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Author Nizamut Jung, Sri Nawab.

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1935

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FIRST SERIES

ISLAMIC POEMS

by

NAWAB SIR NIZAMAT JUNG BAHADUR

Edited by

ZAHIR AHMED

Hyderabad Deccan
At the Government Central Press
1935

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

Many of these poems by Sir Nizam Jung that I have brought together here have appeared in 'Islamic Culture.' This is just a small selection pertaining to a particular subject—Islam.

The poems which appear here will undoubtedly appeal greatly to Muslim youth. The sceptical times we live in demand an acceptable interpretation of the appeal of Islam—a fact much misunderstood and often misrepresented. It was left to Sir Nizam to give expression through the vehicle of English verse to the spirit of Islamic nationalism without making his poems a thesis. This was by no means an easy task, yet one can see how well he has succeeded in it, being, as he is, a poet-thinker of rare distinction. Apart from their poetic merit, the intrinsic worth of these poems lies in the sincerity of their Islamic fervour.

I am grateful to Mr. Abdulla Yusuf Ali for so kindly writing the introduction at my request.

ZAHIR AHMED.

*Hyderabad-Dn.
January, 1935.*

INTRODUCTION.

To be invited to write a Foreword to my dear friend Nizam Jung's poems!—It is like being invited to preside over a feast to which I would walk bare-foot to take even the humblest place at the foot of the table!

Here are a few choice morsels from the soul of one who has played many worthy parts in life, but none worthier than of a practical man who finds peace in poetry, wealth in the stores of History and Imagination, consolation in the message of Religion and serene beauty in the personality and mysticism of the Preacher of Islam.

That the Holy places of Arabia should inspire so sensitive a nature was to be expected. That he should clothe his thoughts in choice and faultless English and present them to the modern youth of Islam in India is the good fortune of the modern youth of Islam in India.

What is the orientation of the modern youth of India? Their future is dear to both Nizam Jung and myself,—as to all thinking men of a generation that is passing away. My friend speaks to them in sugared verse. Let me perform the humbler but complementary task of telling a few home truths! To read Shakespeare in the spirit of degree-hunters, to find in Wordsworth's love of nature merely a graft to be planted in the slits of the rougher stock of our own vernaculars, to make history a battle-ground of races and creeds, to make economic needs merely a fetish for the worship of our own material selves, and in such talk about pseudo-political religion, to drown the still small voice

which is the spirit of Religion itself!—all this may come like a flood upon us, but let us resist the flood like men! Our orientation should be to the true and universal Qibla, which stands for universal Brotherhood in service and love. As our poet says in speaking of the great “Caliphs of Islam;”

“ ’Twas theirs the hallowed path to find,
That once their Leader trod,
And in the guidance of mankind,
The way that leads to God.”

To seek for unity in feeling, thought, and action has ever been the ideal of Islam. The Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Qibla to the Kaaba are but two of the symbols in its simple ritual—the one to be the dream of a life-time, and the other to be practised five times every day. The Nawab who writes these poems is at the present time on the solemn Pilgrimage to Mecca, not for the first time. Many of these poems are the fruit of a former Pilgrimage. Such was the fruit that Abraham prayed for on behalf of the votaries to Mecca (Q. ii-126)—If such fruit can be gathered and enjoyed, and shared among the people who are hungry for spiritual sustenance, one of the main objects of I’tikāf will have been attained. So blessings on the fruit, the Pilgrimage, and the Pilgrim!

Lahore.

A. YUSUF ALI.

SPIRIT OF LIGHT.

SPiRiT of Light, from starry mansions straying,
Whose flight is o'er this world of woe and strife,
On, on thy course, to mortal hearts conveying
God's meaning of the mystery of life!

On, on thy course, wide-scattering from each pinion
Sparks that shall leave behind a trail of fire
To guide mankind from passion's dire dominion
To purer heavens of the soul's desire;

To cheer them, toil-worn, weary and benighted,
With Heaven-born hope pure as the Dawn's first ray;
To gladden them in Sorrow's gloom affrighted
With thy sure promise of Eternal Day!

Oh, sing to them thy song of hope and gladness,
Dispel all sombre shadows from the air,
Till freed from dismal doubt and fear and sadness,
The heart of man shall deem the world more fair!

Bare to the skies in its unsullied brightness
The keen edge of thy spirit-tempered blade,
Held in that hand aloft, whose radiant whiteness
The Lord of Light hath His own symbol made!

