ? " And He said: " It is he whose seed will despoil the earth, beget envy, and raise hand against hand in slaughter/' They asked " Lord, will you give the earth's despoiler and spiller of blood while we exalt your praises and consecrate you ? " But He said " I know what ye do not know."

Then God despatched Gabriel to the earth to bring back a little mud.

And the earth said " I invoke God that you diminish me not." And he went back taking nothing, and reported " Lord, she invoked You." Then God despatched Michael, and to him she said the same, and he went back taking nothing. Then God despatched the Angel of Death, and she invoked God against him; and he replied " I invoke God that I go not back with the order unaccomplished." And he took a little mud, black, red, and white ; and that is why the sons of Adam came forth of diverse colours.

And God named the Angel of Death to minister death.

And Glorious God formed man, and left him forty years till he was compact mud, each part adhering to each. And He left him another forty years while he changed and grew putrid. Then He shaped him and left him of roast clay, still lacking soul, for another forty years. And the angels would pass by him and be afraid; and more afraid was the Devil, who would kick him as he passed ; and at that the dried clay would rattle and clash. And the Devil would enter him by his mouth and come out by his seat, and say " For some mysterious reason you have been created."

When the All-high God wished to breathe soul into man, he told the angels " Bow down and worship Adam "; and they bowed down —save the Devil, who refused from pride, and said " O Lord, I am better than him. You created me from fire, him from mud, and fire is nobler than mud. I was one apart on earth and I was clothed in plumes and ringed with light and crowned with dignity. I worshipped you in your heaven and on earth." And God said " Begone hence ; you are a stoned one. And the curse shall be on you till the day of reckoning." Then he begged God for respite till the day of resurrection. And God granted him respite till the predestined time.

Then God breathed soul into Adam. And as the soul entered a part of him, he made to seat himself. And God said " Man is hasty." And when the soul had spread evenly through him, Adam sneezed. Whereupon God said : " Say, ' Praise be to God/ and may God have compassion on you, Adam."

85

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The first o the second o the third o

The first is Egypt—I was chased from the country

The second is Tunis—my people disowned me

The third is Paris—which left me lonely

The first is Egypt—I was chased from the country—to pay for my care
The second is Tunis—my people disowned me—and the stranger there
 The third is Paris—which left me lonely—though I was Moliere

The first is Egypt—I was chased from the country—to pay for my care—
 and lectures
 The second is Tunis—my people disowned me—and the strangers there—
 also objected
 The third is Paris—which left me lonely—though I was Moliere—
 resurrected

The first was a cup of departure—that burned my throat
 The second was mournful beauty—and trodden fruit
The third my love I want love there—and a black coat

The first o the second o the third o

The first I impeach before him who pours the Nile
 The second I wept for till I drowned the Bastille
 The third sent me rolling the streets like an old cartwheel

The first o the secondo the third o.

86

The king said to the philosopher : " I understand that parable. Now tell me why the ignorant man wins honour and success, while the learned and intelligent man often finds adversity and suffering ?"

" Just as sight depends on the eye and hearing on the ears," said the philosopher, " so does the business of life depend on patience, intelligence, and steadfastness, save that over all these is set the control of fate and destiny. In token of which is the tale of the king's son and his acquaintances." " What is that tale ? " asked the king.

Then the philosopher told the ancient story, how four persons found themselves on the same road, one being a king's son, the second a merchant's son, the third a noble's son, a boy of fine looks, and the fourth the son of a peasant, but all alike distressed, needy, and fatigued, exiles from their countries and possessing nothing but the clothes on their backs. As they walked they thought of their troubles, and each interpreted them according to his character. The son of the king said " The

whole world is ruled by fate and destiny." The son of the merchant said " Brains rule everything." The son of the nobleman said " Beauty rules everything." The son of the peasant said " Hard work is the most important thing in the world."

As they approached a certain town, by name Matrún, they sat down at one of the boundary stones to discuss what they should do ; and said to the peasant's son " Go in and find your hard work and earn enough to feed us to-day." So the peasant boy entered the town enquiring for work which would earn enough to feed four people, and was told that there was nothing in that place better paid than woodcutting. The boy went out to a forest some three miles away and chopped a load of wood, which he brought back and sold in the town for a florin. With that he bought food, and wrote on the town-gate " One day's work with a man's sweat in it is worth a florin." And he took the food to his friends and they ate.

When next day came, they decided it should be the turn of the one who thought beauty the strongest power in the world. But when the nobleman's son went into the city, he thought " I have no trade, and can do nothing here " ; and yet he was ashamed to go back to his friends empty-handed, and wandered on till he came to a great tree, and sat down with his back against it till sleep overtook him. While he lay there, the wife of one of the magnates of the town passed by, and was struck by his beauty, and sent one of her women to bring him to the house. He was washed for the lady, and she had him alone with her, all day in pleasure and delight. When evening fell she awarded him five hundred florins.

On the third morning they said to the merchant's son " You go to-day, and use your brains and knowledge of trade to earn something for us." The merchant's son started and walked on till he saw an ocean vessel heavy with cargo putting into shore and a concourse of merchants going to meet it hoping to buy the freight. And these sat by the ship's side bargaining, till at last, unable to make a price, they told one another " Let us go home to-day without buying, so that the market may drop and the goods we need be offered cheaper." And they went off, but the merchant's son did the opposite, and approached the masters of the ship and bought their whole cargo for a hundred thousand crowns on trust. Then he let it be said that he intended to transfer his purchase to another town, and when this news reached the business men they were afraid that the goods would pass out of their hands, and offered him a hundred thousand florins profit over the original price. So he took his profit and sent them with the rest of the cash to the masters of the ship, and carried his earnings back to his friends, writing on the town-gate as he passed " The price of one day's wits is a hundred thousand florins."

When the fourth morning dawned, they told the king's son " Off you go, and get us what you can with your fate and destiny." The young prince walked until he came to the towngate, and there he sat on a bench under the arch. Now it happened that the king of that country died in the morning, leaving neither son nor relative to be his heir. The funeral passed by the gate, and every man was mourning but the prince, and he was reproved for his want of tears, especially by the porter who cursed him and shouted " Who are you, there ? Why are you sitting at the gate without a tear for the king ? " And the porter drove him from the gate, but after the procession had passed he returned and sat down again. There the porter, coming back from the burial service, found him and flew into a rage, and had him imprisoned.

The people of the city gathered to discuss whom they should nominate to rule them. Every man stared hard and long at his neighbour, and all disputed. Then the porter spoke up and told how he had seen an unknown youth by the gate, who had shown no grief at the funeral procession, and who, after returning to the bench from which he was driven away, had been imprisoned in case he was a spy. The nobles sent for the young man, and when he was fetched, asked him about himself and what brought him to their town. He replied " I am the son of the king of Faweiran, but when my father died my brother wrested the throne from me, and I fled in fear of my life, and at last found myself here." When he related these things, those present who had been on missions to his father's kingdom recognised him, and spoke well of his father. And the nobles nominated him as their king, and he was approved by all.

