

PERSIAN WIT AND HUMOUR

JÁMÍ.



C. E. WILSON.

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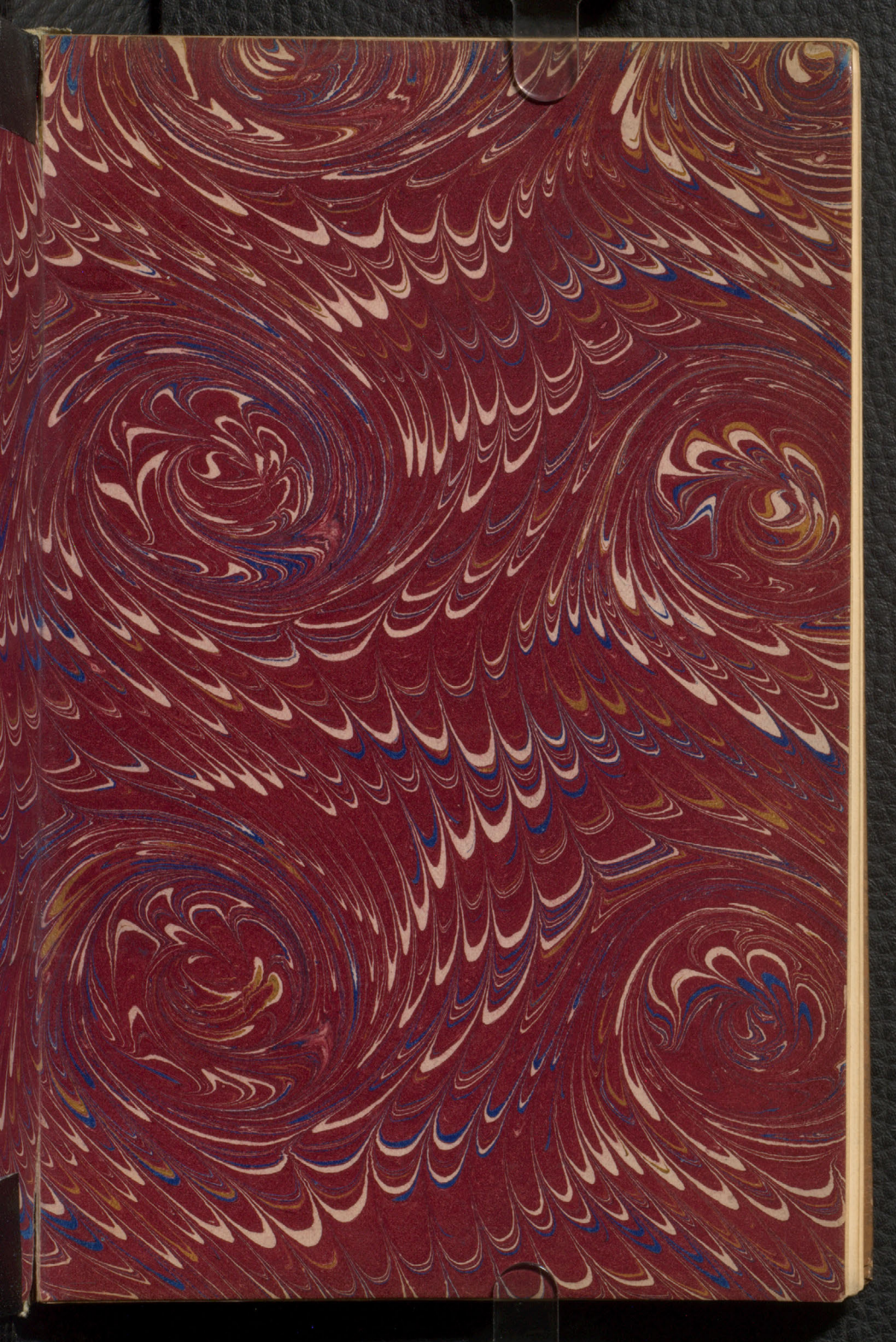
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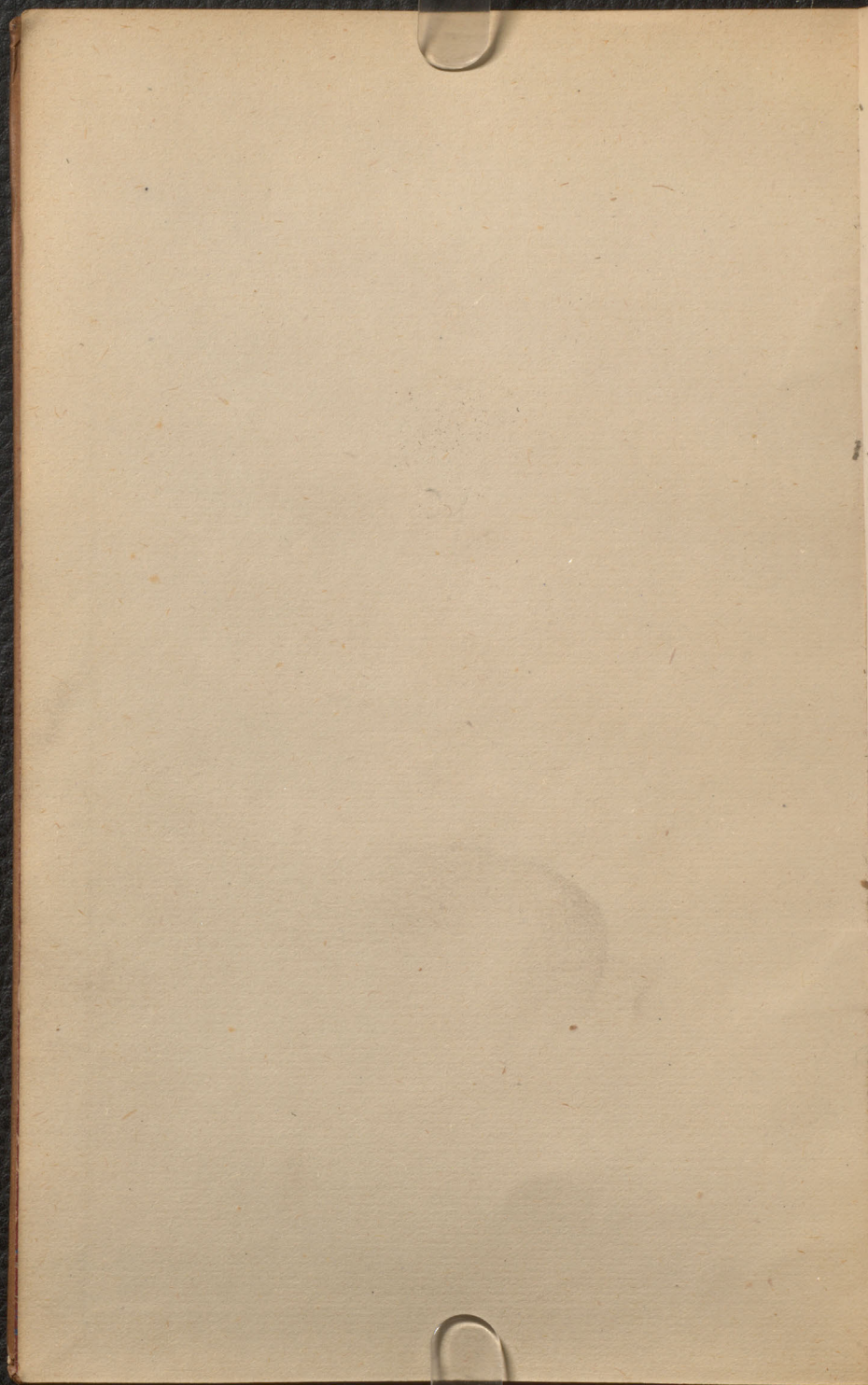
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PERSIAN WIT AND HUMOUR

