

THE BOOK OF THE THOUSAND NIGHTS AND ONE NIGHT: ITS HISTORY AND CHARACTER.

I.

It is now a hundred and eighty years since M. Antoine Galland first introduced to the notice of European readers the most popular collection of narrative fiction in existence, by his translation, published in the year 1704, of an Arabic manuscript alleged to have been procured by him from Syria, which contained something less than a quarter of the tales that compose the work known as "The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night." M. Galland was aware of the imperfection of the MS. used by him, and (unable to obtain a more perfect copy) he seems to have endeavoured to supply the place of the missing portions by incorporating in his translation a number of Persian, Turkish and Arabic tales, which had no connection with his original and for which it is generally supposed that he probably had recourse to various Oriental MSS. (as yet unidentified) contained in the Royal Libraries of Paris. These interpolated tales occupy more than a third part of the entire work known as the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments" and comprise some of the most popular portions of the work, as will be seen from the following list of them.

1. The History of Prince Zeyn Alasnam and the King of the Genii.
2. The History of Codadad and the Princess of Deryabar.
3. The Story of the Sleeper Awakened.
4. Aladdin or the Wonderful Lamp.
5. The Story of the Blind Man Baba Abdalla.
6. The Story of Sidi Nouman.
7. The Story of Cogia Hassan Alhabbal.
8. Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.
9. Ali Cogia, the Merchant of Baghdad.

10. Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Pari-Banou.

11. The Sisters who envied their younger Sister.

Of these, the Story of the Sleeper Awakened is the only one which has been traced to an Arabic original, existing either separately or in connection with the Thousand Nights and One Night, and is found in the Breslau edition of the complete work, printed by Dr. Habicht from a manuscript of Tunisian origin, apparently of much later date than the other known copies. It also occurs in a MS. copy in the British Museum and will be found translated among the stories from printed texts of the Thousand Nights and One Night (not contained in my standard text or in the Boulac edition) which it is proposed to issue as a supplement to the present work.

Galland himself cautions us that the stories of Zeyn Alasnam and Codadad do not belong to the Thousand and One Nights and were published (how he does not explain) without his authority; and the concluding portion of his MS., presumably containing the larger half of Camaralzaman, the whole of Ganem and the Enchanted Horse, as well as all the intercalated tales (that is to say, nearly one-half of the French translation), [\(200\)](#) being unfortunately lost, it appears impossible to ascertain the precise source from which he drew the latter. Opinions differ upon this point, some Orientalists holding (with De Sacy) that the originals of the added tales were found by Galland in the public libraries of Paris (whence, however, no researches have as yet availed to unearth them), and others (with the late Mr. Chenery) that he procured them from the recitation of story-tellers in the bazaars of Smyrna and other towns in the Levant, during his travels there. [\(201\)](#) It was stated by the late Professor Palmer that he found the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves current, in a slightly different form, among the Bedouins of Sinai; but, although the names of the personages of the story (Ali, Abdallah, Mustafa, Morgiana (*Merjaneh*), Cassim, Hussein) are purely Arabic, the use of the Persian titles *Baba* and *Cogia* (see post) seems to point to a Turkish or Persian origin, and it will be noted that the scene is laid in "a city of Persia" and that the story differs widely in style and character from any known to belong to the genuine text. Mr. Palmer also expressed a doubt whether the most popular story of the old book, Aladdin, was an Eastern story at all; but the only evidence we possess upon the subject, that of the tale itself, does not appear to offer any reasonable confirmation of his scepticism. The names (Mustafa, Alaeddin, Bedrulbudour, Fatimeh, etc.) are

without exception Arab, and the story follows the familiar lines of Arabic fiction, of which, in particular, the introduction of the African (or Persian) magician, the finding of the enchanted treasure and ring, the marriage of the finder with the King's daughter, the magical building of the palace, the discovery of the unknown by geomancy, the loss of the talisman through the heedlessness of a third party and its recovery by stratagem, the disgrace of the hero at the instance of the envious vizier, the drugging of the magician and the assumption of the disguise of a devotee for the vilest purposes, are all familiar incidents and find their counterparts in many genuine stories of the Thousand and One Nights, whilst the manners and customs described, allowing for the extreme licence and looseness of Galland's version, do not seem essentially to differ from those portrayed in tales of unquestioned authenticity, such as Camaralzaman or Beder. It may also be observed that there is a considerable resemblance between the plan and details of the story, as given by Galland, and those of Joudier and his brothers (Vol. VI.) and Marouf (in the present volume) and that Scott's meagre abstract (published in 1811) of a few of the unknown tales contained in the Wortley Montague MS. of the Thousand Nights and One Night includes the skeleton of a story ("The Fisherman's Son"), which bears some resemblance to Aladdin and a still greater one to the well-known German Märchen of the White Stone; but, in my opinion, this story is a modern fabrication and has no connection with the original work. The Wortley Montague MS., indeed, appears to be, as a whole, of doubtful authenticity, if we may judge from Scott's translations from it and the detailed account given (in Ouseley's Oriental Collections) of its contents by the translator himself, who states that it bears at end a note to the effect that it was written (or transcribed) in the year 1178 of the Hegira (A.D. 1766 [\(202\)](#)) by Omar es Sufti (Sufta). Sufta (popularly *Softa*) signifies, in Turkish, a divinity student, and this, together with the evidently modern style of the copy, the incoherent jumble of adventure of which the stories (as rendered by Scott) appear to consist and which is much more characteristic of modern Turkish fiction than of the more artistic kind peculiar to the Arabs, and the frequent correspondence of the incidents with German and other popular stories, (a correspondence which, only in the most rudimentary form, is found in the genuine work), appear to stamp this MS. as being, at least as far as the latter portion (which differs greatly from any other copy known to myself) is concerned, as a modern Turkish rifacimento.