It was a tradition among the people of this town to mount their new king on a cream-coloured elephant, and tour the streets with him. In the course of this ceremony, they passed the towngate, and the youth saw what his friends had written; and he ordered the following to be added: " Diligence, beauty, intellect, and all the good or ill man has in this world, come by fate and destiny as glorious God directs. Witness the truth of this the good and happiness which God set before me."

He went to the council chamber and ascended the royal throne, and, sending for his friends of the road, set the man of brains beside him among the ministers, awarded the hard worker an estate among the farmers, and ordered a large sum in coin to be paid to the handsome man.

87

The man's dung said to the cow's " Who are you ?" It replied in Turkish " Your brother."

88

The Messenger of God and his companions had given order that the attack was not to begin before he released a signal, and until then the enemy was to be prevented from advancing by a screen of arrows. And the Prophet took up his station, Abu Bakr beside him, in a wooden structure from which he could observe the battle.

According to Abu Ga'far, the battle of Badr was fought on a Friday, the seventeenth of Ramadan. The Messenger of God drew up his supporters in files, moving backwards and forwards with a baton in his hand to marshal them. As he passed Sawad Ibn Ghaziyya, he found him out of line, and saying "Get into place, Sawad," thrust the baton into his belly. He answered "Messenger of God, you have hurt me. God sent you to be the truth, and you should rather lead me." Then the Prophet of God uncovered his stomach and said "Be led"; whereupon Sawad threw his arms about him and kissed him. "What made you do that, Sawad?" he asked. "Messenger of God," he said, "I saw these great hurts and was not sure I should live; and if this was my last moment with you, I wanted my flesh to touch yours." The Messenger of God wished him well, and returning to the scaffolding went up to the platform; and Abu Bakr was with him.

The Messenger of God scrutinised the polytheists and their armament, and compared his own forces, which numbered not more than three hundred. He turned and faced the holy way and prayed to God asking Him to fulfil His promises; warning Him that if the congregation of the believers was destroyed it would be an end of His worship on earth. He prayed unremittingly till his garment dropped off; and Abu Bakr, taking it and throwing it about him again, said "Prophet of God, you have invoked your Lord enough. He will surely make good His promises to you." On the instant God inspired His Messenger with the verse "If you summon your Lord He will reply 'I am your reinforcement with a thousand angels mounted on horses V

Then the vision was over, and he told Abu Bakr "God's victory is at hand. I see Gabriel with us holding the reins of his horse, leading it over the rim of the pits." At that moment Mahgi', the slave of 'Omar Ibn Khattab, was hit by an arrow and killed, and became Islam's first martyr. He was followed by Haritha Ibn Suraqa of the tribe of Beni 'Adi Ibn Nagar who was killed as he drank at the well. The Messenger of God went out to the men to encourage them and stir them. "By Him who holds the soul of Mohammed in His hands," he said, "each of you that fights and dies, patient, hungry, attacking, never falling back, God admits

that man to Paradise." 'Umar Ibn il Hamam, who was eating a few dates he had been carrying, looked up and asked " Is the only barrier between Paradise and me death at their, hands ? " And he tossed the dates aside, took his sword, and went and fought the enemy till he died—singing

Running to God without arrows
But love and promise and patience
For all runs out like arrows
But love of God and guidance.

And Ibn ' Afra' asked the Prophet " Messenger of God, what would make the Lord smile in the face of His slave ? " He answered " If he dipped his hand in the enemy, naked." At this Ibn ' Afra ' slung down the shield he was holding, and went in and fought the enemy till he died.

The Messenger of God picked up a handful of pebbles and threw them at the opposing Quraish, and said " Their faces are mutilated." Then he turned to his supporters and told them to charge. God slew the adversaries and made them victims in great numbers, and it was defeat for the Quraish.

Among those who came to guard the Prophet of God and prevent the enemy reaching his platform, was Sa'ad Ibn Ma'az ; and the Prophet saw him standing at the foot of the scaffolding his face creased from repugnance of the work the army was doing. —" As if you hated our men's doing," he said. " Yes," Sa'ad said. " Yes, Prophet of God, this is the first time God has fallen on the polytheists, and the frenzy of the blow of battle is stranger than the way of taking prisoners."

The Prophet of God said that day to his companions " I understand that the Beni Hisham have been pressed unwillingly into battle against us. Let our men spare any of them they meet. And Abu al Bukhturi Ibn Hisham should be spared, and so should my uncle 'Abdul Mutallib if anyone comes across him." Now Mugadar Beni Zayad found himself confronting al Bukhturi, who had with him a friend from Mecca, Ganada Ibn Tabha. Being told " The Prophet of God has forbidden your death," al Bukhturi asked Mugadar " What about my friend here ? " Mugadar answered " In God's name, no. Your friend shall not survive. The Prophet of God only ordered us to spare you." " Then, by God," said al Bukhturi, " We will die together. The women of the Quraish shall never say of me that love of life made me leave a friend to his fate." And he raised his sword for the fight, reciting :

" The good son keeps his laurel crown
Until he cuts a way or is cut down."

And they fought till Mugadar killed him.

AFTER SAQQARA

The mind, walking backward, a hygienic interlude,
No ataxia, redescibes (with mimetic compression of the eyes)
Pictures associate and mood, town and trees liquid
where boys watch the skies, buy intellectual scarabs :

with the rain fell knowledge, from the park many followed
laughing at the dangerous thing for a blazoned promise.
The bull of war bellowed on the dreamy hedge-rows
hopeful premises of the marionettes of rebellions.

Knowledge, festooning us so, lightened, the illusionist,
earth and its opacity. Nor yet signalled definitely,
its defeat, from the harassed on the intemperate isthmus,
questioning faintly the conclusions of adult vanity,

for all that snow buries and complicates the fortresses.
Deferring to a traditional mode of deference
the verbal intermediaries trumpet my discoveries
of the cognition of the present, kissing without ceremonial,

for Stendhal as for me capital the impossibility,
old as King Horn, the rigours of eyes and hall;
and later with Thackeray lies the rocking commentary,
the shame of it all, all its degradation.

Immediately knowledge enquires of your numerous epicures
confirmation of an, oh, pallid and dark, impression.
Change lights that face of yours, two identities are yours,
pale bulls and feathered conceptions grappling in a frail meadow.

Sorrows flow like benevolence in the art of a renaissance,
secrets that the inquisitive prying of the last-century novelists
uprooted, suicide of complacency, spring tilting at the fence
of civilised looks, my visits, no visit remunerative,

even humbly rendered, titles in attainder,
to you, once the prance and rage. Sweet the carnage
and the arm, so trained, slash-saluting, you calendar
of my boyhood, my failures, o gun-carriage—and haemorrhage.

Tendernesses (as), knotted strings of vertebrate
vibrates, undetected (I) tremors of the compacted
muscles, inter-correlate (now) the vacuum and dichotomy
wedging the fractious images (see) that you projected.

Tragedy is one function of genuine altruism ;
only the virtuous may sit with unhappiness :
which acquires approbation, not the romantic one,
as guarantor of dependence, mutually, and yet unsermonised

federality. Your tragedy now represents the
death of bull; and if I seem to transplant
the bull's head, that's phantasy's sleight and final trauma :—
I savaged when the rampant bull was felled in me.