BEING

THE SIXTH BOOK OF THE

BAHÁRISTÁN

OF

JÁMÍ

TRANSLATED FOR THE FIRST TIME FROM THE ORIGINAL
PERSIAN INTO ENGLISH PROSE AND
VERSE, WITH NOTES,

BY

C. E. WILSON

Assistant-Librarian, Royal Academy of Arts.

LONDON

CHATTO AND WINDUS.

MDCCCLXXXIII.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN

OF THE SIXTH BOOK OF THE

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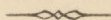
C. R. WILSON

LONDON

CHATTO AND WINDUS

1883

PREFACE.



'Abdu 'r-Rahmání 'bnu Ahmad Jámí, a portion of whose most popular work, the Baháristán, is now for the first time offered in an English form, was one of the most illustrious of the later Persian poets and Súfí philosophers, and also a most learned Doctor of Muhammadan law and divinity. He was born about the year 817 A.H. (A.D. 1414) at Jám, a town of moderate size in the government of Herát, the (then) capital of Khurásán, and itself the chief-town of a canton comprising about two hundred small towns and villages. From the name of this town he assumed his poetical surname of Jámí. He was patronised and encouraged by many of the Princes of his time, and in especial by the Ruler of his native country, Sultán Husain Baikará, to whom he dedicated the Baháristán, and who was a descendant of Tímúr Lang. Besides his four Díváns, or complete series of odes, in which he has displayed all the doctrines of Súfí mysticism, Jámí composed in prose and verse a work on Súfism, called the Kitábi Lavááh, and adapted from the Arabic "Tabakátu 's-Súfíyah," his history of the lives of the Súfí Shaikhs

entitled, the *Nafhátu 'l-Uns min Hadráti 'l-Kuds*. His *Haft Aurang* or *Septenary of Poems*, consists of the following seven works : The *Silsilatu 'z-Zahab*, *Tuhfatu 'l-Ahrár* and *Sabhatu 'l-Abrár*, which comprise expositions of the *Súfí* doctrines with practical illustrations in the form of entertaining stories ; *Yúsuf u Zulaikhá*, a romantic poem of great beauty on the loves of Joseph and Zulaikhá, Potiphar's wife ; *Laila u Majnún*, a poem on the loves of Laila and Majnún, written in imitation of *Nizámí* and *Khusrau's* poems of the same title ; *Salámán u Absál*, an allegorical romance, written in a style of the most elegant perspicuity ; and lastly the *Khirad Námahi Iskandarí*, an epic poem on the deeds of Alexander. Besides these his principal compositions, *Jámí* wrote upwards of thirty other highly esteemed works, including a *Treatise on Music*, and a *Collection of Letters* principally on *Súfí* and *Moral* Subjects, and addressed to his learned friends and contemporaries. He died at *Herát* in the year (according to *Daulat Sháh*) 898, A.H. (A.D. 1492).

The present translation of the sixth book of the *Baháristán*, has been made from a revised text (unpublished), prepared by the translator from the collation of various MSS., the printed text of the *Baron von Schlechta-Wssehrd*, Vienna, 1846, and a lithographed edition by *Amír Alláh Taslím*, *Lakhnau*, 1873, which last though generally not to be relied on, offers a few valuable readings.

Great care has been taken to give a strictly literal version of the prose portion of the work, and but little freedom has been adopted in rendering the verse, in order that the translation might be as useful as possible to the Persian student, for whom it is chiefly intended.

A few short stories have necessarily been left untranslated on account of their objectionable character, and a slight degree of licence taken with a few whose coarseness rendered a perfectly literal version unsuitable. One story of some length which the translator was unwilling to omit has been partially rendered into Latin. It should be stated that the only translation of the *Baháristán* hitherto made is that by the accomplished Baron von Schlehta-Wssehrd; which, excellent as it is, omits much that by a little freedom of rendering, and the exertion of some ingenuity might have been preserved.

Should the translation of the sixth book now offered prove of sufficient interest, the translator proposes subsequently to publish the remaining seven books of his translation, comprising: The Sayings of the Súfís; The Maxims of the Wise; Sovereignty and Justice; Liberality and Kindness; Love and Friendship; Biographical Notices of the Persian Poets, with Selections from their Works; Fables.

The *Baháristán*, as *Jámí* himself tells us, was written on the model of the *Gulistán* of *Sa'dí*, and is second only to that world-famous work in didactic interest.