Of the remaining six interpolations, the tenth and eleventh (Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Pari-Banou ⁽²⁰³⁾ and The Three Sisters) are evidently Persian and comparatively modern (as a Yankee would say) "at that." The use of the Persian prefix, "Cogia" (*Khawajeh*, master or lord, Arabic equivalent *ustadh* or *muallim*), improperly applied to a ropemaker and a merchant of Baghdad, would also point to a Persian or Turkish origin of Nos. 7 and 9 (Cogia Hassan Alhabbal and Ali Cogia), as also the title "Baba" (Gaffer, Daddy, Arabic equivalent *Sheikh*) given to the blind man Abdalla[h] in No. 5, and the general tone of these three stories, as well as that of Sidi Nouman (No. 6), testifies to the probability of their having been composed, at a comparatively recent period, by a person not an inhabitant of Baghdad, in imitation of the legends of Haroun er Reshid and other well-known tales of the original work. It is possible that an exhaustive examination of the various MS. copies of the Thousand and One Nights known to exist in the public libraries of Europe might yet cast some light upon the question of the origin of the interpolated tales; but, in view of the strong presumption afforded by internal evidence that they are of modern composition and form no part of the authentic text, it can hardly be expected, where the result and the value of that result are alike so doubtful, that any competent person will be found to undertake so heavy a task, except as incidental to some more general enquiry. The only one of the eleven, which seems to me to bear any trace of possible connection with the Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night, is Aladdin, and it may be that an examination of the MS. copies of the original work within my reach will yet enable me to trace the origin of this favourite story.

Having at his command the earlier portion only of the collection, Galland was in some measure compelled to invent a denouement, in which he represents the Sultan as pardoning Sheherazade, in consideration of the pleasure her story-telling talents had afforded him. If we turn to the authentic text, we find a totally different version. It appears that Sheherazade had (somewhat irreconcilably) during the progress of the story-telling (extending over nearly three years) borne the Sultan three male children; and in concluding the story of the thousand and first night, she presents these latter to him, begging him to spare her life and not leave her infants motherless. To this he consents in the most gracious fashion, telling her that he had, before their birth, resolved to spare her, in consideration of the great qualities of virtue, wisdom and nobility of mind he had discovered in

her (an assertion, by the way, completely borne out by the record of Night cxlviii, (204) in which he is represented as informing Sheherazade that she has by her wise saws and moral instances put him out of conceit with his kingdom and made him repent of having killed so many women and girls), and concludes by bestowing high honours on her father the Vizier, for having given him a wife of such worth and intelligence, and ordering the city to be decorated and general rejoicings to be celebrated. A rather amusing trait in this conclusion is the emphasis with which the author insists upon the gratifying fact that the whole cost of the rejoicings was defrayed from the royal treasury, and that not a penny came out of the pockets of the Sultan's subjects; no doubt a sufficiently remarkable exception to the practice of Oriental despots like his hero Haroun er Reshid, who was generally careful to make some unfortunate or other provide the money which he lavished upon his favourites or flung away on the caprices, sometimes laudable, but more often extravagant and senseless, that have won him his most ill-deserved reputation.

It is much to be regretted that the French translator, in accordance with the literary licence of an age in which the principles of the art of translation were perhaps less generally understood than at any known literary epoch, should have thought himself entitled to deal with the original text in a manner which in the present day, more strict upon the question of fidelity and local colouring, would certainly have been visited with the severest reprobation. Both in abridgment and amplification of the original, his sins of omission and commission are innumerable; and he permits himself not unfrequently the most inexplicable and apparently wilful perversions, as in the story of the Merchant and the Genie, where he makes the former throw away the *shell*, instead of the stone, of the date (which of course has no shell), and in that of Bedreddin Hassan, where he substitutes a cream-tart for the true corpus delicti, a mess of pomegranate-seed (a dish repeatedly mentioned in the Nights), and represents the hero as going to bed in his trousers, going out of his way solemnly to assure us, in a special footnote, that the Eastern nations invariably sleep in those garments, although it is distinctly stated in the text that Bedreddin, before getting into bed, took off his trousers, wrapped up in them the purse of a thousand dinars he had received of the Jew and placed them under the pillow of the couch, retaining only one garment, a shirt of fine silk. These are a fair specimen of the many inexcusable alterations he permits himself, and in addition to this he did not scruple to correct and adorn what doubtless seemed to him the frequently repulsive artlessness

and crude simplicity of the original, expanding, abridging, amplifying and substituting in the most wholesale and uncompromising manner. To give only one example, where I might cite many, of the liberties he allowed himself in this kind, there is perhaps no passage in the old version more generally admired than the description of Egypt contained in the story of the Jewish Physician. I quote the passage as it stands in the old translation of Galland's version, edited [\(205\)](#) by Scott:

"My father joined in opinion with those of his brothers who had spoken in favour of Egypt; which filled me with joy. Say what you will, said he, the man that has not seen Egypt has not seen the greatest rarity in the world. All the land there is golden; I mean, it is so fertile, that it enriches its inhabitants. All the women of that country charm you by their beauty and their agreeable carriage. If you speak of the Nile, where is there a more wonderful river? What water was ever lighter or more delicious? The very slime it carries along, in its overflowing, fattens the fields, which produce a thousand times more than other countries that are cultivated with the greatest labour. Observe what a poet said of the Egyptians, when he was obliged to depart from Egypt: 'Your Nile loads you with blessings every day; it is for you only that it runs from such a distance. Alas! in removing from you, my tears will flow as abundantly as its waters; you are to continue in the enjoyment of its sweetness, while I am condemned to deprive myself of them against my will.' If you look, added my father, towards the island that is formed by the two greatest branches of the Nile, what variety of verdure | What enamel of all sorts of flowers | What a prodigious number of cities, villages, canals, and a thousand other agreeable objects! If you turn your eyes on the other side, up towards Ethiopia, how many other subjects of admiration | I cannot compare the verdure of so many plains, watered by the different canals of the island, better than to brilliant emeralds set in silver. Is not Grand Cairo the largest, the most populous, and the richest city in the world? What a number of magnificent edifices, both public and private! If you view the pyramids, you will be filled with astonishment at the sight of the masses of stone of an enormous thickness, which rear their heads to the skies! You will be obliged to confess, that the Pharaohs, who employed such riches, and so many men in building them, must have surpassed in magnificence and invention all the monarchs who have appeared since, not only in Egypt, but in all the world, for having left monuments so worthy of their memory: monuments so ancient, that the learned cannot agree upon the date of their erection; yet such as will last to the end of time. I