The bull rocks in Saqqara, a dead and fertile empire.
While knowledge indeed continues, the sands against it spinning
their wormy flush and fear, quiet is the ancient harrasser ;
This pestilence without mutiny is lovely in diminuendo.

ORDER IN ANDALUSIA

The night-watch is maintained by a network of lane-masters, each with his swinging lantern and vigilant dog and sword assigned to one of these cul-de-sacs which are the peculiar feature of Andalusian town-planning. After sunset every lane is barred off and the watchman takes tip his station. These excessive security measures are conditioned by the excessive swarm of thieves, and their agility in climbing high walls and forcing intricate locks. The thief usually adds murder to his crimes by killing the householder to prevent him reporting to the police. The tourist in Andalusia hears an endless succession of tales that so-and-so's house has been ransacked by burglars and that so-and-so has been killed in his bed by house-breakers. But experience shows that in general it

depends on the magistrates and the degree of severity with which they apply the law and redden the executioner's axe, whether crimes in a particular district are many or few.

The Audits Office recruits men of the highest intellectual and academic level, and the appointment of Director is normally made from the King's Bench. The Director is expected personally to go down to the markets with his assistants, carrying his official balance to check the bread exposed for sale against the standard legal weights. The application of this system has had beneficial results. The innocent child, the careless slave-girl, the expert in weights and measures, all alike may go and buy in the market and be sure the proper measure will be sold. The Audits Office has also ordered that the price of meat be legibly advertised, and no butcher dares to sell above or below the official tariff price as marked. From time to time the Auditors send a boy or slave-girl to make a sample purchase, which they test, and if they prove an offence the offender is flogged and dragged through the shopping-streets.

The police are organised under local commandants popularly known as " Landlords of the City " or " Landlords of the Night." A commandant on good terms with the sultan may be given the right to execute a convicted person without reference to the royal authority, but on the whole this liberty is rare. The regular charge of the commandant is to restrain fornication and drunkenness, and to settle many of the questions of personal status which come under his jurisdiction. The Bench, which was at one time hostile to his powers, has now become reconciled to them.

9i

Then the king of France and a number of the French nobles sued for peace, which was accorded to them. They were conducted to Mansura, and the king, fettered in iron, was detained at the local residence of the judge and royal amanuensis, Fakhr el Din, where the eunuch Sabih el Mo'zimi was installed to watch him. His brother was confined with him, and a daily ration allocated to the pair. Meanwhile, Seif il Din, having received orders from the king that the French prisoners were to be exterminated, took them in batches of three or four hundred a night and beheaded them, and threw the corpses into the sea; until eventually the order had been completely carried out.

In a letter addressed to the commissioner in Damascus, Prince Gamal il Din Ibn Ghumur, Sultan Mo'zim reported his victory as follows :

" From his son Tumanshah. Glory be to God who has averted sorrow

from our heads. Victory is the gift of God, as witness His saying ' On that day will the Believers exult in God's victory' And the grace of God is beyond all reckoning. To the sublime Assembly and the whole Moslem world we declare the good tidings of the triumph which God has granted over the enemy of religion; whose strength was growing and his evil in full flood, so that our people despaired and our women and children wept. But we caused an order to be circulated in God's name forbidding despair; and on Monday, the beginning of the holy year, when God's blessing on his nation was fulfilled, we opened our treasuries and placed the monies for purchase of armament; and we mobilised the desert nomads and called for volunteers. At length we had assembled a multitude whose number was known only to God, and men flocked to the colours from every deep valley and distant place. And by Tuesday evening the enemy was in flight towards Damietta, and his tents and wealth and supplies were abandoned in our hands. We held on their heels all night, striking with the sword, and they suffered ignominy and disaster. By Wednesday three thousand had been killed in battle, others had been drowned in trying to escape, and we had taken prisoners as many as the sea. Their remnants sought shelter in Maniyya and asked for peace, which we accorded. We took their king and treated him with due respect. And we recaptured Damietta by God's glorious intervention."

There were further extensive claims in the letter, with which was forwarded the French King's cloak, a fine piece of Irish scarlet bordered with ermine and clasped with gold, as Sheikh Nagm il Din Israel implies in his verse about it:

White as French pastry it came crawling to our lord
Except where cochineal had pinked it from his sword

And Prince Gamal il Din was delighted with the garment and wore it.

Sultan Mo'zim next moved to Fariskour where he had decided to settle. He pitched his pavilion, and commissioned the building of a wooden tower beside it. The camp became the scene of his customary debaucheries.

Meanwhile he had embarked on a purge of his leading statesmen. Count al Maghith Fath il Din was arrested and interned. Count Said Fakhr il Din was transferred from Cairo to Damascus, and there was arrested and imprisoned by Gamal il Din. On Friday the 5th of Mulharram the viceroy in Cairo received a letter announcing the imminent arrival of the royal suite and informing him that he was replaced by Prince Gamal il Din Aqush. Prince Abu 'Aly, the counsellor and right hand of the late king, who went to the Sultan's headquarters and put himself at the royal disposal, was ignored.

Mo'zim next wrote a threatening letter to his father's widow, Shagr il Din, and ordered her to surrender the treasures and jewels which her

husband had bequeathed to her. And she, terrified of his frenzy and dissipation, wrote to the Nile Knights, laying before them an account of her part in assisting Mo'zim to claim the throne, her vigilance to preserve the quiet of the country prior to his arrival, and the recompense he was now paying her by his threats and impossible demands.

The Knights replied condemning the King's conduct and expressing their indignation. They had additional causes of grievance. One of their number, Aqtai, had been promised the rank of General when Mo'zim received him at Kifa Castle, but the promise had never been observed, and he cherished a secret resentment which was kindled by the Queen Mother's letter. The Order as a whole was offended by the King's disregard of it. Those Knights who had served his father had been dismissed with the other counsellors and companions. In their places new favourites had been appointed and were fattening themselves on the major offices of the kingdom. The new Chamberlain was the eunuch Masrur; the new C-in-C. was a gigantic Abyssinian slave, who had been awarded a princely salary, spacious estates, and a gold baton. Mo'zim had already done much to spite himself on the Knights and was threatening more. Evening after evening, in the bravado of intoxication, he would line up the candlesticks in front of him, and slash the tops off with his sword, shouting "That's what I'll do with the Nile Knights." Each candle was named after one of the Knights and duly decapitated; after which the King would retire into that extraordinary and unprecedented seclusion which he was creating for himself, and abuse the paternal slaves, not only the females but also the males who had not been accustomed to such treatment in the days of the old King.

Hardening their hearts against him, the Knights conspired his death, by which they would also break the power of his friends who had appropriated authority in the State. On Monday, the 16th of Muharram, when Mo'zim was holding a banquet at Fariskour, Berbus il Bindaqdari, the Knight who was to be his successor to the throne, drew his sword and made a pass at him. The Sultan parried the blow—but with his hand, and the skin was sheared off the bone. He turned and fled, making for his wooden tower of refuge. "Who wounded me?" he shrieked. "An assassin of the Secret League," someone suggested. But he knew better and shouted "No, by God. This time it's the Nile Knights. I'll slaughter them all." And he called for the barbers to dress his hand.