C. E. WILSON.

*T H E blowing of the Gentle Gales of
Fests, and Fragrant Airs of Jokes,
which cause the Rose-bud of the
Lips to smile, and make the
Blossom of the Heart
expand.*

IT is related that his Eminence the Prophet—God bless and preserve him!—said: “The believer is jocose and sweet spoken, while the infidel is sour-faced and frowning.” The Prince of the Faithful, also, ‘Alí—God honour his face, and approve of him!—once said: “No harm is done if a person’s jocularities extend so far as to carry him but beyond the boundary of morosity and without the circuit of sullenness.”

The Prophet—God bless and preserve him!—said to an old woman: “Old women cannot enter Paradise.” The old woman beginning to weep, he continued: “But God Most High will renew their youth, and raise them up more beautiful than they ever were; then He will admit them to Heaven.” Again he once said to the wife of one of his companions: “Ask thy husband how he is, for there is white in his eye.” The woman hastened with great celerity and agitation to her hus-

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band, who asked her the cause of her distress. After she had repeated to him what his Eminence had told her, he said: "He spoke the truth: in my eye there is white and also black, but not of a prejudicial kind."

FRAGMENT.

Blame not if one whose fortune smiles should jest;
 Both Faith and reason's laws this thing permit.
 The heart, a mirror, is by toil made dim;
 Than jests what polish for its rust more fit!

STORY I.

One day when Asma'í was present at Hárún's table, mention was made of the dish "pálúdah."¹ Hearing Asma'í remark: "There are many Beduins who have never seen a pálúdah, nor even heard of it," Hárún said: "Thou must bring some proof in support of the statement which thou hast made, otherwise I shall esteem it a falsehood." It happened one day that Hárún went out to hunt accompanied by Asma'í, when seeing a native Beduin arrive from the desert, Hárún said to Asma'í: "Bring him before me." Asma'í went up to the Beduin and said: "The Lord of Believers calls for thee: comply with his request." The man said: "Is there then a Lord of believers?" Asma'í replying "Yes!" he continued: "I do not believe in him." At these words Asma'í began to abuse him and

call him bastard, which so enraged the Beduin that he seized him by the collar and pulling him about on all sides, overwhelmed him with abuse, while Hárún laughed aloud.

Afterwards he went up to Hárún and said: "O Prince of the Faithful, as this man believes thee to be, give me redress against him, for he has abused me." Hárún said: "Give him two dirams." "Great God!" exclaimed the Beduin, "must I then give him two dirams when he has given me abuse?" "Yes," replied Hárún, "such is my command." Turning his face to Asma'í, he said: "O doubly bastard! be off and give me four dirams in accordance with the Prince of the Faithful's decree." Hárún was so much amused that he fell on his back with laughter.

They then took him with them. When he entered Hárún's palace and saw its grandeur and pomp, when he saw also Hárún's assembly-chamber, it seemed so magnificent in his eyes that he stepped forward and said: "Peace be on thee, O God!" Hárún exclaimed: "Silence! What art thou saying?" "Peace be on thee, O Prophet of God!" then said the Beduin. "Out upon thee!" exclaimed those present: "What words are these? He is the Prince of the Faithful." "Peace be on thee, O Prince of the Faithful!" at last said the man. "And on thee be peace!" replied Hárún. Then he was permitted to sit down, and the table being set out they partook of every variety of food till at last on the appearance of a pálúdah Asma'í said:

"I hope now to find that he will not know what the pálúdah is."

Hárún said: "If it should be so I will give thee a purse of ten thousand dirams." Then the Beduin stretched out his hand, and began to eat the pálúdah in such a manner that it was preceptible he had never before partaken of it. Hárún asked him: "What thing is this which thou art eating?" "I swear," he replied, "by that God Who honoured thee by the khalifate, that I know not what thing it is; but God Most High says in the Koran: 'And fruits: dates and pomegranates.'² As dates are here before me, I suppose this is a pomegranate." Hearing this, Asma'í said: "O Prince of the Faithful, now thou owest me two purses, for he not only knows not what a pálúdah is, but is also unacquainted with a pomegranate." Hárún ordered Asma'í to be given two purses, and the Beduin to receive enough to enrich him.

FRAGMENT.

Dost know what men are kind? 'Tis they
 Whose store of gold from locks is free:
 Who, let what haps be grave or gay,
 In all things cause for kindness see.

STORY II.

A Khalif while one day dining on some roast lamb which had been placed before him, perceived a Beduin come up from the desert, and called him to his presence. The Beduin sat down and began to eat with voracity so remarkable, that the Khalif said: "What has come to thee? Thou tearest this lamb asunder and eatest it with such avidity that one would say its father had gored thee with his horns." The Beduin said: "Nay, not so; but *thou* viewest it with eyes of such compassion, and art so afflicted at its being torn up and eaten that one would say its mother had given thee milk."

FRAGMENT.

My lord is kind and gentle to his wealth,
He views it all with eyes of tender care;
To save his lambs or sheep from any risk,
His precious child or mother he would spare.

FRAGMENT.

If bread and roasted lamb my lord should lay
Before thee, when thou art his guest one day,
Thou 'ld'st pain his teeth far less with tyrant stone
Than if his bread thou brokest with thine own;
Inflict on him by hundred wounds less grief
Than if thou soughtest from his lamb relief.

JEST III.

Bahlúl³ being asked to count the fools of Basrah, replied: "They are without the confines of computation. If you ask me, I will count the wise men, for they are no more than a limited few."

FRAGMENT.

He who is wise has always still a share
Of folly's store, as time demands, to pay ;
While burns the sun of evil chance, his life
Beneath the shade that folly gives is gay.

JEST IV.

A learned man being annoyed while writing a letter to one of his confidential friends, at the conduct of a person who, seated at his side, glanced out of the corner of his eye at his writing, wrote: "Had not a hireling thief been seated at my side and engaged in reading my letter I should have written to thee all my secrets." The man said: "By God, my lord, I have neither read nor even looked at thy letter." "Fool!" exclaimed the other; "how then canst thou say what thou now sayest?"

FRAGMENT.

Who furtively thy secret learns—
For him the thief's ill-fame :
If by the deed he seek for hire,
Base hireling be his name.

JEST VI.