pass over in silence the maritime cities of the kingdom of Egypt, such as Damietta, Rosetta, and Alexandria, where nations come for various sorts of grain, cloth, and an infinite number of commodities calculated for accommodation and delight. I speak of what I know; for I spent some years there in my youth, which I shall always reckon the most agreeable part of my life."

The reader, who is not acquainted with the original Arabic, will doubtless be surprised to hear that this eloquent passage is almost entirely due to the fluent pen of the French translator. Here is the plain and unadorned foundation upon which he reared so extensive an edifice of imaginative description. I translate from the Breslau text, which appears, due allowance being made for errors of transcription, etc, to be almost identical with that of Galland's MS. and in which I have corrected several mistakes, clerical or typographical. The version of the Macnaghten and Boulac Editions is (as will be seen by reference to Vol. I. pp. 260-1) yet more concise and to my mind more effective.

"Quoth my father, 'Who hath not seen Cairo hath not seen the world: its dust is gold and its women puppets; [\(206\)](#) its Nile is a wonder, its waters light and sweet and its mud a commodity and a medicine, as saith of it one in verse, "The waxing of your Nile profiteth you to-day, And to you alone it cometh with profit. [\(207\)](#) The Nile is nought but my tears after [separation from] you: Yours is fair fortune and none is forlorn but I." And if your eyes saw its earth and the adornment thereof with flowers and the embroidery of it with all manner blossoms and the island[s] of the Nile and how much is therein of wide [\(208\)](#) prospect, and if ye turned the sight to the Birket el Hebes, [\(209\)](#) your eyes would not revert free from astonishment nor would ye see [a match] for that goodly prospect, and indeed the arms of the Nile encompass [\(210\)](#) its verdure, as it were chrysolites set in filagrees of silver. [\(211\)](#) And what is there to compare with the Observatory [\(212\)](#) and its beauties, whereof saith the beholder, whenas he draweth near and looketh, "Verily this comprehendeth all manner goodness!" And if thou speak of the Night of the Waxing [of the Nile], [\(213\)](#) give the bow, take it [\(214\)](#) and distribute the water to its channels; and if thou sawest the Garden [\(215\)](#) in the evenings and the shadow sloping over it, thou wouldst behold a marvel and wouldst be cheered by the like thereof, and wert thou by the river-side of Cairo, [\(216\)](#) when

the sun is going down and the river dons hauberk and coat of mail ⁽²¹⁷⁾ to its vestments, its gentle breeze would quicken thee and its bland and copious shade."

Again, it cannot be denied that, either out of a mistaken deference to the literary tastes and prejudices of his age or from a want of sufficient acquaintance with Oriental manners and literature (a somewhat improbable defect in the case of one who was a well-known scholar and had made three voyages to the Levant), M. Galland to a certain extent failed in producing a fair transcript of the original, so far as the exact detail of the manners and customs of the people whose life it describes is concerned, as will be evident (to give one instance out of many) from the way in which he makes the Jewish physician, in the story above quoted, express surprise at the presentation to him by the young man of Mosul of his left hand, not for the true reason, as stated in the original, *i.e.* the want of good breeding evinced in offering the *left* hand (which, being used for certain ablutions, is considered among Mohammedans unclean or unworthy), but because "This, thinks I, is a gross piece of ignorance that he does not know that people present their right hand and not their left to a physician."

Nevertheless, in spite of the defects I have cited and numerous others of various kinds, it cannot but be evident to the impartial reader, who does not look at Oriental literature solely from the narrow scholastic point of view, that in M. Galland's translation, fragmentary as it is, he is in presence of a monumental literary work and one that is destined to live from its intrinsic artistic value, whatever the future may bring forth in the way of more perfect and more conscientious reproduction of the original it professed to represent. Numerous as are the mistakes and inaccuracies, wilful and involuntary, that deface it, there lives in it, if not the letter, emphatically the true spirit of Oriental romance, as seen by European observers through the intervening media of distance and difference; and the translator's charming style, the fine flower of the literary manner of the eighteenth century, partaking at once of Voltaire and Diderot, of Manon Lescaut and Les Bijoux Indiscrets, uniting in itself simplicity and boldness, strength and grace, equally capable of expressing naïveté without vulgarity and of rising to the pathetic and the majestic without undue emphasis, atones for many an error and covers, with the seduction of its bright and perfect movement, many an omission and many an audacious distortion of fact and intention. Indeed, it seems to me that this first effort, imperfect as it was, to transplant into European gardens

the magic flowers of Oriental imagination, can never entirely be superseded and that other workers in the same field can only hope to supplement and not to efface it. The value of Galland's achievement was at once recognised by the public, notwithstanding the obligato sneers of his brother savants and the doubts cast by critics and men of letters upon the authenticity of the work, and his book was almost immediately translated into most European languages. Nine years after the first publication of the French version, we find the fourth English edition already reached; and since then its popularity has continued to increase, until it has become one of the few standard works dear to all, young and old, and whose editions, becoming year by year more numerous, can only be numbered by hundreds, if not by thousands.