Give it to those who seek the path of glory
In realms beyond the shadow of the grave,
Above the loud acclaim of song and story,
Who keep Life's tenor righteous, bright and brave.

Oh quell the powers of darkness that surround them—
Guileful to lure and eager to destroy—
Whose vain, deluding phantoms throng around them
And feign the guise of Wealth and Peace and Joy.

Speed on thy course with outspread wings pursuing
The destined orbit of thy heavenward flight,
Wide o'er the world with bounteous hand bestrewing
The stars of Faith amid the shades of Night!

FAITH.

O LIGHT unseen: Lead thou us onward still,
And guide the purer passions of the soul
That man's departed life again made whole
May claim its birthright of divine goodwill:
Lead us through strife to power to fulfil
Life's purpose wrapt in nature; Shape, control
Each growing impulse in us to enrol
The chastened with the blest redeemed from ill:
With us in life, O be thou ours in death,
Unite the past and present—there and here!
O link our earth and heaven with one beam
That radiates from the Source! Let each drawn breath
Bring light to make our darkness disappear,
And mirror forth the Real in our Dream:

THE SPIRIT'S PARADISE.

NOT in those realms where rivers flow,
Of milk and honeyed wine,
Or where with mystic light aglow,
The eyes of Houris shine;
Not there, O soaring spirit! lies
Thy home of bliss, thy paradise.

Nor in bright bowers where the Blest
On silken seats recline,
Where with the heaven that fills the breast
Earth's memories entwine;
Not there, O heaven-born spirit! lies
Thy place of rest, thy paradise.

Sense-pictures, these—to soothe the hearts
That still to sense incline;
Through them high heaven the hope imparts
Of bliss that is divine;
But not in them, O spirit! lies
That bliss which is thy paradise.

Nay, far beyond the reach of thought,
Where life is love divine
And with eternal grace is fraught,
The promised bliss is thine.
There, there, O happy spirit! lies
Thy cradle and thy paradise.

HEART'S WEALTH.

GAZE on this earth, see Nature's boundless store;
God gives it all to thee!
Gaze on the heavens and let thy spirit soar
Into Infinity!

When such thy wealth, O vainly longing heart!
Is there aught more to gain?
Desire and hope and fear—let all depart,
For all their strife is vain.

One priceless boon does man's free soul require:
The godlike power to give
The best it has of love, and love's desire
In other souls to live.

The Giver of all gifts to thee has given
The love He bids thee share
With all thy fellow-souls on earth, in heaven,
That claim the Maker's care.

Who gives, shall have; the soul's pure gifts are won
Back in Eternity.
Love's gift is thine below; beyond the Sun
It shall abide with thee.

THE BLESSED MESSENGER.

UNKNOWN to self, unconscious of his power,
He gazed aloft where Faith's bright vision lay.
Beyond this earth, beyond the light of day
He gazed afar as from a lofty tower.
Morn, noon and night, in brightest, darkest hour
He saw in all things near and far away—
In birth, in death, in growth and in decay,
From man to lowliest worm, from star to flower—
The Maker manifest. Each wish, each thought
Came as a breath from Him, no longer far:
A breath of light, a light from breath divine,
Charged with the Word. It was a beacon fraught
With hope for all, a never-setting star
Whose unextinguished beams through ages shine.

Still gazing upward, waiting—such the part
To test his worth the powers ordained on high.
No torments forced the tribute of a sigh,
No weak repining owned the secret smart.
No hero's breast was pierced with such a dart,
And none so meekly brave, did so defy,
With dauntless bosom and with steadfast eye,
And patient faith, the anguish of the heart.
Faith triumphed over all, and travails o'er,
The world with all its gifts lay at his feet.
But on another world was fixed his gaze,
Where good alone shall live for evermore,

And where the dead shall rise their Lord to greet,
Peace in their hearts, and on their lips His praise.

‘The veil is lifted; let all mankind see
In Heaven and Hell, the mystery of Doom;
In life, the spirit’s splendour and its gloom;
In Death, the mask of immortality.’
Such was the mandate, and it bade him be
The messenger of truth and light to illumine
The heart of man where evil still finds room
And self-deluding sin takes sanctuary.
Soldier and Saint, unvanquished though alone!
High-souled, pure-hearted Leader of mankind!
Light-bearer, Guide, entrusted and ordained!
O lead us on from height to height unknown
Till God as ever-living Truth we find,
And Peace be ours when this last height is gained!