As the Kádí of Baghdad was going forth on foot to the Friday service at the Mosque, he was encountered by a drunken man, who, recognising him, exclaimed: "God ennoble thee, O Kádí! It is not right that thou shouldst go on foot." Then he swore by the penalty of a divorce that he would mount the Kádí on his own neck. "Come hither, accursed wretch," said the Kádí. The Kádí being mounted on his neck, he turned back his head and asked: "Shall I gallop, or walk?" "Go at a medium pace," replied the Kádí; "only thou must not take fright, or slip; take care also to go so close to the wall, that we may be safe from the pressure of the throng." "God bless thee, O Kádí," said the drunkard; "how well thou hast learnt the rules of equitation!" After he had thus brought the Kádí to the Mosque, the Kádí ordered him to be thrown into prison. "God amend thy state, O Kádí," appealed the man; "is this a fit return to a person who saves thee from the dis-

grace of walking, devotes himself to thee as a horse, and carries thee to the Mosque with equestrian honour?" The Kádí laughed, and let him go free.

FRAGMENT.

When sots would stop thee, wishing to contend,
Be mild with them, O Sage with learning fraught ;
The Sage's honour, subtile as a hair,
Should not be flawed by strife with men untaught,

JEST VII.

A weaver left a deposit in the house of a learned man. After a few days had elapsed, finding some necessity for it, he paid him a visit and found him seated at the door of his house giving instruction to a number of pupils who were standing in a row before him. "O Professor," said the man, "I am in want of the deposit which I left." "Be seated a moment," replied the other, "until I have finished the lesson." The weaver sat down, but the lesson lasted a long time and he was pressed for time. Now that learned man had a habit when giving lessons, of wagging his head, and the weaver seeing this, and fancying that to give a lesson was merely to wag the head, said: "Rise up, O Professor, and make me thy deputy till thy return: let me wag my head in place of thee, and do thou

bring out my deposit, for I am in a hurry." The learned man, hearing this, laughed and said :

FRAGMENT.

In public halls the city jurist boasts
That all, obscure or clear, to him is known ;
But if thou ask him aught, his answer mark :—
A gesture with the hand or head alone.

JEST VIII.

A blind man with a lamp in his hand and a jar on his shoulder, while passing along a certain road in the darkness of night, was met by a meddlesome fellow, who said to him : "O fool, since day and night are alike to thee, and light and darkness one to thine eyes, what use hast thou for this lamp?" The blind man laughed and replied : "This lamp is not for my own use: it is for such ignorant fools as thou, that they may not knock against me, and break my jar."

FRAGMENT.

Fools better know the state of fools than they
Who in their knowledge Síná's son⁴ excel ;
Taunt not the blind though thou canst boast of sight,
They see what suits their own affairs quite well.

JEST IX.

'Amr Lais⁵ seeing one of his soldiers mounted on a lean horse—

FRAGMENT.

In this lean nag, the matter of whose make
Was surely ne'er composed of aught but bone,
Bones met together as in Esdras' Ass,⁶
But on the bones the flesh had not yet grown.

FRAGMENT.

A horse with not a sign of flesh,
So meagre and so thin :
Examine it from head to hoof,
Thou'lt find but bone and skin.—

Said: "Male eveniat militibus meis, quod, equis fame enectis, omni pecunia quam eis dedi uxorum pudenda pingua fecerunt!" Miles, his auditis, dixit: "Deum adiuro, domine, si uxorismeæ pudenda diligenter explores, equi mei natibus macriora existimes." 'Amr Lais, hæc ridens, muneris aliquid ei dedit, atque ita allocutus est: "Age, utrumque tibi sarcinarium pingue facito."

FRAGMENT.

Deus tibi duo dedit, iumenta,
Quorum interdum alteri, alteri interdum, onus imponendum
est :
Altero noctis sarcinario, diei altero, utendum :
Alterum strato caballino, femori alterum, supponendum.

JEST X.

A descendant of 'Alí being in Baghdad called to himself a certain woman, and on her demanding money of him, said : "Is it not enough for thee that a member of the house of prophecy, and of the family of saintship embrace thee?" "Speak in this manner," she replied, "to the courtesans of Kum and Káshán,⁷ but seek not without the payment of money, the accomplishment of this desire from the courtesans of Baghdad."

FRAGMENT.

Give twice the boon thou seek'st or sordid men,
Then hope thy heart's desire from them to find :
Untie thy purse ; think not the courtesan
For God or prophet will her zone unbind.

JEST XII.

A learned man of ill-favoured countenance and hideous form, on paying a visit to Farazdak,⁸ found that his face had become pale through an illness from which he had suffered. "What has happened to thee," he enquired, "that thy colour has thus paled?" "As soon as I saw thee," replied Farazdak, "I thought of my sins, and my colour turned pale as thou seest it." "Why," said the other, "at the time of seeing me didst thou think of thy sins?" "I thought," replied Faraz-

dak, "and was fearful of the power of God Most High, should He deem me worthy of punishment, to extend His severity so far as to make me as hideous as thyself."

FRAGMENT.

My soul, thy frightful face seen, breaks
 The league to keep in sin it made,
 In fear that for my woeful sins
 God might my form like thine degrade.

JEST XIII.

The same learned man, too, gives us this relation: "As I was once standing in the street, in conversation with a friend, a woman came and standing opposite me, gazed in my face. When her staring had exceeded all bounds, I said to my slave: 'Go to that woman and ask her what she seeks.' The slave returning to me thus reported her answer: 'I wished to inflict some punishment on my eyes which had committed a great fault, and could find none more severe for them than the sight of thy ugly face.'"

FRAGMENT.

The pupil of my eyes, from sin not cleared,
 Though hundred times in tearful streams immersed,
 To escape the curse of fire that doom's-day brings,
 Now by the image of thy face is cursed.

JEST XIV.

Jáhiz relates: "I never experienced so much shame as this event occasioned me. One day a woman took my hand and led me to the shop of a master metal-founder, saying to him: 'Be it thus formed.' I being puzzled to know what this conduct signified, questioned the master, who in reply said: 'She had ordered me to make her a figure in the form of Satan. When I told her that I did not know in what semblance to make it, she brought thee, as thou knowest, and said: 'Make it in this semblance.'"