Considering the immense vogue thus obtained by this first imperfect version and the interest it has naturally excited in the original work, it is a curious and somewhat inexplicable fact that, during the lapse of nearly two centuries, so little should have been discovered concerning the origin and history of the collection whose outlines are so well known to all. It has never yet even been ascertained who was its author or compiler, nor has the date to which its composition may be referred been fixed with any degree of certitude. The origin of the work has, indeed, been the subject of much surmise and research, although to no great result; and the first half of the present century witnessed an animated and somewhat acrimonious discussion upon the subject between the two greatest Orientalists of France and Germany. From the first it had been a favourite theory, founded chiefly on the prevalence of Persian names among the personages of the Introduction, that the Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night was merely a translation into Arabic of a work supposed to have been originally written in ancient Persian or Pehlevi, and this theory Baron von Hammer-Purgstall adopted and improved, bringing forward in support arguments of considerable weight and plausibility, founded upon passages in the works of Arabic and Persian authors of repute, such as the magnum opus of the celebrated Baghdadi geographer and historian, Ali Aboulhusn el Mesoudi, the *Murouj edh dheheb* or Golden Meadows, published at Bassora in the middle of the tenth century, and the great Arabic compendium, the *Fihrist* of Aboulferej Abou Ishac en Nedim, about forty years later. In the work above mentioned, Mesoudi states, in a passage that is a mainstay of Von Hammer's theory, that there existed in his time a book of Persian stories, called *Hezar Efsan* or The Thousand Romances, being the history of an Indian King, his Vizier, the Vizier's

daughter Shirzad and her nurse or duenna Dunyazad, and adds that the book in question had been translated into Arabic and was called in that language The Thousand Tales or (more commonly) The Thousand Nights. He also mentions, as similar Persian or Indian collections, the story of Jelkand (Jelyaad) and Shimas, or the Indian King and his Ten Viziers, and Sindibad, and allows us to suppose that the Hezar Efsan was translated into Arabic by order of El Mensour (grandfather of Er Reshid and second Khalif of the Abbaside dynasty), who reigned from A.D. 754 to A.D. 775. It would appear also, from a preface to the great epic poem of Persia, the Shah nameh of Firdausi, and from other sources, that the original authorship of the Hezar Efsan was attributed to a Persian litterateur in the service of one of the early sovereigns of Persia, for whom he composed it, a semimythical personage by name Queen Humai, daughter of Ardeshir Behman (Artaxerxes Longimanus, B.C 465-425) and mother of Darab (Darius) II. (B.C 423) and that the prose original was in the eleventh century versified (or perhaps only rearranged) by a certain Rasti, court poet to the Ghaznevide Sultan Mehmoud of Persia. The passage from the Fihrist which Von Hammer afterwards brought forward, in confirmation of his citation from Mesoudi, is (briedy) to the following effect. "The first who composed tales and made books of them were the ancient Persians. The Arabs translated them and the learned took them and embellished them and *composed others like them.* [\(218\)](#) The first book of the kind made was that called Hezar Efsan (or Efsaneh), and the manner thereof was on this wise. One of the kings of the Persians was wont, whenas he took a woman to wife and had lain one night with her, to put her to death on the morrow. Now he married a girl endowed with wit and knowledge, by name Shehrzad, [\(219\)](#) and she fell to telling him tales and used to join the story, at the end of the night, with what should induce the king to spare her alive and question her next night of the ending thereof, till a thousand nights had passed over her. Meanwhile he lay with her, till he was vouchsafed a child by her, when she discovered to him the device she had practiced upon him. Her wit pleased him and he inclined to her and spared her life. And the king had a duenna named Dinarzad (or Dunyazad) who was of accord with her concerning this. The book comprises a thousand nights, but less than two hundred stories, for a story is often told in a number of nights."

These passages suffice to establish, beyond reasonable doubt, the fact that the first idea of the work was taken

from the Hezar Efsan, to which it owes the scheme of the introduction and external thread of story and the system of nights which serves as a frame for the various stories told by Shehrzad, and it will be noted that the names of the personages of the introduction and the general skeleton of the story appear to have been preserved almost without alteration, standing out in sharp contrast to the rest of the work. Even the number of the stories contained in the Thousand and One Nights in some measure corresponds with Aboulferej's account of the Hezar Efsan, being (if we leave out of the question the numerous incidental tales) less than two hundred in all, and had Hammer-Purgstall contented himself with stating the legitimate consequences of the evidence he adduced, his position would have been unassailable; but, as is not unusual with German scholars, he went to an extravagant length in the deductions he drew from the passages above cited, insisting that the Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night, in its original form, was identical with the Thousand Tales or Nights mentioned by Mesoudi, *i.e.* was a mere translation from the Persian, and that its foundation was no other than the wild and fascinating Persian tales which appear to have been popular in Arabia proper, at the time of Mohammed, and to have, by the seduction of their brilliant and picturesque imagery, become so serious a stumbling-block in the Prophet's way that, not content with having evidently assimilated part of them for his own purposes, he thought it necessary to caution his followers against their dangerous attractions and to exhort them to be satisfied with the delightful tales that God had told them in the Koran. To this original nucleus or foundation afforded by the old Arabic version of the Hezar Efsan, Von Hammer was of opinion that the Arabs added the anecdotes of the Omniade and Abbaside Khalifs, of such frequent occurrence in the collection, as well as certain tales of evidently later origin, and that the work grew by additon after additon till it assumed its present dimensions; that it was finally rearranged and (so to speak) edited by a native of Egypt and that its definitive production in its present form cannot be referred to an earlier period than the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century, since one of the tales mentions the Egyptian Khalif Hakim bi-amrillah, A.D. 1261. [\(220\)](#) Unfortunately both prose and rhymed versions of the Hezar Efsan appear to be irrecoverably lost and we have no traces of them save what may exist in the Thousand and One Nights, wherein it is at least a singular fact that not a single reference to the ancient romantic heroes of Persia (Sam Neriman, Feridoun, Rustem, Zal Zer, Isfendiyar, etc.) nor to such fabulous monsters of Iranian romance as the Simurgh (griffin), Anca (phœnix), etc,