A PRAYER IN THE PROPHET'S SHRINE, MEDINA.

O MIGHTY spirit, pure and true,
Ordained to bear His trust,
That tried by sorest trials grew
More faithful and more just!
While here I bow in silent prayer
I feel thee hovering nigh.
"Let not the sinner's heart despair,"
The angels sing on high.

"By grace alone will Heaven relieve
The sinner's heart of woe."
Ah! Let not this my heart deceive;
'Tis thine to bid me know
How vain the sanctimonious mood
When prompted by some fear,
How vain all words of gratitude,
Repentance insincere.

The prayer that from thy soul did rise
On wings of ecstasy,
Could pierce the veil of earth and skies
And bring God near to thee.
Through silent vigils of the night
His voice was in thine ear:
"Tis thine to lead mankind aright
Toward light from darkness drear."

Prophet of god—an outlaw driven
Away from hearth and home!
Thy feet on earth, thy head in heaven,
It was for thee to roam
An exile till by His Command
A happier home didst gain
Where Islam ruled the subject land
From proud Medina's plain.

Yea, thus amidst the toils of life,
Its horrors and its woes
Thy soul won peace through patient strife,
And stood serene where glows
The light unseen around the Throne,
To see what none had seen.
Thou but a man, yet thine alone
The glory that hath been!

A mortal thou, yet born to bear
The weight of earth and heaven
A prophet thou, yet to thy share
A sovereign's power was given.
Prophet and king! Life's humblest task
Ne'er did thy hands refuse;
And ne'er didst thou God's bounty ask
But for thy people's use.

In sworn allegiance at thy feet
When all Arabia lay,
When Chiefs and Envoys came to greet
Islam's new-risen day,
They saw thy glory and thy might
(Unlike the pomp of Kings)
In self-denying sense of Right
That from God's guidance springs.

Saw thee in clouted garb, a man
In God's own grace arrayed,
A humble guardian of the plan
Thy Master's hand had laid
To quell all darkness with His light
Through regions near and far,
To make thee shine through Error's night
The one resplendent Star.

I feel God's presence in this shrine
Fashioned by thine own hands.
I see the fresh-hewn palm-trunks shine
Where now this alcove stands.
These arches' painted pageantry
From me can ne'er conceal
Faith's unembellished majesty
Thy palm-trees did reveal!

In rapt devotion on this floor
My prostrate form I lay;
Raise me to trace for evermore
Thy footmarks on Life's way!
O make my soul, reborn, to cast
The dregs of sin aside,
My future brighter than my past,
With thee my light, my guide!

For faith, with heart's blood in my tears,
For faith to thee I cry;
That faith to which God's self appears
On earth, in air and sky!
What shades my soul's dark caverns fill,
Let them all turn to light;
Let rising hopes my being thrill
With rising faith's delight!

ROUND MECCA.

BARE sands, grim rocks, no friendly palm trees nod
By pool or stream the wanderer to invite.
Here famined Nature scowls, vague fears affright
The bold whose weary steps these wilds must plod.
Yet here, from scorching sand and barren sod,
From doubt and fear to Faith's unclouded height
Uprose, on wings of majesty and might,
One fervent spirit in its quest of God!

Each glance a longing, and each wish a prayer,
What wonderous stores lay scattered all around!
The Maker's bounty spread before man's eyes,
Like grains of sand, or motes in sunlit air!
With new-born strength the heart's desire was found,
The herbless desert bloomed a paradise!

AT THE HAJ.

KINGDOMS and Empires may decline,
Of pomp and power and splendour reft;
Here is no change—the spark divine
Still in these hills and sands is left!

May it not leap once more to flame
And dart its beams across the world,
Lead Right once more her rule to claim,
See Wrong once more to ruin hurled?

Long years ^hthrough varied scenes have rolled,
But left untouched the desert wild,
And left untamed the Arab bold,
The desert's lord, the desert's child.

The might of Arab heart and hand
Still breathes, of outward glory shorn,
The faith that glows in burning sand,
The freedom of the desert born.

The Arab scorns our world of pride;
He built his—and might build again.
But he must seek what shall abide;
And what he lost may be his gain!

Untaught, unused to smile on wrong,
Fearless of loss, entrenched in faith—
This made him, and will make him strong,
Unconquered, free—in life, in death.

Strong, patient, to God's will resigned,
His faith will direst ills outlast;
For deep within his soul he'll find
The living message of the Past.