The Knights were hastily conferring, and encouraged each other to finish the business before the King could take counter-measures and annihilate them. They drew their swords and forced their way into the tower. He fled to the roof and barred the trap-door, his hand still bleeding. They set fire to the tower, and shot arrows at him on the roof. He threw himself over the side, and clutched at the tail of Aqtai's horse and screamed

for mercy and help. But Aqtai was set against him. Then he fled to the water crying " I don't want to be King. Let me go back to my castle. Isn't there one Moslem to defend me ? " And while all this was happening, his soldiers were standing by and none responded to him. The arrows were flying at him from all angles. Some of the Knights swam after him in the water, and cut him to pieces with their swords. He died three deaths, by the sword, by fire, and by water.

All his supporters escaped or disappeared, and his trunk was left on the bank for three days, swollen and unburied, for no one dared approach. At last the Caliph's resident envoy interceded, and he was carried aside and buried near the river.

His rule had lasted seventy-one days. It might have been altogether avoided, had Prince Hisam il Din carried out the threat of killing him made on the occasion when he refused to return from Kifa Castle to Cairo. It is a curious fact that four Nile Knights had been deputed to execute that proposed murder. But there is another fact more curious still. His father, Al Salih, had been guilty of fratricide, having arranged the murder of a brother through the agency of the eunuch Muhsin. Muhsin had asked the Nile Knights to share the commission, and though most had refused four had joined in visiting the victim in prison and strangling him. God willed it that these same four murdered Al Salih's son and thus repaid the wrong within the family by inflicting an atrocious death on Mo'zim; shortly after whose murder the father was seen in a dream, in which he said

They made a sordid end for him, careless
Of his house and its annals. They preferred
To appoint themselves retributive angels
And him a crimson caution to the world.
The justice they invoked shall feed them
To the humblest bellies in the world.

A SONG FOR MOULID IN NABI

The Porter says to the Prophet: " Step in to Paradise
And see—what bricklayer never touched—the palaces of bliss."
As our Prophet entered the Porter told him to wish.
He said: " Behind at the gates there are still many believers.
If I am late back to them they will say What made you leave us ? "

93

IN EGYPT NOW

The rags whose hearts are red and blue
 Involve a stern retentive skill;
 And glasses of a vacant beast,
 Benevolent troughs of good and ill,
 Step, lofty in their metres, to
 A tender feast
 Where sleepful caviare of the east
 Smokes in the urban, idle, popular view.

The years have piled their academe,
 Their gentle latticework of tears,
 Crown over beads, of bubbling art
 The lock and frame. Our own time wears,
 Like theirs, exterior and esteem
 That stuff the thought
 And stultify the trenchant act
 Until the clocks deluge our nervous dream.

The blind man with his script will turn
 Those famous, empty eyes, and mark
 The iron eclipses of their laws
 Stamped on his liberal dark.
 Now sticks, now stones, now eyes that burn
 Acrid because
 Compression brims and bursts the glass ;
 Let these depart in a recumbent urn.

Funerals must march ; tribunals must
 Shed all but idiom ; all dread
 Refine to bridal recollection
 Of rapture in the mother's bed.
 Some tools are good, although they rust.
 Some bright correction
 Will fertilise the eye's infection
For delicate sparks to ride and rinse its crust.

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

Malicious donors, while we quest
For relics and for embassies
(Those burning mantles of the globe),
Our conscience, not our conduct, is
Some heritage ; that, dispossessed,
Sweetly unrobe,
Origins of an optic hope,
The detruncated heroes of the west.

94

There is no sea in the universe greater than the sea of India. Part of it is a gulf reaching along the coast of Abyssinia from the negro lands to Berbera. And this the seafarers from Oman traverse, on their way to the island of Qanbalu in tropic waters, where there are Moslems holding high offices of state among a negro people.

The men of Oman, masters of the ships, report that the gulf is known as the Gulf of Berbera off Gafouni land. And its waves, they say, are like lofty peaks, and are "blind waves"—that is, they swell mountain-high and subside to the levels of the streams in the valleys, yet they never break into foam like the waves of other seas. They are also called "crazy waves."

And as the sailors, people of Oman and Arabs of the Azd, are half over the sea and are abreast the waves, they are flung high and whirled low; and they burst out singing

Berbera and Gafouni look at the breakers
Gafouni and Berbera the crazy breakers.

99

There was a hermit, who was loved by God and all his prayers were answered. One day as he sat on a river bank a baby mouse, dropped from the claws of a kite, fell beside him, and he took pity on it and wrapped it in his cloak. And he decided to carry it home and rear it, but was afraid his wife might find trouble in nursing so tiny a thing, and therefore turned to God and asked Him to change it into a maiden.

So the mouse was turned into a maiden, lovely and winsome, and was

taken to the hermit's house, where he commended her to his wife saying " This is my daughter. Treat her as you would your own child." He gave her the finest education but kept her ignorant of the story of her birth.

At last, when she was twelve years old, he said " Now, daughter, you are come of age to seek a husband who will take you from my care to his own. Choose whom you love best of all men, and I will marry you to him." To which she replied " I desire a husband who is strong and invincible."

The hermit said " I do not know who that could be unless the sun." And he went to the sun and told him " I have a beautiful girl who is like my own child. Will you not marry her, for you are strong and invincible ? " The sun replied " I will show you one stronger than me." And when the hermit asked who that was, he told him " The cloud that covers me and drives back my light."

So the hermit went to the cloud and asked him to marry the maiden. And he said " I will show you one stronger than me, the wind that hauls me to all corners of the sky."

Then the hermit went and asked the wind to marry the maiden, but he pointed to a mountain, and said " There is one stronger than I, for I cannot move him."

The hermit went to the mountain and asked him what he had asked the wind. But the mountain said " There is one stronger than I, the mouse who burrows inside me, and I am helpless to stop him."

And the hermit went to the mouse, asking him to marry the maiden ; and the answer was " Gladly. Only my chink is too narrow to admit her."

At this the hermit returned to the maiden and said " Would you like me to call upon God to make you a mouse, so that you may marry a bull-mouse, who is stronger than the elements ?" She accepted. And he called upon God, and she was changed into a mouse and married to the bull-mouse.

96

THE PRECIOUS GIFT

There was once a town on a hilltop in a sea island, that was fertile and full of blisses, for its gates were wide, its breezes swift, and the well-watered earth reared many trees and luscious fruits and animals that thrived on the essences of the air. The inhabitants, being descended from one man, were all brothers or cousins, and their life was happy because of their love for each other and their capacity for tenderness and tolerance. They were free of the hate, hostility, and anger which are common in the giant battling cities.

It happened that a number of the people of this town went out in a ship, which was wrecked, and the waves threw them on another island. Here the contours were craggy, and the trees tall and their fruits bitter, and the springs of sullied water were sunk in inaccessible clefts. Here were dark caves and wild beasts, and the inhabitants were apes. And each day and each night the island was raided by a monstrous bird that came from another part of the ocean, and snatched away an ape or a beast.