occurs, as would certainly not have been the case, were Von Hammer's theory true. Had the book "Sindibad," mentioned by Mesoudi in the passage cited above, been the well-known Voyages of Sindbad (as erroneously assumed by Von Hammer), its existence in Persian would have been a powerful argument in support of his theory. But this is not the case. The book is mentioned by Mesoudi as "Sindibad" only, and is stated to be similar to the story of the Indian King and his Ten Viziers, to which nothing can be more unlike than the Voyages of Sindbad, a work purely Arab in form, although doubtless containing many incidents derived from Greek, Indian, Persian and perhaps even European sources, and it has now been definitely shown that the work referred to was one which is known in perhaps more numerous versions than any other popular fiction, *i.e.* "The Story of a King, his Seven Viziers, his Son and his Favourite," written by one Sindibad, ⁽²²¹⁾ said to have been chief of the Brahmans under Korech, third King of Northern India after Porus, the celebrated adversary of Alexander the Great.

Von Hammer's theory, as soon as advanced, was disputed by the still greater French Orientalist, Silvestre de Sacy, who (whilst allowing the possibility and even probability of the original Arabic compiler having used a slight thread of connecting narrative adapted from the external scheme of the Hezar Efsan, on which to string the immense succession of fictions provided by himself and his successors) definitely establishes the fact that no trace whatever exists of any considerable body of præ-Mohammedan or non-Arabic fiction in the extant texts of the Thousand and One Nights. He points out that the language of the collection is in no respect classical, containing many words in common and modern (as opposed to literary) use, that it is generally of a character to be referred to the decadence of Arabic literature and that all the tales, even when dealing with events supposed to have occurred and persons to have dwelt in Persia, India and other non-Arabic countries and in præ-Mohammedan epochs, invariably, with the naïvest anachronism, confine themselves to depicting the inhabitants, manners and customs of such cities as Baghdad and Cairo and are throughout impregnated with the strongest and most zealous spirit of Mohammedanism, and especially that the men and manners described are almost exclusively those of the epoch of the Abbaside Khalifs. Galland himself, in his preface, attributes the work to an unknown Arabic author; and the Sheikh Ahmed Shirwani, editor of the unfinished Calcutta edition of 1814-18, states in his introduction his belief that the author was a Syrian Arab, who wrote in a simple

conversational style, which was not of the purest. Von Hammer himself allows that the first complete version could not have been finished till the beginning of the eleventh century, and it therefore could not have been known either to Mesoudi or the author of the Fihrist. Relying upon these and other arguments of equal weight, M. de Sacy concludes that the book was originally written in Syria, about five centuries ago, in the vulgar Arabic tongue; that it was left unfinished by the author or (more probably) authors, who had possibly adopted the framework of exterior or connecting narrative suggested by the Hezar Efsan in the same manner as the scheme of the old Indian work of "Sindibad," already mentioned, was adopted by the authors of "The Seven Wise Masters," "Dolopathos," "Syntipas," etc., etc., as an excuse for the composition of works to all practical intent completely original; that the work was finished by other hands, probably copyists, who completed it by adding stories of foreign origin, such as Jelyaad and Shimas and the Malice of Women; that several persons undertook the task in company, each supplying tales of his own composition or transcription; and finally, in view of the general resemblance of the style to the modern Egyptian dialect and to the prevalence throughout of descriptions of modern Egyptian manners, that the work received its final revision at the hands of some Egyptian or Egyptians of the fifteenth century, the absence of any mention of firearms, tobacco and coffee forbidding to ascribe it to any more recent period. ⁽²²²⁾ M. de Sacy's opinion has now, I believe, been generally adopted by the Oriental scholars of Europe. The late eminent English Orientalist, Mr. Lane, whose death has been so grievous a loss to Arabic lexicography, at first seemed inclined to side with Von Hammer, but afterwards with certain reservations adopted De Sacy's views and declared that the Thousand and One Nights can only be said to be borrowed from the Hezar Efsan, in the same sense as that in which the Æneid is said to be borrowed from the Odyssey, suggesting (with great probability) that the actual name, "The Thousand and One Nights," was deliberately adopted, partly for the purpose of differentiating the work from the Arabic translation of the Hezar Efsan, which, as we learn from Mesoudi, was known as 'The Thousand Tales or Nights,' and partly to avoid the use of even numbers, always considered unlucky by the Arabs, or perhaps to constitute a specially auspicious title by the addition of the primary number one to the cabalistic number 1000.

The principal points upon which Mr. Lane differed from De Sacy were (1) the question whether the original work was the composition of one or of several persons, (2) the date and (3) the locale of the composition itself

and of the definitive compilation or redaction to which it is generally agreed that it owes its present form. Mr. Lane was of opinion that the whole work was the composition of one person, who had re-written the old tales comprised in the collection and completed it by the addition of new stories composed or arranged by himself for the purpose. I believe I am correct in stating that Mr. Lane stood alone in holding this opinion and for my own part, I cannot understand how any one can peruse the Arabic text of the work and fail to come to the conclusion that we are in presence, not of the homogeneous work of a single writer, but of a collection of separate stories, written in widely differing styles and bearing manifest signs of having been composed by many different authors at various times and under various circumstances. The difference of the language employed in the various parts of the collection, some tales or sets of tales, for instance, abounding in Persian, Turkish and other foreign or provincial words, whilst others are comparatively free from them, and the variety of the formulas and style, apparent to the observant reader, would alone, it seems to me, suffice to negative Mr. Lane's theory, to say nothing of the almost equally material fact that the various extant copies, both MS. and printed, of the work differ widely both in the outline and the detail of their contents. Again, Mr. Lane held that the composition of the work, in its earliest complete form, must be referred to a much later date than that attributed to it by De Sacy, to wit, the middle of the sixteenth century, and upon this point much is to be said. De Sacy abstained from setting out in detail his reasons for believing the work to have been composed in the fourteenth century, contenting himself with adducing, as his principal argument, the nature of the language or dialect in which it appears to be mainly written and certain peculiarities of diction which characterize the general style; but, as this (though possibly sufficient evidence in the case of a limited and thoroughly sifted subject such as Greek or Roman literature) can hardly be held to suffice, in the absence of corroborative proof, when the question in dispute ranges over so wide an area as the boundless and comparatively unexplored fields of Oriental philology, it may be well, by way of endeavouring, in some measure, to ascertain the reasons unparticularized or but lightly hinted at by the great French scholar and without assuming definitely to pronounce upon the matter, to touch upon the principal points for and against his theory which have been raised by modern scholars or have occurred to myself in the course of my labours upon the foregoing translation.