Faith moves him on to find the way
By God ordained, by Prophets found,
And hope renews the promised day
Whene'er he treads this holy ground.

IN THE KAABA.

HERE in Thy house I stand. Thou mak'st me one
With all within the depths and on the height.
Thy Universe encircling star and sun,
Boundless domain o'erspreading day and night,
Surrounds me; yet not this my heritage.
'Tis some dim spark where clouds of darkness roll,
Some unknown symbol on an unseen page—
A glimpse of Thee faith-flashed upon my soul!

From nothing I, from darkness came my light,
Thy breath gave life—which is eternity!
So I, a being ever in Thy sight,
Once having been shall never cease to be.
Say, am I but a dream in endless sleep?
Dispel the dream, or let its veil be riven.
Show me within myself Hell's deepest deep.
And in myself the highest height to Heaven!

Thou art above them all, and my return
From earth and hell and heaven is to Thee.
Wrapt in Thine own, my being still doth yearn
To find in Thine its immortality.
Of Thee, from Thee, and unto Thee I move
In endless motion born of endless might.
Thy best is for me—Mercy, Grace and Love;
The fire of Hell shall burn with Heaven's own light!

THE ROAD TO MEDINA.*

ALOOF and grim the mountains stand
Where not a plant will grow,
Where silent heaves a sea of sand
Beneath the Sun's fierce glow.
A pilgrim bends, with labouring breath,
O'er scorching sand and stones
Marked by that monument of death—
A camel's bleaching bones.

He gazes on the mountain heights
And on the desert bare,
If life presents no soft delights,
Death has no terrors there.

How leisurely that Caravan
Of camels passes by!
How, lurching o'er the gravelly span,
The creaking motors fly!

He stands at gaze with longing eyes. . . .
Uplifts an eager hand. . . .
And as the last one mocking flies
He sinks upon the sand.

Then creeps to some acacia-tree
With sparse but friendly shade,
And 'neath that thorny canopy
His listless form is laid.

*This poem is intended to suggest the need of constructing a road to Medina. (Ed.)

To his own land his fancy flies,
To roads and roadside trees
Where, close at hand, the well supplies
Its bounty, and the breeze

Through rustling leaves will softly come
To cool his brow to rest,
And birds will chirp, and insects hum
To soothe his lonely breast.

But here . . . his heart well understands
What can all fears defy:
When life and death are joining hands
'Tis one—to live or die!

On, on! With striving soul untired,
With tottering steps, and slow;
Fainting, but with faith's frenzy fired,
Still onward he must go.

Onward, beyond those hills . . . that plain,
Where yonder vision flies—*
Ah, would he could those heights but gain!
The chosen City lies.

Chosen of him whose presence shot
Through darkness living light,
Of him who unto mankind brought
The message of its might.

*Mirage.

Faith gives him strength and quickens love,
And hope now quells despair.
The Master beckons from above—,
So onward he must fare.

New life is in his limbs, he treads
With firmer step the sand
That still immeasurably spreads
Betwixt him and the land

He fain would reach. . . . Oh, for that hour
When, near and yet more near,
Those symbols of mysterious power,
Medina's hills appear!

But oh! the bitter, bitter strife,
The endless, endless way.
'Twixt life and death, 'twixt death and life,
Unending seems the day.

Yet onward, onward, onward still
He drags his weary weight,
A martyr of unbending will,
A votary of fate.

At last, at last he gains the height
From whence his eye can roam
To scenes where, conscious of its might,
Islam first found a home.

There, cradled in a happy vale,
Medina's turrets lie
He gasps, as though his heart would fail—
The green dome strikes his eye!

That trembling, rapturous glance—the first—
So stirs some passion deep,
Had he a hundred hearts, they'd burst;
A hundred eyes—they'd weep!

Man knows not why so throbs the heart
And bids the eyes o'erflow.
No power that secret will impart,
And none shall ever know.

He gazes on the rocky plain,
That overlooks the town.
Its verge his weary feet must gain
Before the Sun goes down.

"Ah! there, where yon white turrets shine,
At eventide to rest!
And at our master's holy shrine
To end my life-long quest!"

He stands where light from heaven is shed,
His Maker to adore,
He finds his quest—he bows his head
And sinks to rise no more.

THE VOTARY.

WITH longing heart, void of all doubt and fear,
Seek I thy long-sought threshold, bring to thee
What never was revealed to mortal ear—
A soul eclipsed amid faith's jeopardy.