The men from the fair island scattered through the gullies of their new home, seeking springs to quench their thirst and fruits to staunch their hunger. They learned to clothe their bodies with leaves from the trees, and at night they took shelter in the caves and chasms. The apes came to them and were accepted as friends, since they found these nearest in image to men of all that was on the island. And there they settled as time went on, making houses for themselves in the mountains by gathering flints, and setting up granaries to store fruits, and they chose female monkeys for mates after competing with one another for them. Amid all this they forgot their homeland and its beauty and the people who were once their neighbours. They grew pleased with their new condition and were ready to keep it for eternity. Discord and dispute rose among them. There were wars.

But in a dream one of them thought he went home to his country, and that when the people heard of his return they were glad. The dearest among his brethren came out of the walls to meet him; and looked at him and found him so altered by travel and the life of the strange land, that they were loath to admit him to the town like that, and washed him in a fountain by the gates, shaved him, cut his hair and trimmed his

nails, and dressed him in new clothes, perfuming and garnishing him, before they put him on horseback, and took him into the city. The inhabitants came round rejoicing and began to question him concerning his friends and the journey and what time had done to them. They seated him at the head of the Assembly, and gathered round marvelling that he had returned after they had despaired. Happiness flowed over him and gratitude for God's gift, in saving him first from perishing in the sea and afterwards from a miserable existence among the horrors of an evil place and the society of apes.

All this happened, as it seemed, in waking life. But when the man rose in the morning he found himself still with the apes in their land. Melancholy overtook him, and he thought of his home and longed to go back there. And he confided in a brother, who remembered then what he had forgotten with the years, the ways of his city, the people and their kinsmen, the bliss in which they had been lapped. Consulting together on the means of winning safety and finding their home they determined to work side by side gathering wood from all corners of the island till they had enough to build a ship for the return voyage. They sealed this contract by a sacred vow not to slacken till the task was completed. Then it occurred to them that if they had a third with them, he would share the work, and that with each new helper they could recruit, their object would be the sooner realized. And gradually they remembered their brothers, and sought them out and argued with them till they too found their memories and began to hate the place they were in. At last there was a whole society of them, covenanted to build the ship and go home to their native land.

While they were chopping the trees and sawing the wood for their vessel, the huge bird came over on its mission of assault against the apes, and snatched a man from the busy company and lifted him into the skies. In full flight the bird looked at its load, and saw it was not his habitual prey ; but flew on till it was over the hilltop and the town from which the man had started out, and there it dropped him on the roof of his own house. And the man looked, and there were his people, his kin, his city; and he wished that the bird would descend on the same place every day and seize one of his friends and restore him to the fair city likewise.

But those who were left behind were sad when their friend was torn away, and wept at the separation, ignorant what the bird would do. If they had known, they too would have wished all their friend wished for them.

That is the pattern for the faith of the brethren of purity, and that is how they should think of the man whom death chooses first. For the world is like the place of crags and its people are the apes ; and death is

the huge bird. The favourites of God are like the company whose ship was wrecked, and the city from which they started is like the other world.

Such is the belief of our brethren and the spring of their collaboration.

97

There were three branches of the tribe of Quda'a living between Al Shahr and the Hadhramaut. They were the Banu Na'ib, the Banu Dahin, and the Banu Ri'am. The last, who were the fewest in number but the bravest in attack, had among them an old woman, Khuweila, and her slave-girl, an Arab half-breed called Zabra\ Khuweila was herself barren, but forty nephews would resort to her tent. And the Banu Na'ib and Banu Dahin were united against the Banu Ri'am.

There came a day when the Banu Ri'am gathered for a wedding-feast, and seventy brave and hardy men sat down together to eat and drink. That day Zabra', who was initiated in mysteries, spoke to Khuweila and said to her " Let us go to our people and I will warn them." So they went, Khuweila leaning on Zabra', and when the people saw her they rose in respect. She said :

Fruit of hearts
 Issue of one year
 A nipple of prediction
 Rides in front of doom
 Before darkness shifts
 And clears for its leap
 Listen to Zabra.

They asked Zabra* to speak, and she said :

By the shaking of space
 By the stick of night
 By the morning coming up
 By the visiting planet
 By the river rain
 The trees of the valley are shaping ways of death
 And burning their great canines
 And the spiked rocks talk bereavement
 And no line of light tapers
 For the blindfold people
 Wading in wine.

They said:

A wind that blows for a second
Between the organs is a wide hollow
And Zabra's gelding is nine months gone.

Zabra' said:

Take care, children of the cherished.
I smell the smell of men under iron.

A young man among them, named Huzail Ibn Munqith, said :

O emittance, what you smell is the stench of your armpits.

The women went away, and some of the elder men present were impressed and went too. Thirty stayed eating and drinking; and on these fell the Banu Na'ib and the Banu Dahin, killing them all.

Khuweila came with the sunrise and stood over their bodies. And she cut the little fingers off the corpses, and joined them together in a necklace and hung it round her neck; and wearing this she journeyed till she reached Mardawi Ibn Sa'wa al Mohari, who was one of her nephews. She knelt down in his courtyard and recited :

I have come, spreading blackness over the dried-up void,
Enduring and cutting the heat, like the bird
That ate the spring till it crimsoned its corslet.
Look at the gauds I chose for this visit,
The joints of boys of the house, the best twenty,
The richer rain of a cracked century.
Death rapped, they are rolled over by jackal noses.
The tails of the sandstorm are flogging their corpses.
They drank hard under a weight of scythes.

A passion scalds this barren inside,
A heat of grief for generations of killing.

Lift off what threw us, heavier than hills,
The fertile chambers are empty and hurt
And the hours are torn by an unsatisfied
Beak driven into the foreign earth.

He answered:

The secret of women is under ban to me
And the slices of slaughtered meat
And all thrown into the turbid pan,
Until I have sown pain at daylight
And broken the assassin earth

So bury their fingers in mysterious earth
And hide yourself behind the lattice

For I swear to the birds of bloody birth
That sprang with rattle of wings from their foreheads
And sang for revenge, I will bring it to them
And draw the water from the night and the dawn.

Then he took a force of his people and set out, and attacked the Na'ib
and the Dahin, and made them suffer.

98

IN PRAISE OF THE CALIPH MU'TASIM AFTER THE VICTORY AT 'AMURIYYA

The sword is a better reporter than books
Follow the meteors of lances at war
They drive beyond the seven planets
And further than fables and the perjured
Ornaments of heaven, and sciences
Heady as pine and slight as willow.

The librarian mutters of two months
That stare like crows, of a tailing star at dusk,
Of steady and turned bodies, of poles
And orbits and spaces, mineral gods
By which he disposes his estates,
A heathen in a gown.

Conquest of conquests, outside embrace of language
The day of 'Amuriyya was rich with bags of milk
Islam drove the confounders of faith down the slopes
It was worth the sacrifice of many mothers.

The forelocks of nights had whitened since Alexander
But she was unwrinkled, and no hand had divided
Her virginity. The kings of Anatolia
Had never forced her. The years shook her niggardly
Like old women churning a fine foam
On the pail and spilling nothing.