FRAGMENT.

A face, a visage rare, hast thou ;
Such ugliness in none we trace :
Save thine, no face is found to serve
As model for the devil's face.

JEST XV.

A person who perceived an ugly man asking pardon for his sins, and praying for deliverance from the fire of hell, said to him: "Wherefore, O friend, with such a countenance as thou hast, would'st thou cheat hell, and give such a face reluctantly to the fire?"

FRAGMENT.

In this, that thou thy own face canst not see,
 To others 'tis unpleasant, not to thee :
 With such a face should fire thy dwelling be,
 To fire we'd give our pity ; not to thee.

JEST XVI.

An ugly man went to the doctor and said : " I am troubled with a tumour on the most unsightly part of my body." The Physician, after narrowly scanning his face, said : " It is not true : behold I see thy face, but find no tumour on it."

FRAGMENT.

Some parts, because unsightly ever deemed,
 Should be concealed, the Prince of Law⁹ declared ;
 No part is more unsightly than thy face,
 Be that then hid and aught thou wilt be bared.

JEST XVII.

A person with a large nose, who was wooing a woman, said to her in description of himself : " I am a man devoid of lightness and levity, and patient in bearing afflictions." The woman retorted : " If thou

wert not patient in bearing afflictions, thou could'st never have endured this nose for forty years."

FRAGMENT.

Thy nose so large lies as a weight on all ;
How long to this and that one turn thy face ?
Thou bendest ever, though 'tis not to pray,
The irksome weight upon the ground thou'd'st place.

JEST XVIII.

A witty man, seeing a person on whose face a great quantity of hair had grown, said : "Thou hadst better eradicate a lot of this hair, before thy face becomes a head."

FRAGMENT.

If from his face some hair each day
With tweezers he neglect to tear,
A few days o'er—my lord will find
His face a head through so much hair.

JEST XIX.

As Mu'áwiyah¹⁰ and 'Akíl the son of Abú Tálib¹⁰ were seated together, Mu'áwiyah said to some people who were present : "Have you ever heard, O Syrians, the

words of God Most High, where He says : ' The hands of Abú Lahab shall perish, and he shall perish ? ' " " On their answer being in the affirmative, he continued : " Abú Lahab was the uncle of ' Akíl. " " Have you ever heard, O Syrians, " said ' Akíl in his turn, " the words of God Most High, where He says : ' And his wife also bearing wood ? ' " " Their answer being again " Yes ! " he said : " The bearer of wood was the aunt of Mu'áwiyah. "

FRAGMENT.

When faults thou hast, 'tis not the wise man's rule
That thou should'st blame another for the same,
He speaks no word of thee or thy defects,
Why make the silent speak thy faults to blame ?

JEST XX.

A descendant of 'Alí, in the course of an altercation with a certain man, said : " How canst thou hate me, when thou art commanded in every prayer to invoke blessings upon me, and say : ' God bless Muhammad, and the family of Muhammad ! ' " " Yes, " said the other ; " but I add also : ' The good and pure, ' to which class thou dost not belong. "

FRAGMENT.

Thou claim'st as thine the Prophet's race ; hast thou
 The proof—a nature pure and virtues fair ?
 With pride thou nam'st good men and deeds of good ;
 Dost thou in grace and signs of goodness share ?

JEST XXI.

A pretender arrayed in the manner of the 'Alavíyans,
 and claiming to be of that exalted stock—

With not a ray of truth his claim to grace ;
 With locks attesting lies upon his face.¹²—

paid a visit to a holy man, who on seeing him, sprang from his place and seated him in the seat of honour, retiring himself to the meanest place. He complied with his every request, giving him even more than he sought, and at the time of his departure respectfully conducted him to the door. His companions observed : “ We know this person : his family is entirely unconnected with the race of 'Alí, and his pretension in this respect is false and vain. Neither has his father any connection with that great house, nor is his mother in any way related to that illustrious family.”

FRAGMENT.

His vagrant mother begs from house to house ;
 His father kettles mends, makes spindles too :
 A member of the meanest tribe is she,
 While he is one of any rabble-crew.

The pious man said : "That which I have done is not worthy of the true members of that illustrious family ; but only suitable to misled impostors."

FRAGMENT.

To honour members of the Prophet's race
Is not the lot of every mean poor man :
For love of him, the wonder of the earth,
Give wealth and rank and empire he who can.

JEST XXII.

A Khalif was partaking of food with an Arab from the desert. During the repast as his glance fell upon the Arab's portion he saw in it a hair, and said : "O Arab, take that hair out of thy food." The Arab exclaimed : "It is impossible to eat at the table of one who looks so at his guest's portion as to perceive a hair in it." Then withdrawing his hand he swore never again to partake of food at his table.

FRAGMENT.

The host, when he the tray of bounty spreads,
From gazing at his inmate should abstain :
Not eye askance and in his heart compute
Each single morsel at the table ta'en.

JEST XXIII.

An assembly of people being seated together, and engaged in discussing the merits and defects of men, one of them observed : "Whoever has not two seeing eyes is but half a man ; and whoever has not in his house a beautiful bride is but half a man ; finally he who cannot swim in the sea is but half a man." A blind man in the company who had no wife, and could not swim, called out to him : "O my dear friend, thou hast laid down an extraordinary principle, and cast me so far out of the circle of manhood, that still half a man is required before I can take the name of one who is no man."

FRAGMENT.

My lord's so far beneath the rank of man,
So vapid, foolish, and unfeeling he,
That though by men a thousand virtues taught,
He ne'er can hope to reach true man's degree.

JEST XXIV.

As Bahlúl once came into the presence of Hárún he was accosted by one of the Vazírs, who said to him : "Be it good tidings for thee, O Bahlúl ! the Prince of the Faithful has made thee ruler over the apes and swine." "Listen to me then, and obey my behests,"

rejoined Bahlúl, "for thou art in the number of my subjects."

FRAGMENT.

Good news thou bringest, I'm to rule each ass ;
 Then thou to me as subject wilt be bound :
 My soldiers, so thou tellest me, are pigs ;
 Thyself then first among them will be found.

JEST XXV.