To thee I come sin-stained in thought and deed,
A prey to passion, wandering aimlessly.
Here in thy shrine from life-long travail freed,
I hail the dawn of immortality!

What erst I felt, and what I now do feel
As ne'er before, let all unvoiced remain.
Thou knowest all; there's nought I might conceal
From thee—my hope of bliss, my fear of pain.

These with no kindred bosom could I share,
From no like-burdened soul could solace gain.
Here in thy shrine my inmost soul lies bare,
Confirm my faith nor bid me yearn in vain.

THE ARAB CHAUNT.

ARABIA lay entombed in night;
A beam from Heaven revealed
Islam, a sword of living light,
Islam, the spirit's shield.

A prophet in our midst arose,
Whose voice to God appealed:
"Allah! Thy grace high gifts bestows,
Let Islam be our shield!"

We ~~awoke~~. Beyond the desert sand
The wide World was our field.
The sword of Faith was in our hand,
With Islam for our shield.

And when we marched across the world,
That sword of faith to wield,
Islam the flag of peace unfurled
High o'er its blazoned shield.

We dared—and rose to heights unknown
Of power which ne'er would yield
Save to the will of God alone,
While Islam was its shield.

We fought for faith in love, not hate,
And Faith this vision revealed:
Mankind—one nation good and great,
With Islam for its shield.

Our pact of love and brotherhood
With faith and honour sealed,
True Champions of Right we stood,
With Islam for our shield.

Years rolled, time saw our glories fade;
We sank 'neath grace repealed.
Our power with righteous will decayed
Though Islam was our shield.

We sank, and sank—to rise again
Till Fate to us shall yield
The skill to wipe each rusty stain
Off Islam's dented shield!

To God alone all glory, power;
To Him alone we've kneeled.
'Tis ours to scorn misfortune's hour
While Islam is our shield.

Proud of our past, in freedom strong,
No power shall see us—yield.
We fear no proud oppressor's wrong
While Islam is our shield.

A QURANIC HYMN.

THOU Lord of all Creation!
Thou King of all mankind!
Thou God of all the nations!
In Thee we refuge find
From those who follow Satan
And aid him in his plan
When he doth whisper evil
Into the heart of man.

Lord of the light that dawneth
From out the shades of Night!
O lead us out of darkness
And guide us to Thy light!
When succour from Thee cometh
Right triumphs over Wrong;
And then 'tis theirs the victory,
Whose faith is pure and strong.

A LESSON OUT OF THE QUR'AN.

'Tis worship but to gaze on Nature's face,
Not with a questioning but a grateful heart,
With eyes that find in every varied part
Some sign of Providence, some act of Grace.

Wind-wafted rain-clouds, bending o'er the earth,
Pour forth the Maker's bounty from on high
Upon the dead sod and the seeds that lie
Entombed in all the expectancy of birth.

His Mercy lights on them in gentle showers,
Breathes life into them, bringing forth to view,
In beauty's garb of ever-changing hue,
The season's generous gift of fruits and flowers,

That all His earth-born creatures may obtain
In all their haunts the sustenance they need.
He knoweth all their haunts, His hand doth feed
All, all that dwell in valley, hill and plain.

When such the scene that spreads before man's eyes
Shall he with thankless pride the boon ignore?
And having all yet crying out for more,
Undo the gift and miss the priceless prize?

Nay, let man's soul, responsive to the call
Once heard and sounding in it still, attend
To all His gifts and blessings to the end,
Whose pity, mercy, grace encompass all.

LAILAT-UL-QADR.

THE Night of Glory! Lo! it brings to thee,
By angel hands unseen, a mystic key
To give to Faith and Hope
That long have sought to ope
The shining portals of Eternity.

It is the Night of Bliss, the Night of Grace,
More hallowed than a thousand months and days!
Behold! God's grace descends,
Each hour His blessings lends
To crown each thought and act of prayer and praise.

The light of all the stars shines in thine eyes,
And in thy heart—see, Heaven mirrored lies!
Watch till each star's withdrawn
Into the folds of Dawn;
Watch till the Sun of Peace ascend the skies!

Watch till the skies their folded depths unroll,
Watch till the light of Heaven flood thy soul!
The promise of the Night
Thrills into love and light,
Creation breathes, and Peace pervades the Whole!

THE MIRACLES OF ISLAM.

A FAITH in one lone bosom stirred,
A voice by one lone ear was heard,
And all Creation and its mystery
Lay like an open book lit by one word
'Read!'¹ And the heart became an eye to see
God's self in His Creation. All was light—
The unity of God, His mercy and His might.