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

But a dazzle,
And affliction was on her. First Ankara
Fell, and the squares were empty, the public places
Mournful as monuments. Then the plague came
Through the fields and through the family.
The best men dropped between the walls, their hair
Hot and scarlet, but not for orthodoxy
Not with the Prophet's henna.

The Prince of Believers sold rock and wood
To fire. He departed at midnight
In a forenoon of flame, and one sun
Rose livid as the other died, utterly
Pure of light, except where smoke made haggard
The fringes, trying the private dark.

Time cleared like cloud
The day broiled
Obligation was appeased
Trophies were abundant
Near husbands fallen early
New grooms couched that night.

Vestiges of camps, their pasture plucked,
Where the ballad lovers encouraged their griefs
Were greener than all we left. We liked
Those sores better than the crimson and shamed
Cheeks of the girls we took, and the befouled steppe
Better than the vineyards down south.

You feed on victory, Prince, your sword
Drags souls from coverts, your commissars
Fit your armies for many fronts.
God has hurled you on two cities :
Whose marshals said " No grass will be cropped
By these stray nomads, no rose⁹ round here."
They feted on hope till the antlers of swords
Locked, and swung the frustrating vessels
Of water and bush with death.

A girl in Zibatraea was taken by the Greeks.
 As they rent her she shrieked your name.
 You heard her beyond the two torrents, and you
 Dashed your cup on the marble, and spat out
 The saliva of sweet women. The free cities
 Crying for help brought even in summer
 Unemployment to cold trickling mouths
 And sent you among the fair people
 With a sword of fair play and the fare of death to them
 And glory to the Arab faces.

99

The women and old men among our luggage
 Connived at that stratagem
 We were cornered in the market place

When they told us choose between lances and a rope
 We said " Before now our dressed swords
 Have cut elbow-room in the Narrows.
 Ask us again after one round
 Propping yourselves on the sand and dropping back."

Once before through the same village
 I had given them the point of my sword
 And kept what the fingers clenched.

Disaster is thick as matted hair
 Beyond clairvoyance, unless a man
 Visits the deluge of death, protected
 By fine blood on the maternal side.

100

The world is Anasphaxis
 Like a cupboard on an axis
 The tailor tacks, then he untacks it
 Each animal has a toe and cracks it
 Except the camel, and he lacks it.

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

101

They told the donkeys that turned the mill
" The Day of Judgment is terrible."
" Saddles," they said, " we have never worn,
And **never eaten the high corn,**"

102

They waded in blood thicker than the bye-passed swamps.
They carried fire into houses, and left them
A wreath of bricks for the dead. They turned
Wading again and orphaned sweet Maltiyya
And the suckling plantations. Their horses plied
The ford and multiplied in it, and the running
Current was damned, and the channels
Turned sick with stoppages. They loaded
A cataract full against Euphrates,
A trauma of riders and beasts.
And pebble-dashed on the sheet of sea
Was a congregation of centaurs
Chasing the waves in the deep beds.

103

AN INDUCTION

They went on, and left me long vague nights,
Longer than bridal nights, and showed me
The regular unwanted moon, and held
The new moon beyond the stretch of roads,
A journey away, and the way doubled
By a stop in existence like a wall.
And for their Hermes of calamity
They made me live when the lovers had gone.

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

The hot gardens sometimes heard voices
In migrant winds. Like a tree I waited
For the voice to come back. Touching a glass
I sometimes choked because the mind flashed
To fixed steel, that now catches the water
By the one-time camping-place of girls.
I watched the stars on their dark cruises.
Could they not lead to the high clearings ?

Has the night not seen your eyes, I cried,
To grow thin and quiet and go ?
By the last house I found dawn. The meeting
Healed my limbs and the night died
And the day stood in quick light,
Still wet with gelatine of birth, the sign
That hills were opening, and over lush roads
The sun advancing as your envoy.

104

This camouflaged millionaire
Made his packet,
And ten miles of Delta fields,
By a morning parade to market
With bagpipes in the rear
And a vanguard of his beard.

109

Tickle the bottoms of those in front
Trouble the noses of those behind
You win if you sit with the middle kind.

STORY TOLD IN A PUB

To charitable God I first appeal.
The throne, the world, the sky are His, who put
The pillars under them, and steered the whale
Across the primal waters for His boat.

He built the globe on a great rock. He rested
The sea on solid Power below the stars.
Later he sent a Messenger, and crested
His brow with light. There we direct our prayers.

The Yemen King said " I have ruled the earth
And seven seas from Assam to the Tigris,
And seven hundred sultans took my oath
And Abyssinia's valleys sent me taxes.

" I built a palace on a river bed,
Its basement drilled among the mineral deeps,
And raised on dizzy piers, its balustrades
Swung in the air above the city keep.

" Three thousand negroes and two thousand boys
I had, and many girls with trailing hair.
I hoped to double my five hundred years,
But the steady traps of time were coming near."

The Yemen King shed tears, and on his right
His Turkish minister said " King of Kings,
Why do you weep ? No man of yours has died.
No one has left you. And no lover missing.

" But if a sultan has done wrong, command
His head to be presented on your right."
The Yemen King replied " Bring me the sand
And let it catch my riddling horse of night."

The King addressed the sands " Tossing in sleep
 And sweating in the palace blank and dead
 I saw a fire rise from the dark, and creep
 Among the lattices and halls, and spread

" And no one helped me, and the lightning struck
 Into the city with a poison fang,
 The river drowned the crops, and overtook
 The mountains, which began to float." The sands

With the dry cough of their native wilderness
 Were shaken. Then they settled in a line
 Of perfect letters seeking the King's pledge
 To spare them if they spoke an honest mind.

The King consented. " Hear the truth," they said,
 " Your age is done, your time is nearly over.
 Three years you may sit easy in your state,
 The fourth the frightening dreams will come to flower.

" The surface of the earth is breeding now
 A boy still hairless and wide-eyed. He comes
 From the black settlements beside the Nile
 Bringing you gifts that bend his camels* humps.

" Trickily entering when you have no one by
 He draws your hunch-backed sword, and from the right
 He cuts your head off, King, and you will die
 Between the cushions and the felt of night."

The Turkish minister offered bribes of slaves,
 The Yemen King a province to the sands
 To unsay the word of death ; but they said death
 Was not within the stretch of royal command.

The Yemen King let slip the virgins' hair,
 He left the thousand blacks and thousand valets
 And on his right the Turkish minister,
 And walked like night around the starry palace

Evaluating for that personal era
 His empire from Mombasa to Siberia.

107

Under ban the heart illuminated by God, to think on any glory but God's
 Under ban the tongue schooled in declaring God's name, to speak another
 name than God's
 Under ban the soul cleansed from wordly stains by obedience to God, to
 be polluted by disobedience of God
 Under ban the eye that beheld the throne of God, to look elsewhere than
 on God
 Under ban the body flushed with reliance on God, to lean on another
 than God
 Under ban the servant honoured by a task from God, to seek other
 service than God's
 Under ban the client who sat in the courtyard of God, to visit another
 than God
 Under ban he who rejoiced in soliloquy before God, to discourse before
 another than God
 Under ban he who wallowed in the bliss of God, to worship another
 than God
 Under ban the confederate with the banner of God, to transgress the
 bans of God
 Under ban the appellant of God, to answer any other than God
 Under ban the workman of God, to give loyalty to any other than God
 Under ban he who took shelter with God, to quest after another than God
 Under ban he who apprehended the power of God, if he render himself
 subject to God's rage.