In the reign of a tyrannical prince, a rich man dying, his son was sent for by the tyrant's Vazír, who asked him : "What has thy father left ?" The son replied : "Of property and possessions so much, and to inherit them, but the great Vazír, whom God Most Glorious strengthen ! and my poor and humble self." The Vazír smiled, and ordered the inheritance to be equally divided, leaving one half of it to the son, and carrying off the other half for the king.

FRAGMENT.

The tyrannous Vazír esteems
 The orphan's wealth his Monarch's due ;
 To take it all considers just,
 And kind, to part it into two.

JEST XXVI.

A Turk being asked : " Which should'st thou prefer, plunder now, or Paradise to come ? " replied : " Let me to-day engage in pillage and carry off all I can find, and to-morrow enter the fire with Pharaoh."

FRAGMENT.

A Turk to him who Heaven described, once said :
" Are spoil and rapine there allowed, canst tell ? "
" Not so ! " Then said the Turk : " I deem that Heaven,
Where spoil and rapine are not, worse than hell."

JEST XXVII.

A mendicant once coming to beg something at the door of a house, the master of it called out to him from the interior : " Pray excuse me : the women of the house are not here." The beggar retorted : " I wish for a morsel of bread, not to embrace the women of the house."

FRAGMENT.

When'er the beggar to thy house-door comes,
Give what thou hast ; no vain excuses seek :
And that his mind may nothing ill conceive
No word before him of thy household speak.

JEST XXVIII.

A teacher whose son had fallen ill and was nearly at the point of death, said: "Send for the washer to wash him." "But," objected they, "he is not yet dead." "Never mind," said he, "he will be dead by the time they have finished washing him."

FRAGMENT.

He whom impatient temper leads
 To action ere the time is meet,
 Would break his fast ere evening falls,¹³
 Far from the stream would bare his feet.

JEST XXIX.

They said to the son of a teacher: "What a pity thou art a fool!" "If," he replied, "I were not a fool I should be a bastard."

FRAGMENT.

The mother is in fault if to her child
 Her husband's disposition fail to pass:
 The mule's long ears afford us ample proof
 A horse is not its father, but an ass.

JEST XXX.

A teacher being asked : " Art thou the elder or is thy brother ? " replied : " I am now the elder, but after another year has passed over him his age will be equal to mine."

FRAGMENT.

When time has brought thee nought, why ask
What time has brought to others, pray ?
Thou count'st the years of other men ;
Know thine as theirs too pass away.

JEST XXXI.

While a man lay sick and nearly at the point of death, a person from whose mouth an unpleasant odour issued, had seated himself at his bedside, and with his head close to the dying man, was prompting him in the creed, breathing all the time in his face. The more the sick man turned away his face, the more the other urged him, and the nearer he brought his face. At last, when the sick man could bear it no longer, he said : " My dear friend, wilt thou permit me to die happy and clean, or dost thou wish to pollute my death with all that is most filthy ? "

FRAGMENT.

We cannot list to every fool,
Though men of sense on earth are rare :
When lips exhale hypocrisy
Their loathsome breath 'tis hard to bear.

JEST XXXII.

A person came before another and began to complain of him in these words : "Is it right for thee not to recognise me, and show respect for what is my due?" The other astonished at his words replied : "I know not of what thou art speaking." "My father," explained the man, "wooed thy mother, and had he wedded her I and thou should have been brothers." The other replied : "This is a relationship, the effect of which is that I should inherit thy wealth, and thou mine."

FRAGMENT.

The man who senseless craves, thinks all compelled
By God's command their bounty to bestow ;
But since from such wild cravings naught can come,
His lust of gain will lead him but to woe.

JEST XXXIII.

They said to a hunchback: "Should'st thou like God Most High to make thy back straight like others', or to make the backs of other men crooked like thine?" He replied: "I should prefer God to make all men crooked, in order that I might view them with the same eyes with which they looked at me."

FRAGMENT.

From that defect for which thy foe reproves,
How pleasant could'st thou spite him sit down free!
But how much better than this faultless state,
Could'st thou thy foe with thy own failing see!

JEST XXXIV.

A certain person after going through his prayers began to make petition, begging in his supplication for entrance into Heaven, and deliverance from the fire of hell. An old woman who was standing behind him, heard his petition, and said: "O Lord, let me be a partner in that which he desires." The man hearing these words continued: "O Lord, let me be hanged or die under the lash." "O Lord," exclaimed the old woman, "be compassionate and preserve me from that which he seeks." At these words the man, turning his face round, said: "What a strangely unfair arrange-

ment and unworthy distribution is this? In comfort and ease thou would'st be my partner; but would'st leave me to suffer pain and trouble alone."

FRAGMENT.

Unjust the greedy wretch who'd share
 The good thou may'st from God obtain,
 And not a single step would take
 Beside thee on the path of pain.

JEST XXXVII.

A certain person made a claim of ten dirams on Júhí.¹⁴ The judge enquired: "Hast thou any testimony to offer?" On the answer being in the negative he continued: "Shall I put him on his oath?" "Of what value is *his* oath?" said the man in reply. "O judge of the Faithful," then proposed Júhí in his turn, "there lives in my quarter of the town an Imám,¹⁵ temperate, truthful and beneficent, send for him and put him on his oath instead of me, that this man's mind may be easy."

JEST XXXVIII.

A Beduin having lost a camel, made an oath that when he found it he would sell it for one diram. When however he found it, repenting of his oath, he tied a cat to its neck, and called out: "Who will buy the camel for one diram, and the cat for a hundred dirams; but both together, as I will not part them." "How cheap," said a person who had arrived there, "would be this camel, had it not this collar attached to its neck!"

FRAGMENT.

To take the camel sordid men would give,
Is not the rule of generous men and great;
The favour is a collar on its neck,
Which thousand times exceeds the camel's weight.

JEST XXXIX.

A Beduin who had lost a camel, proclaimed: "Whoever brings me my camel shall have two camels as a reward." "Out, man!" said they to him; "what kind of business is this? Is the whole ass-load of less value than a small additional bundle laid upon it?" "You have this excuse for your words," replied he, "that you have never tasted the pleasure of finding, and the sweetness of recovering what has been lost."