A savage race, a savage clime;
He but a man, who, past his prime,
Unread before, was made that word to read—
The Word that burned into the heart of Time
The simplest, purest, and the noblest creed.
That living Word, a miracle, went forth
'To conquer realms and hearts' to East and West
and North!

By it the Arab righteous made,
Brave, and of none but God afraid,
Child of the desert, broke proud Persia's might²
And quenched her sun, when pomp and glory's shade
Was like a phantom lost in endless night.
A miracle! and then salvation came,
And Persia stood once more upon the roll of fame.

-
1. The first Sura of the Qur'an in which the Prophet was commanded to read.
 2. Battle of Cadesia won by Sa'd bin Waqas, A.D., 632 within a year of the Prophet's death.

The dazzled votaries of the Sun
Who lost their creed and kingdom, won
New light from Truth, and learned to bow before
The Unseen, Uncreate, Eternal, One;
His goodness, might and mercy to adore
Whose light unchanged their changeful beams hath
Unto the Sun, and Moon, and all the stars of heaven!^{given}

And Syria¹ too, the Eastern home
Of the decaying pomp of Rome,
Beheld a miracle—the lightning glance
Of Arab swords—and like a tottering dome
Fell at the first touch of the Bedouin lance!
Nor Rome's dread name nor all her deeds' renown
Could stem the conquering tide that rushed from
town to town.

Later, the Sphinx² was forced to read
The riddle of the new-old creed
Which Moses thundered once in Pharaoh's ear;
And Memphis³ hailed the miracle at her need
To rise from darkness into daylight clear;
And Alexander's city⁴ owned the sway
Of Yethreb⁵ in whose heart a mighty empire lay!

-
1. Syria conquered by Khalid, the Sword of God, and Abu Obeidah A.D. 632-37.
 2. Invasion of Egypt by Amrow, A.D. 638, and conquest of
 3. Memphis 4. Alexandria.
 5. Medina from which the Conquering Generals were sent.

Then ruined Carthage,¹ great in fame,
Contemner of the Roman name,
Warder of Afric's burning heart restored,
To Islam's keeping, when its heroes came,
Her faded laurels and her broken sword.
But onward, westward² did the conquerors ride,
Where tow'rd the setting sun the Atlantic flings his tide.

A halt—but soon yon ocean-stream
Beholds the Moorish weapons gleam.
Once more a miracle! for Heaven decrees
The swift fulfilment of Don Roderick's dream.³
Soon from his mountain's brow⁴ the Victor⁵ sees
The pomp of Gothic arms on Xeres' plain,
And murmurs: 'God is great; He gives us Spain!'

-
1. Invasion of Africa by the Arabs, A.D. 647.
 2. Progress westward 665-689. Conquest of Carthage by Hassan A.D. 692.
 3. Don Roderick, the last Gothic King, is said to have seen in a vision the conquest of his kingdom by the Moors.
 4. Gibraltar (Jebel-et Tariq).
 5. Tariq the Conqueror of Spain defeated an army of 90-100 thousand Spaniards near Xeres on July 19-26 in the year 711 A.D.

THE GREAT CALIPHS OF ISLAM.

IMMORTAL Faith, immortal Love
Raised high on rapture's wings
Their souls that learned to soar above
The pomp and pride of kings.

Love claimed, by right of heavenly birth,
Its heritage divine;
Faith saw from far, though chained on earth,
The heavenly glories shine.

Mortals, and in Life's prison pent,
They nobly dared to rise
Into a vaster firmament
Of grander earths and skies,

And ranging God's creation, free
From self's ignoble strife,
They gathered Truth's infinity
Into the core of Life.

Their prayers that winged the passing hour,
Eternal life did claim;
Such faith was theirs, it shared the power
That feeds the suns with flame!

'Twas theirs the hallowed path to find,
That once their Leader trod,
And in the guidance of mankind,
The way that leads to God.

OMAR (AFTER THE CONQUEST OF PERSIA).

LOUD throbs Medina's heart with prayer and praise;
Her conquering hosts from Persia's fields return.
All eyes upon the heroes fix their gaze,
While anxious hearts for missing faces yearn.

Outside the Prophet's mosque the elders stand
Around their Chief to welcome and to greet
The noble leader* and his valiant band
Who come to lay their trophies at the feet

Of their Amir. He marks the joyous stir
Of grateful hearts rejoicing in their gain—
He, throneless king and pompless conqueror
Of Syria's lands and Persia's wide domain!