108

Virtue cast an eye at me coming, and cried.
 I swore I was fasting, he laughed till he died.
 He leaned on his elbows by the seaside
 And talked to himself and the fish and the **tide**.

io9

We shouted for servants, but all slept.
 The palace was quiet and I
 Stared at the archer in his eyes
 And dropped my head and licked
 His trickling fingers, and he fumbled
 Dreamily for the jugs and poured
 Half and half into our tumblers
 Leaning on his elbows while he snored.

110

We wrote to Abu Nasr Mohammed al Gabali, asking him what happened to Mutanabbi after his farewell to 'Ada al Dawla, and in what circumstances he was killed. He replied in a long letter, which revealed that thirteen days before the end of Ramadan, the poet set out from Wasit, and eleven days later he and his son and slave were killed at a farm near Deir il 'Aqul. The assassin was Fatik Ibn Abu Gahl, uncle of a lady whom the poet had lampooned; and he cursed him as he struck home, saying " Foul be the beard of the slanderer of noble women."

" The details are," said our correspondent, " that Fatik had learned of Mutanabbi's departure from Persia for Traq by way of Deir il Aqul mountain. At this news he could not dismount for impatience, but rode off with a band of cousins who shared his hatred for Mutanabbi, and every traveller they met on the road they questioned for news of his movements. Fatik was with me when a company came past, and I personally saw him cross-examine them about the poet. After they had gone I remarked ' I see you take a great interest in this man. What do you want him for ?' ' Only for his own good,' he replied, ' and to tell him what I think of his satire on my niece.' ' One may detect here something out of keeping with your good reputation,' I hinted. He laughed and said ' By God, Abu Nasr, let me just see his shadow on my eyelid, and I shall cut his throat.' I said. ' Stop. God forgive you and bring you back to your senses. The man has a famous name and his powers are respected every-

where. No one should be killed for his poetry.' He said ' God does what he pleases,' and left me.

" Some days later Mutanabbi came, leading mules loaded with gold, silver, incense, robes, and precious books. For it was his habit never to leave a penny or a stitch worth a penny at home when he was travelling. He was afraid for everything but especially for his books, which he had chosen carefully and studied hard.

" I received him and invited him to my house, and asked what news of him and the people he had met abroad. And he gave me such news about himself as made me happy ; and then he described the learning of Ibn il Amid, and the generosity of 'Ada al Dawla and how the prince loved literature and literary men; and the talk went on till nightfall, when I asked if he had made any plans. ' To use night as my boat,' he replied, ' I find travel easier after dark.' Hoping that the night would cover him, and that when morning broke he might have passed out of reach of danger, I approved of the intention, but advised him to accept an escort of my townspeople, who would guide him through these hostile parts as far as Baghdad. At this counsel he bristled, and asked what I implied. ' Only that you will feel safer on the road with an escort,' I said. But he answered 'There are two of us, the sword on my shoulder and I. We don't need a third to make us feel safe.' I agreed with him, but persisted in my suggestion till he suspected something and asked me to give him the truth of the matter. So I told him ' The fool, Fatik al Usdi, was with me three days ago. He is up in arms against you, because you libelled his niece and allowed yourself to say things that make it necessary to exercise the greatest care and vigilance. He has about twenty cousins with him who think as he does.'

" Mutanabbi's slave who heard me said ' Master, there is great truth in Abu Nasr's advice.' But Mutanabbi was furious and said ' By God, I won't allow people to say I travel with another man's sword protecting me.' ' There's no need for that,' I replied. ' I will send a party to Baghdad on my own business, and tell them to make the journey with you.' ' By God, you will do no such thing,' he shouted. ' Who are these people whom you mention to frighten me ?—Bird-droppings! Slaves of the whip ! By God, if the men of that family had been riding for five days without water and hurried to the Euphrates to drink, and then saw my flannel at the river's edge, they would stare at the snakey water and not a shadow of them, not a toe-nail of them, would dare to go near. God forbid that I should waste the bat of an eyelid thinking about them.' * For God's sake, say " God willing," ' I said. And he answered * What is " God willing " ? A trite saying that can't stop destiny or create a future.' So he rode away, and that was the last time I saw him."

We quote from al Tabasi's long poem in praise of his memory:

IMAGES FROM THE ARAB WORLD

He was the accident of the ages,
The sole inheritor of time,
The miracles were in the images,
And the prophecies were in the rhyme.

III

What she lost under the wicked scalpel
Is howled by a millenium of ghosts
Far from the river-loops, in Syrian castles
Amazed and beating their memorial hoops.

112

THE PROPHEET

When he beckoned the trees advanced
Signing with a flourish of body
Their text and engraved tale

A cloud paced his movements
To be his awning at midday
Also the moon divided herself

His cave was light with winds
And concepts of truth and good,
Stoniness to the infidels

Who did not see the bows round him,
The weaving of the spiders
And the doves making circles.

From God, and better than citadels
Or the skins of multiple shields.

ii3

When the Moslems came to Medina they used to gather for prayer without any given summons to it; a lack which they discussed one day, and some argued " Let us have a bell like the Christians," and some said " Let it be a trumpet like the horn of the Jews." 'Umar said : " Why not appoint a man to call the people to prayer ? " And the Prophet said " Rise, Belal, and call people to prayer."

"4

A NURSERY SONG

When they told me it was a boy
My back became straight and strong,
They brought me shelled eggs
And said " Eat for your son."

When they told me it was a girl
The chimney crumbled over me
They made me eat eggs with shells
And for butter they gave me water

(but if she likes her daughter she sings)

When they said it was a bride
I gave the midwife a heifer
And two cullenders with lids
And seven spoons of silver.

ii9

A LETTER FROM HATIM

When you are a line of bones on the earth
Or cram a dark tumulus with the spiders
Felled by arthritis and thrift, your heir
Will spend it on stables and riders

Or tell your broker to sell out
 Nor keep a bond in your memory
 Nor a tablet for you nor a tribute.
 Depreciate it, then, with lavish fury,
 Your love that is to be a riven lute.

116

While Abu Hureira was washing himself according to the holy ordinance, I heard the Prophet say " My nation will be summoned on the Day of Resurrection, and will be found white of forehead and feet, and the marks of ablution on them."

ii7

Winter came on us. Under it
 A beggar naked, the prince in his quilt.
 The stars deny one a day's rations,
 Feed the other the corpus of nations.
 This earth, though often a bride, has killed
 Her many grooms, and is still maiden.
 Cup your right hand and drink clean.
 The curve of the royal tusk is obscene.

Travellers, too, let us make provision
 For a more exact destination.
 Our best is no luckier than the surgeon
 Who plotted growths in his own colon.
 Let the fat swell. Cap or coronet,
 Either may spin on that crossed ocean
 Where featureless trunks face the infinite.