FRAGMENT.

Although thy loss is mean, say not
 To turn aside from search is best,
 For wise men deem the object found,
 Less pleasing than successful quest.

JEST XL.

A doctor who was observed, whenever he approached the cemetery, to draw his cloak over his head, being asked why he did so, replied: "I am ashamed before the dead of this cemetery, for each one I pass has suffered at my hands, and every one at whom I look has died from my potions."

TETRASTIC.

Thy knowledge fails the invalid to cure,
 Thy advent is of death a token sure,
 No longer in our land need 'Azráíl¹⁶
 The toil of taking lives away endure.

TETRASTIC.

Through thee has medicine lost its lustre bright,
 Through thee the sick man is in piteous plight,
 Of some use yet art thou, thank God; for they
 Who wash, sell shrouds, dig graves, in thee delight.

JEST XLI.

A certain philosopher has observed : " An unskilful physician is a public pestilence."

FRAGMENT.

From thy practice of physic unskilled,
When a pest to all people thou art,
'Tis not strange if thou'rt curs'd, for the curse
Is a prayer that the pest may depart.

JEST XLII.

"One day in the season of spring, I went out with a party of friends to ramble and survey the plains and fields. When we were resting in a pleasant spot and had spread our cloth, a dog perceived it from afar and hurried to the place. One of the party took up a piece of stone, and as if he were throwing it some bread, cast it to the dog, which after smelling it, ran back without a moment's delay, and paid no attention to all our calling. While my friends were wondering at the action of the dog, one of them said : 'Do you know what this dog says? He says 'these poor wretches are so stingy and hungry, that they are eating stones; what hope can their tray afford me, and what enjoyment their cloth?''"

FRAGMENT.

Though decked the tray, two things afar and near
 From sharing in the master's feast debar :
 The stick deprives the cat of pleasure near ;
 The stone restrains the hapless dog afar.

JEST XLIII.

A youth being asked, "Dost thou wish thy father
 to die, that thou may'st take his inheritance?" replied :
 "No ; but I wish they would kill him, that I might not
 only take his inheritance but also the fine exacted for
 his death."

FRAGMENT.

The son loves not his father, but his wealth,
 He would his sire might go, the gold remain,
 Yet scarce content with what his death might leave,
 He wants him killed, the price of blood to gain.

JEST XLV.

A child whose sire had homeward sped,
 To each who passed the doorway said :
 "Sir, gold and silver pray bestow,
 My sire has come ; the good news know."

A witty man said : " O my son,
 His advent glads not every one :
 From travel has returned her lord,
 So from thy mother seek reward." ¹⁷

JEST XLVI.

A certain man read to a poet a couplet in which he had made "ru" follow the rhyming syllable in one hemistich, and "zi" in the other. "This rhyme is incorrect," said the poet, "because one letter is 'z' with the dot." "Then leave out the dot," replied the man. "In one hemistich," still objected the poet, "the syllable has 'u,' and in the other 'i.'" "Just see," exclaimed the other, "what a fool this man is! I tell him to discard the dot, and then he wishes to introduce the vowel point."¹⁸

TETRASTIC.

That vulgar fool who knows not praise from blame,
 Who a, i, u, apart too cannot name,
 Amazes me ; for how can he boast rhyme,
 In whose mind rhyme and rye¹⁹ are both the same ?

JEST XLVII.

Once when two poets had met together at the same table, a pálúdah was brought up. One of them finding it extremely hot said to the other: "This pálúdah is hotter than the perspiration and sweaty humour which after this life thou wilt drink in hell." The other replied: "Breathe out but a couplet of thy verse there, that thou and others then may find relief."²⁰

FRAGMENT.

A line of thy dull, frigid verse,
 On hell's gates graven, in a trice
 Would take the fire's hot glow from hell,
 And make the sweaty stream as ice.

JEST XLVIII.

A poet brought to a shrewd man, an idyll in which each couplet came from a different collection, and every thought was the conception of a different poet. The shrewd man said: "Thou hast brought me a wonderful string of camels, for should any one loosen their reins, each would incline to a different herd."

FRAGMENT.

With proud pretence thou saidest, "Tell me, friend,
Can honey with my dulcet verse contend?"

REPLY.

"From every source some couplets have been brought,
All else is vainly in thy verses sought ;
If each to whence it came again should hie,
Nothing but paper on the ground would lie."

JEST XLIX.

Farzadak once eulogized the ruler of Basrah, whose name was Khálid, but not receiving from him such a present for his eulogy as he desired, he satirized him in this stanza :

VERSE.

By Khálid's splendid portal I was duped,
Not knowing that his skin was stuffed with greed,
But if in praising Khálid I have erred,
I'm not the first has done a foolish deed.²¹

TETRASTIC.

A palace front adorned once met my gaze,
I struggled hard to sing the owner's praise,
But when my thoughts had ripened I beheld
All dirt-bedaubed my garment and my lays.

When the stanza reached Khálid, he sent the poet a thousand dirams, and with them this message :
"Cleanse with these dirams that which thou hast given forth, and with which thou hast bespattered thyself."

FRAGMENT.

What wonder, to the poets he is kind,
 Though praise or censure shower on his name,
 By letting streams from bounty's ocean flow,
 He clears the tablets of their minds from blame.

JEST L.

A poet read some verse to a learned man, and when he had finished it said: "I composed this in the lavatory." "By God," replied the other, "my scent informs me that thou speakest the truth."

FRAGMENT.

O poet tell us not thy verse
 Has come from joy or sorrow's sea,²²
 By some fine spirit breathed from it,
 The man of taste knows whence it be.

JEST LI.

A poet went to a physician and complained: "I have something sticking in my heart which makes me very uncomfortable, and sends a numbness through all my limbs, while my hair rises upright." The physician who was a man of wit and tact, said: "Hast thou

lately composed any verse which thou hast not yet read to any one?" "Yes," replied the poet. "Read it to me," said the physician. After hearing it he said: "Read it again." When this was done he said: "Rise, thou art saved! it was this verse which stuck in thy heart, spreading its dryness outwards. Now that thou hast freed thy heart from it, thy health has returned."

FRAGMENT.