A tall stern figure, somewhat past his prime,
An iron mind within an iron frame,
Ordained to stamp faith's edicts upon time:
Omar, a man of might, a mighty name.

His were the words "Saad Wakkas! Be it thine
O'er godless realms God's levin-bolt to fling,
To purge with purer flame the Magian's shrine,
To tame the high-born pride of Persia's King."

*Saad bin Wakkas.

Saad heard—and went and conquered. Quenched the
star

That long had shone upon the Persian race.
Soldier of fate, whose victory near and far
Did spread like light the beams of dawning grace.

And now he comes to lay upon the ground
Trophies of nameless price from Persia won;
Bright jewels heaps before him and around,
That once adorned the votaries of the sun.

The Caliph looks, then turns away his eyes.
Another vision sleepless memory brings;
He hears the voice that taught him to despise
The glittering gauds that grace the pomp of kings.

What thoughts are his upon this glorious day
(More glorious than an Alexander's dream).
Deep thoughts, high thoughts, and sad thoughts that
dismay
The soul that takes life's gifts for what they seem.

“Lo! Persia's kingdom lies a crumpled scroll,
“As he foretold who sleeps in yonder grave.
“God's peace and blessings on the Prophet's soul!
“Glory is God's, not mine, His humble slave.

“All, all upon this earth shall pass away:
“Kingdoms and Kings, wealth, power, glory, fame—
“The weak heart’s snare, the playthings of a day;
“The weak soul’s lure, the echoes of a name.

“Thy power abides, and Thine the hand alone
“That holds the kingdom of the earth and skies.
“Lord of all worlds! Creation is Thy throne,
“And all Eternity beneath Thee lies.”

Such are his thoughts; he turns the crowd to scan.
“Say, who hath seen the Persian on his throne,
“Decked in his jewelled trappings? Dress yon man
“E’en like the king, that to us may be known

“Vain Yezdgird’s form—poor phantom of a king!”
An Arab soldier wears the diadem
The Monarch wore, his collar and his ring,
His shoes of gold, his robe with jewelled hem.

“For these he lost his life. when he had lost
“His kingdom. and his warriors. through
his pride.

“He had the choice. . . . and chose at mortal cost
“That which hath fled, not that which shall abide!”

THE EMPIRE OF ISLAM.

WHEN sword and sceptre, crown and throne were cast
A shapeless wreck round Time's devouring shore,
Man's will could yet remould the shattered past,
Rebuild Life's throne though Empires were no more.

Their conquering might sunk in oblivion,
Their ancient glories sepulchred in loam,
Egypt, Assyria, Media, Babylon
Were faded memories,—as Greece and Rome,

Man's will triumphant bade the Future rise
From out the past, and Hope and Faith, reborn,
Strove for the empire of the earth and skies,
And changed the night of ages into morn!
One will alone, supreme o'er Space and Time,
Thus gained unconquered realms by faith sublime.

THE MYSTIC.

HE stands and gazes on the brow of night.
Silence around, but yon bright orbs that roll
Millions of miles above—they speak in light
And send their message to his hearkening soul.

The universe, and life and death, and man;
Religion, law and morals, faith and love;
Of these the God-made scheme, the man-made plan;
Man's life below, the Spirit's life above—

All these seem mingled in one little word,
A word, a thought that glances like a beam
And penetrates the soul unseen, unheard!
Is it a voice, a light, or but a dream?

He sees the stars—they crumble and disperse,
Vapour once more to shapeless chaos hurled;
Sees storm-tossed atoms of a universe,
Fragments adrift of many a shining world.

Time with his dusky train of formless years
Glides through a boundless void all noiselessly;
He turns to look again—Time disappears;
Its trail is lost upon a shoreless sea!

Yet there he stands—with nothing all around;
No heaven, no earth, no flames, nor gardens fair;
His place, all space where silence is like sound;
And all his soul could wish for, all is there.

Was it a breath, a sigh? On noiseless wings
An unseen spirit comes and says 'Rejoice!'
Think of the Self once thine; now from it springs
Thy formless being—this unbodied voice.

I am thy soul—the stars' soul—spark divine
And living part of the Eternal Mind.
Yea, I am thou and all—foredoomed to shine
Eternal o'er all forms to dust consigned.

And lo! the long-past object of his care,
There lies the ruined mansion of his breath—
A heap of grim white fleshless bones laid bare,
A gruesome monument of life and death!