As a first step towards any enquiry into the age and land of origin of the Thousand and One Nights, it is evident

that we must endeavour to ascertain of what the original nucleus or primitive body of tales, upon which the complete work was built by aggregation and which, for the sake of convenience, I shall hereafter call "the original work," consisted; and to this end, our manifest course is to enquire which of the tales comprised in the complete collection are common to every copy known. Proceeding thus, we find that the following exist (with such unimportant differences only of general style and detail as warrant us in treating them as copies from one common original, owing their variations to the differing ages and nationalities of their respective transcribers), in the four printed editions, *i.e.* the two of Calcutta (1814-18 and 1839-42), that of Boulac and that of Breslau and (according to Caussin de Perceval, Gauttier, Habicht, Scott, Hammer-Purgstall, De Sacy and other scholars) in at least a dozen MS. copies, complete or fragmentary, of the work, including that used by Galland. (In these copies, both printed and MS., the other portions of the collection differ widely, both in the number and nature of the tales contained in each and in the detail of the stories common to all, as will appear from a comparison of (*e.g.*) the Boulac Edition with that of Breslau and the Wortley-Montague MS. now in the Bodleian Library.)

1. Introduction (Story of King Shehriyar and his brother) and the incidental story (The Ox and the Ass).
2. The Merchant and the Genie and the three incidental stories.
3. The Fisherman and the Genie and the four incidental stories.
4. The Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad and the six incidental stories.
5. The Three Apples.
6. Bedreddin Hassan.
7. The Hunchback and the eleven incidental stories.
8. Nouredin and Enis el Jelis.
9. Ali ben Bekkar and Shemsennehar.

These form about an eighth part of the whole collection, and if we add the stories of Ghanim ben Eyoub, Kemerez-zeman and Budour, The Enchanted Horse and Julnar, which occur, in substantially identical form, in all the editions and MSS. mentioned above, except the unfinished Calcutta edition of 1814-18 (from which, however, we see no reason to suppose that they would have been excluded, had the publication been

completed), and we get what is evidently the nucleus or original of the work, comprising (roughly) a fifth part of the whole. The stories contained in this portion, though bearing evident traces of the work of different authors, offer such general similarity in style and diction as to warrant us in supposing them to have been composed or arranged and adapted to the framework of the external fable by several persons of the same nationality acting in concert and at one and the same time. It is practically useless to enquire what portion of this original is a survival of the Hezar Efsan, as it is at once evident that such features of the old Pehlevi work as might possibly have been borrowed by the authors of the Thousand and One Nights must have been so disfigured by the radical process of adaptation and remodeling to which they appear to have subjected all foreign material employed by them, as to defy identification: even in the Introduction, which is certainly (with the exception, perhaps, of the Enchanted Horse⁽²²³⁾) the oldest portion of the original, the remains of the old Persian cadre are evidently confined to the names of the principal personages (Shehriyar, Shahzeman, Shehrzad or Shirzad, Duniyazad or Dinarzad), the period (the reign of a king of the Benou Sasan or Sassanians⁽²²⁴⁾), the localities (the islands, *i.e.* peninsulas, of India and China and the kingdom of Samarcand) and of the merest thread of incident whereon to string a fable wholly Muslim in colour and circumstance. The same remarks apply to the first story, that of the Merchant and the Genie, which is probably contemporary (or nearly so) with the Introduction, but contains no trace of præ-Mohammedan colour.

In enquiring into the age of this nucleus or original of the work, we are at once confronted by two dates, between which we must fix the period of its composition. In the Tailor's Story, ⁽²²⁵⁾ a speech of the meddlesome barber identifies the day of his adventure with the unfortunate young man of Baghdad as the 10th of the month Sefer, A.H. 653 (*i.e.* the 25th March, A.D. 1255), that is to say, in the 14th year of the reign of El Mustazim Billah, the last Khalif of the house of Abbas, and only three years before the storm of Baghdad by Hulagou and the extinction of the Khalifate. This date is that given by three texts, *i.e.* those of Calcutta (1839-42) and Breslau and Galland's MS., which agree in making the barber, by way of confirmation, date his own story ⁽²²⁶⁾ in the reign of the penultimate Khalif of the Abbaside dynasty, El Mustansir Billah (father of El Mustazim), A.H. 623-640 (A.D. 1225-1242), and state that, after his expulsion from Baghdad by the latter, he did not return