118

Yesterday pickled among the roses and myrtle
 To-day a penitent in the pew
 A middle way between bills and capital
 Is what we all pursue.

ii9

You are lost if the riddle approaches.
 If it turns its back you guess it.
 You see that you see no matter right
 Unless you methodically reverse it.
 To the lamp of noon night fetches
 The obscure vehicle of its light.

120

" You have consulted me on a question the answer to which is partly public, partly secret. Now secrets have their residences: into some of which the multitude may enter, some the family, and into some only two men are admitted. This secret is of such moment that only four ears and two tongues may share it." The king rose immediately, and went apart with him and conferred.

121

You women, watch me dying if you want, but without slander
 on both sides slander was free but did good to neither
 time taught us fully the folly and the error
 and satire for its own sake was never my way.
 I have a straight tale for the visiting rider
 to the high plateau and the inns and the diners
 say I was pressed to wine in a famous cellar
 and could not decline. I did not join the run from disaster
 the dark stumbling horses never crept after me
 I bared to the lances in the old way
 on the old lands. When they pegged my tongue with leather
 I wrote men of the plain use a just measure
 men of the plain let my tongue be free
 only my tongue for I will not go home in penury
 but choose the chant of swans and the chance of memory
 and so kill me and kill me a master

you women who rally, who watch and wonder
 where prisoners are scarce, who sidle and hover
 and dally and bid with a wink for the favour
 you women scratch for my wives called me panther
 giving battle and taking. But strange I shall not hear
 the songs of the herdsman driving to pasture
 and the cattle lowing to-morrow, I who slaughtered
 droves of cattle for guests and who adventured
 in roads where only the ghosts knew the way.
 I divided brocades between the green girl singers
 the chargers reared but the spear was quick in my fingers
 I drew the charges on my own centre
 and the locust flights wavered and heeled over.
 And you women, watch now if you want, all flows away
 and lost is the long riding, the hour of order
 to prise a way on launched horses, the filter
 of wine from a skin like gold, and logs on the fire
 laughter of flame in the dark to call the wanderers.

122

ZEINAB

Zeinab started my weakness, my cycle of sickness,
 Zeinab betokened every bird.
 When I was moiled by a great sickness
 And the doctors buzzed about
 And my soul was leaking out
 I remembered
 Zeinab
 The solitary savant.

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[The aim of this index is to enable a reader who is interested in a particular writer or book, to see immediately whether he or it is represented, and if so where. Accordingly, the arrangement of the index is based not on alphabetical order of full names but on that of the names as familiarly known. Sometimes instead of the author or compiler of a book, the book's name is given—but if so, between brackets. The figure or figures that follow refer to the figures above each translation in the text. Then a geographical fix, to suggest regional influences on the work. Then, a time fix, expressed in A.D. chronology to facilitate placing author or book in relation to western history and literature.]

<p>ABU'L 'ALA IL MA'ARRI 3, i 9, ii 7 ABU'L 'ATAHIYA 27, 108 ABUNUWAS 1, 12, 37, 41 (vd. also 9) ABU TAMMAM 98 (for Abu Tammam's <i>Hamasa</i> vd. HAMASA) (AMALI'L QALI) 3 0 , 9 7</p>	<p>NORTH SYRIA 973-1058 KUFA, BAGHDAD 748-826 BASRA, BAGHDAD 747-810 (Persian origins) SYRIA, EGYPT, c. 804-842 BAGHDAD, MOSUL (Dictated at University of Cordoba, tenth century, by ABU 'ALIAL QALI OF BAGHDAD) b. MECCA fl. EGYPT 13th centu- rury EGYPT, PARIS Living SYRIA, BAGHDAD c. 820-897</p>
<p>BAHA' IZ ZOHEIR 62, 104, 118 BAIRAM AT TUNISIE 21, 23, 85 AL BUHTURI 18 (for Al Buhturi's <i>Hamasa</i> vd. HAMASA) AL BUSIRI 112 AL GHAZALI 14, 49, 66, 81 AL HALLAJ 59</p>	<p>BILBIS 1213-1296 KHORASAN, BAGHDAD 1059-1111 THE LEVANT PERSIA, MECCA, 858-922 BAGHDAD</p>
<p>(HAMASA OF ABU 60, 82, 99 TAMMAM) (vd. also 'UMAR IBN RABIYYA) (HAMASA OF AL 119 BUHTURI) (vd. also HATIM AT TAI and AL KHANSA) HATIM AT TAI T15</p>	<p>.Collections of Arabic Poetry which by the Age of the Com- pilers (vd. Abu Tammam and Al Buhturi) had already be- come " Antique "</p> <p style="text-align: right;">c. end of 6th Century</p>

- IBN BATTUTA 35 b. TANGIERS i302-i377
Wrote his travels at Fez.
" *Der Groesste Reisende Der Araber* "
- IBN EL GAUZI 46
- IBN HAMDIS 11 SICILY, SEVILLE 1055-1132
- IBN KHALDOUN i3,76 b. TUNIS d. CAIRO 1332-1406
- IBN KHALLIKAN 47 DAMASCUS 1211-1282
- IBN IL KHATIB 40 ANDALUSIA 1313-1371
(Family of Syrian immigres)
- IBN IL MU'TAZZ 109 BAGHDAD 86 i - 90 8
- IBN AR ROUMY 5,24, 56, 80 BAGHDAD 836-896
- IBN ZAIDOUN 32 CORDOBA, SEVILLE 1003-1071
- IBRAHIM ID DESUQI 83 LOWER EGYPT 1235-1277
- IMRU 'L QAIS 17 THE ARAB GEZIRA, 6th Cen-
CONSTANTINOPE tury
(Said to be a translation, origin-
ally from an ancient Sanskrit
book, made from the Pahlevi
by Ibn il Mukaffa in the 8th
Century)
- (KALILA and DIMNA) 6, 69, 86, 95, 120
- AL KHANSA 7i THE ARAB GEZIRA b. early
7th Century
- (KITAB IL AGHANI) 74 (Anthology of early Arabic lyrics,
called by Ibn Khaldoun " the
register of the Arabs." Put
together c. 950 by Abu 'l
Faraq il Isfahani working at
Baghdad)
- AL MAQ Q A R I 90 MOROCCO, ANDALUSIA d. 1631
- AL MAQRIZI CAIRO, DAMASCUS 1364-1442
- AL MAS'UDI 25, 78, 84, 94 b. BAGHDAD d. CAIRO d. 956
(Travelled extensively)
- (THE MUFAD-DALIYAT) 12i (Anthology of early Arabic odes,
selected by Al Mufaddal, 8th
Century, working in Kufa)
- AL MUTANABBI 33,54. 6i, 72, 102, 103 b. KUFA, st. SYRIA 915-965
(vd. also iio) (Travelled Near and Middle
East)
- AN NIFFARI 34 MESOPOTAMIA 10th Century
- AN NUWAIRI 10 b. UPPER EGYPT, 1279-1332
fl. CAIRO
- " RISA'IL IKHWAN 96 "The Brethren of Purity."
IS SAFA' " Society fl. BASRA towards
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The two poems which are recited in 15 are quoted by Sheikh 'Aly Nuh who wrote his account of the

for Elder's Egyptian Colloquial Reader. (American University, Cairo).