What verse is that which if thou ask its name
 Brings naught but nonsense to the sage's tongue?
 Breathed o'er the patient's draught,—he is no more
 By burning fever but by ague wrung?

JEST LII.

A preacher recited in the pulpit some of the most insipid verse imaginable, and by way of giving it dignity, said: "By God, I composed it during my prayers." I have heard that one of the congregation observed: "If this verse which was composed in the course of prayer is so insipid, what spirit could the prayer in which it was introduced have possessed?"

FRAGMENT.

"I wrote last night in prayer," thou say'st,
 "Verse which all other's worth impairs."
 If came it whence I think, thou'st lost²³
 Both thine ablution and thy prayers.

JEST LIII.

A poet read me once a wretched ode—
Verse of the kind where "alif" finds no place.²⁴
I said the kind of verse that *thou* should'st make,
Is that in which *no* letter we could trace.

JEST LIV.

Two lines thou read'st me, saying, "In my verse
"A measure-full of pearls, no couplet view!"
Yet how a single measure could'st thou say,
When in these lines of thine thou givest two?²⁵

JEST LV.

Though thou canst neither read nor write, nor give
The offspring of thy mind symmetric grace;
How can we blame thee for such wants in verse
As naught impaired the Prophet's rank and place?²⁶

NOTES.

(1.) "Pálúdah."—The Pálúdah is a kind of jelly prepared from a decoction of sheep's feet, with flour, honey and various spices.

(2.) See the Koran, Chap. LV., Verse 68.

(3.) To Bahlúl, who lived in the time of Hárúnu 'r-Rashíd, are ascribed many witty sayings. The lines which follow the story refer not to it, but to Bahlúl himself, who, though a learned philosopher, and included in the number of the Muhammadan saints, had acquired through his many eccentricities and jests, the surname of the "Mad-man" (Al-Majnún). He was allowed many liberties at the Court of Hárún, who was amused by his peculiarities.

(4.) Although Abú 'Alí Husain, the son of 'Abdu 'lláh the son of Síná, the illustrious philosopher and physician, was not the son but the grandson of Síná, he is generally called by Muhammadan writers, Ibnu Síná (Síná's son), of which our word Avicenna is a corruption. He was born in Bukhárá in the year 370 A.H. (A.D. 980), and died in Hamadán in 428 A.H. (A.D. 1036). His system, as displayed in his great work the "Kánún" (Institutes), is still followed by most Muhammadan physicians.

(5) 'Amr, the son of Lais, was the second Prince of the Saffárian dynasty, which ruled over Fárs (Persia proper) Khurásán, and Persian 'Irák. He succeeded his brother Ya'kúb in the year 265 A.H. (A.D. 878), and died in the year 289 A.H. (A.D. 901).

(6) See the Koran, Chap. II., Verse 261.

(7) Kum and Káshán are two towns in Persian 'Irák, distant about forty miles from each other. They are both inhabited exclusively by Shíites (sectaries of 'Alí). In Baghdad, on the contrary, most of the people are Sunnites, who revere equally the first four successors of Muhammad, though they give 'Alí the last place in the succession. The Sunnites, also, follow the "Sunnah," or third basis of Muhammadan canon law, which the Shíites disregard.

(8) Farazdak—the surname of an Arabian poet, so celebrated for the bitterness of his satires, that he gained the name of Shaitán Farazdak (Devil Farazdak).

(9) "The Prince of Law."—Muhammad.

(10.) Mu'áwiyah I. was the first Khalíf of the Umayyah dynasty. He reigned from 41 to 60 A.H. (A.D. 661 to 679).

* Akíl was the brother of 'Alí and the cousin of Muhammad.

Abú Tálib was the father of 'Alí and 'Akíl, and the uncle of Muhammad.

(11.) This and the following quotation are from Chapter CXI of the Koran. The chapter in full is: "The hands of Abú Lahab shall perish, and he shall perish. His riches shall not profit him, neither that which he hath gained. He shall go down to be burned into flaming fire; and his wife also bearing wood, having on her neck a cord of twisted fibres of a palm tree."—SALE'S TRANSLATION.

'Akíl's uncle, Abú Lahab, who married Mu'áwiyah's aint, Umm Jalíl, was one of Muhammad's most bitter enemies. He opposed the establishment of his nephew Muhammad's new religion to the utmost of his power, and finally after some open act of violence on his part, the above denurciatory passage was revealed. His wife, Umm Jalíl, was to bear wood, a bundle of thorns and brambles, because she carried such, and strewed them by night in the Prophet's way.

(12.) The 'Alavíyans (descendants of Alí) wear bong ringlets.

(13.) During the entire month of Ramazán, a rigorous fast is kept from sun-rise to sun-set.

(14.) Júhí.—The name of a man of rank, who delighted in the perpetration of mad tricks and jests.

The Diram, a silver coin, was worth about sixpence.

(15.) Imám.—A priest.

(16.) 'Azráíl.—The Angel of Death.

(17.) Persian scholars will observe that a word has been omitted in this last line.

(18.) The poetaster was as far out in his rhyme, as an Englishman would be who gave "they rue" as a rhyme to "hazy." In the Persian however the fault is not so manifest, as the only difference between "r" and "z" is that the latter has above it a little dot which is wanting in the former, while the vowels, though of course heard, are never written. On this account the poetaster, with apparent reason though real absurdity, reproaches the poet for noticing the vowel point, which in the composition would be imperceptible after he had been told to discard even the dot, a perceptible part of the letter.

(19.) In the original: "Shi'r" (rhyme), and "Sha'ir" (barley).

(20.) The verse being so 'cold' or insipid.

(21.) This line is freely translated.

(22.) Sea—The metre or measure of the verse.

(23.) This line is freely translated.

(24.) Verse from which the letter "alif" (a) is excluded.

(25.) The metre or measure of each hemistich was different, so that the couplet, instead of being *a* measure (of pearls) as the poetaster called it, constituted two separate measures, and was thus open to censure.

(26.) "We have not taught Muhammad the art of poetry; nor is it expedient for him to be a poet." Koran, Chapter XXXVI, Verse 69, Sale's Translation. Muhammad was not only ignorant of the art of poetry, but he could also neither read nor write.

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