till he heard he was dead and another Khalif (*i.e.* El Mustazim) come to the throne. The Calcutta Edition of 1814-18 is silent as to both date and reign, whilst the Boulac Edition gives the former as A.H. 763 (A.D. 1362), a time when both Baghdad and Bassora, the two cities in which the scene of the tale is laid, were in possession of the successors of Genghiz Khan, and makes the latter the (six months') reign of the parricide El Muntansir Billah, A.H. 247-8 (A.D. 861-2). The first is an evident error, as the barber is described in the sequel of the Tailor's Story as an old man past his ninetieth year and he speaks of himself in his own story as already an old man at the time of his adventure with the Khalif in question; so that, even if we suppose him to have been then sixty years old, this would only bring us back (after making some necessary allowance for the space which must have elapsed between the flight of the lame youth from Baghdad and his encounter with his persecutor at Bassora⁽²²⁷⁾) to (say) the year of the Hegira 743 (A.D. 1343), at earliest, or nearly a hundred years after the fall of the Khalifate. The second date is also a manifest error, as, putting aside the fact that the time covered by the story of the barber must be estimated at (at least) some years, the Khalif who banished the barber is described by the latter as a prince "who loved the poor and needy and companied with the learned and the pious," a description which, though exactly tallying with the character of the good and wise El Mustansir, as given by Arab historians, is in no way applicable to the melancholy madman El Muntansir.⁽²²⁸⁾ It may, therefore, be safely assumed that the date (A.D. 1255) given by Galland's MS. and by the Breslau and Macnaghten Editions is the correct one. For the reasons above stated, the Hunchback's adventure can hardly be dated earlier than ten years later, *i.e.* A.D. 1265, or seven years after the fall of Baghdad,⁽²²⁹⁾ and in view of the fact (inexplicable, if we suppose the story to have been written at or soon after this date) of the absence of any reference to the terrible event of the sack of the capital by the Tartars and of the occupation, in immediate succession, of Bassora and the other towns of Irak Arabi and Mesopotamia, events which must for a time, at least, have agitated the whole Muslim world, we may fairly suppose some half century or more to have intervened before the composition of the story. This brings us to the second decade of the fourteenth century as the earliest period at which the Hunchback's story, and therefore the rest of the original part of the work, (of which it may be taken as a fair specimen,) could have existed in its present form, and Galland's MS., which is stated by a note appended thereto to have been read by a Christian scribe of Tripoli or Syria (who wishes long life to its

possessor), ⁽²³⁰⁾ in the year 1548, supplies us with the second date above mentioned, *i.e.* that of the latest period at which it could have been written or rearranged. I have said that I consider the story of the Hunchback fairly representative of the original work, so far as age is concerned, and it would not be difficult approximately to prove, from internal evidence, that the other stories are practically contemporary with it. For instance, the introduction, in the Story of the Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad, of the Three Calenders (*Carendeliyeh*), an order of religious mendicants, so called after their founder, the Sheikh Carendel, ⁽²³¹⁾ not instituted (or at least not known under that name) until the early part of the thirteenth century, and the absence of any explanation of the name (such as would probably have been volunteered by the story-teller, had the order been, at the date of writing, of recent institution), assign the composition of this story to the same date at earliest as that of the Hunchback, as does also the mention in the same tale of Sultani peaches, *i.e.* peaches from Sultaniyeh in Persian Irak, a town not founded till the middle of the thirteenth century; and in Bedreddin Hassan the mention of a cannon ⁽²³²⁾ (*midfaa*), by way of metaphor, warrants us in drawing a like conclusion as to the age of this latter story. On the other hand, the absence from the stories of the original work of all mention of coffee (which, according to Abdulcadir el Ansari, was first drunk in Arabia early in the fifteenth century and the use of which spread all over the East within the next hundred years ⁽²³³⁾) would prove that it must have been composed before A.D. 1500, at latest. Again (except in the story of Bedreddin Hassan, where, as before mentioned, the passage in question is not improbably apocryphal), firearms are nowhere named or alluded to in the original work, although cannon are several times referred to in the later stories of the collection. Cannon were first used in Europe at the battle of Crecy in 1346, but the researches of modern scholars have proved that their use was known to the Arabs nearly a century and a half earlier and was perhaps learnt from them by the Crusaders. ⁽²³⁴⁾ Gunpowder is believed to have been known to the Chinese (and probably also to the Indians) from time immemorial, though they did not employ it for warlike purposes, except by way of mines and war-rockets or fusees, which latter the Arabs (who under the early Khalifs were in constant communication with both China and India ⁽²³⁵⁾) appear to have early adopted from them and (in all probability) used at the destructive sieges of Mecca in the years A.D. 683 and 691-2. ⁽²³⁶⁾ The Greek fire, mentioned by Joinville and

other Christian historians of the Crusades and described as exploding in mid-air with a terrible noise, may be reasonably supposed to have been rather some war-rocket of this kind than the (incendiary) composition of naphtha, etc., known by the name. According to Arab chroniclers, bombards or wooden cannon were used at the siege of a town in Africa as early as A.D. 1205, and Ibn Khaldoun and other historians testify that the use of firearms became general among the Moors of Northern Africa and Spain by the end of the 13th century. The "perfervidum ingenium" of the subtle and keen-witted Arab, quickened into abnormal productivity by the religious and political system of Islam, so well suited to the character of the race, carried him, as regarded the arts and sciences, far in advance of his European contemporaries, and if the inhabitants of the metropolitan provinces⁽²³⁷⁾ of the Khalifate did not perhaps altogether keep pace, in re militart, at least with their more adventurous Spanish and African brethren, there can be little doubt that they became acquainted with the use of firearms long before it was known in Europe; but, even if we suppose the introduction of the new weapons to have been simultaneous in the two continents, the absence of all authentic mention of them would limit the most recent date to which it is possible to ascribe the definitive composition of the original work to the middle of the fourteenth century.