'Are these' he asks 'My splendid plans, my hope,
Ambition, passions, aspiration vain,
Presumptuous strife with mightier powers to cope?
In this gaunt frame does aught of me remain?'

'Long since we passed' he hears 'the gate of strife
And saw the measure of our gain and loss,
And thence we passed on to a higher life
Whiter than these white bones and free of dross.

Like thy dead frame the stars' dead orbs decay,
But that which is All-life shall never die,
'Tis one with that which once made Night and Day
And chose to wear the form of Earth and Sky.'

AN ISLAMIC HYMN.

UNSEEN, all-seeing Lord of all,
Eternal, Increate!
Thy will makes worlds arise and fall,
Thy thought unknown is Fate;
Creator Thou of heaven and earth,
Lord of Eternity,
All life from Thee alone has birth,
All life returns to Thee.

Thou wast, Thou art, and Thou shalt be
As when Thy work began,
From Nothing to Infinity,
From formless clay to Man.
Atoms of dust, we are made whole
And quickened by Thy breath;
Yea, Thou dost breathe a deathless Soul
Into the heart of Death.

All-seeing and all-knowing, Thou;
Master of Morn and Night;
O guide us on Thy way, e'en now
From darkness unto light!
Our life on earth is idle sport,
A year, a month, a day;
Thou art our Refuge, our Resort
When all shall pass away.

The hidden and the manifest
Alike are known to Thee;
All acts, all thoughts within man's breast,
Of sin or probity.
Thou guidest with a Master's care,
If man but understood,
His soul from that which seemeth fair
To everlasting Good.

We praise Thee, Merciful, Benign!
We praise Thee and obey.
Lord of the Worlds! All life is thine,
And Thine the Judgment Day.
O lead us to the path of Right;
Guide us along the Way
Of those on whom Thy grace doth light,
And not of those who stray!

A SENSUOUS PARADISE.

I SEE the Realms of Bliss where toilers rest
Whose virtue flagged not in the earthly strife.
I see them with the spirits of the Blest
Revestured in the visual garb of life.

In groves and glades where murmuring waters flow,
'Neath laden boughs in grateful shade reclined;
Far from the desert sands where tempests blow
And Death comes riding on the sun-fed wind.

For them eternal peace. Their prayer is praise
Of Him who first the boon of Life bestowed,
Whose guidance led from error's darksome ways
O'er shining paths unto the Blest Abode.

'Mid beauteous scenes what forms around them glide
Fairer than aught that fancy pictured fair!
What visions rare, to poet's eyes denied,
Float round them here and fill the 'ethereal air!

Fair forms as softly bright as orient pearls
With eyes in which the Maker's love is blent
With reverent wonder, even as boys and girls
To wait upon the favoured guests are sent!

I pause. 'Tis not the philosophic mind
But 'tis the sense-touched, throbbing, human Heart
That in these visual forms its bliss would find—
The Heaven-born Artist revelling in his Art!

Or must I dream with Plato? Seek to rise
From Form to Beauty, the self-beautiful,
The formless Regent of his Paradise
Which of unborn eternal types is full?

Where shall the disembodied spirit dwell?
In form, or formless in void nothingness?
I question Earth and Heaven but none can tell,
None save the voice sent from on high to bless,

The voice that rang below the vault of Heaven
When Man with eager heart first gazed above.
He waited long; then was the tidings given
Of life eternal and eternal love!

That voice rang out from darksome age to age—
Loud, clear and vibrant as a trumpet call.
It taugth man's soul to burst its iron cage
And soar above the World's encircling wall,

Reach out to Heaven, see a realm more bright
Than ever seen beneath the starry dome:
Of passionless Desire's pure delight,
Of love and grace the everlasting home

Ordained for those who leave life's dross behind
E'en with the body sepulchred in Earth;
Life's toils and trials past, who hope to find
In Death advancement to a higher birth!

That Voice I hear resounding in The Book.
It bodies forth the spirit's pure desires
As scenes in Heaven; to others who forsook
The path of Right, reveals Hell's flaming fires.

Man's mind, sense-guided, rises to a height
Surpassing sense; but Visions can appeal
Through Sense alone. God's glory and His might
Are Thoughts that Nature's picture-scenes reveal

Enough for me; our "Sensuous Paradise."
(By folly misconceived) is pictured Thought.
The Truth it veils lies open to the wise,
Its web and woof with deepest meaning fraught.