Among other arguments that have been put forward in support of the theory referring the composition of the original to a later date, it has been conjectured that the colours of the fish in the story of the Enchanted Youth were suggested by the yellow, blue and red turbans worn by the Jews, Christians and Samaritans of Egypt, in obedience to an edict, issued early in the fourteenth century, of the Memloun Sultan Mohammed ibn Kelaoun and that the story-teller appropriated the colour red to the fish into which the Magian inhabitants of the City of the Black Islands had been transformed, because the Samaritan religion (as described by an Arab writer) was a mixture of Judaism and Magism; but the theorist forgot that the enforced wearing of distinctive colours by the non-Muslim subjects of the Mohammedan empire dates from the taking of Jerusalem in A.D. 636 by the Khalif Omar ben el Khettab, whose ordinance nearly two centuries later Haroun er Reshid revived, commanding the Jews to wear a yellow, the Christians a blue and the Magians a black galloon on their surcoats, and the red colour given by the story-teller to the fishy representatives of the latter sect was probably suggested by that of the fire worshipped by them, the colour white being that of the Ommyade dynasty and having been from time

immemorial appropriated to the true-believer. It has also been argued that the occurrence in Bedreddin Hassan of the word *sahib* (lit. friend or comrade, but colloquially equivalent to our "Sir"), as applied to the Vizier Shemseddin, and the use of the word *midfaa* (cannon), said not to have been employed in that sense in Egypt until the year 1383, prove this tale to have been composed after the end of the fourteenth century, at which time the aforesaid title is asserted to have been first applied to viziers; but both these objections are also founded upon error, as it appears from the historians Mirkhond and Ibn el Athir that the title *Sahib* was given to Ismail ibn Ebbad, the great and good Vizier of the Buyide Prince Fekhreddauleh, who died A.D. 995, and the word *midfaa*, used in the contested sense, is found in a recipe for the preparation of gunpowder given by an Arabic MS. of the thirteenth century (discovered by M. Reinaud in the Royal Library of St. Petersburg), in which the text is explained and confirmed by an illustration showing the gunner firing a ball from the *midfaa* or hand-cannon, by means of a flame applied to the touch-hole. Another objection is founded upon the anachronism alleged to be committed in most of the stories of the original in the application of the title of Sultan, which is stated not to have come into use as applied to sovereign princes until after the twelfth century; but this argument in its turn appears to be groundless, as the title was first assumed⁽²³⁸⁾ by the Ghaznevide prince Mehmoud ben Sebektigin (as also by a Buyide prince) early in the eleventh century, and repeated instances of this use of the word Sultan occur in the ancient Arab historians, *e.g.* Et Teberi, who lived in the ninth century and who not unfrequently applies the title (which properly belongs to a viceroy or sovereign prince invested with the *temporal* power only, to the exclusion of the spiritual) to the various Khalifs, as also does another ancient writer, cited by Ibn Khellikan. Yet another argument, put forward as tending to prove that the collection dates from the end of the fifteenth century at earliest, is the fact that the women figuring in the stories, even those of high rank and repute, are frequently represented as uncovering their faces before strange men and otherwise behaving with more licence and immodesty than is recorded of Muslim females of an earlier age and that Es Suyouti, a writer who flourished at the period above named, expressly complains of the loose and immodest carriage of the (Egyptian) women of his time. Complaints of this kind, however, are found in earlier historians than Es Suyouti, *e.g.* Ibn el Athir before quoted, who flourished at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries, and who mentions the (to the Muslim Puritan) shameful custom of going

abroad with unveiled faces, that prevailed among the women of Northern Africa (even to those belonging to the royal household), under the rule of the Almoravides, in the early part of the eleventh century. The above are the more cogent of the arguments that have been advanced in support of the theory of the late date of composition of the original work: others are founded mainly upon doubtful particularities of manners and customs and discrepancies of reckoning and description (almost certainly attributable to the carelessness or ignorance of transcribers or of the persons from whose dictation they wrote), and seem to me to carry little weight, especially when allowance is made for the close similarity (conceded by the advocates of the theory in question) of the manners and customs of the metropolitan countries of the Muslim empire (and particularly of Irak Arabi, under the Khalifs of Baghdad), to those of Cairo, under the fainéant princes of the second Abbaside dynasty, and the well-known tendency of successive copyists gradually to corrupt a work handed down in MS. by the introduction, conscious or unconscious, of names and details belonging to the language, manners and customs of their own time; ⁽²³⁹⁾ suffice it to say that it seems to me, in the highest degree, improbable that the stories should (as is contended) have been composed by an Egyptian of the sixteenth century, (*i.e.* after the Turkish conquest in 1517), and that yet no mention, direct or indirect, should be found in them of any of the Memloup Sultans or fainéant Khalifs or indeed of any sovereign of Egypt (Khalif or Sultan) later than the Eyoubite Saladin at the end of the twelfth century.

As for the contrary theory of the remote origin of the work, it is, I think, now pretty generally allowed that De Sacy satisfactorily disposed of Von Hammer's arguments; but, since the date of the controversy, fresh evidence has been adduced in its support. This consists of a passage from the great work of the Arab historian of Spain, Aboulabbas Ahmed ben Mohammed el Meccari, entitled "Windwafts of Perfume from the branches of Andalusia (Spain) the Blooming" (A.D. 1628-9), to the following effect. I translate directly from the Arabic text as edited by the greatest (since De Sacy) of modern Arabic scholars, the late M. Dozy.

"Ibn Saïd (may God have mercy on him!) sets forth in his book El Muhella bi-s-shaar, ⁽²⁴⁰⁾ quoting from El Curtubi, the story of the building of the Houdej ⁽²⁴¹⁾ in the Garden ⁽²⁴²⁾ of Cairo, the which was of the magnificent pleasaunces of the Fatimite Khalifs, the rare of ordinance and surpassing, to wit, that the Khalif El

Aamir bi-ahkham-illah let build it for a Bedouin woman, the love of whom had gotten the mastery of him, in the neighbourhood of the Chosen Garden⁽²⁴³⁾ and used to resort often thereto and was slain, as he went thither; and it ceased not to be a pleasuring-place for the Khalifs after him. The folk abound in stories of the Bedouin maid and Ibn Meyyah of the sons of her uncle⁽²⁴⁴⁾ and what hangs thereby of the mention of El Aamir, so that the tales told of them on this account became like unto the story of El Bettal⁽²⁴⁵⁾ and the Thousand Nights and One Night and what resembleth them."

Aboulhusn Ali Ibn Saïd ben Mousa el Ghernati,⁽²⁴⁶⁾ a celebrated Spanish historian, poet and (especially) topographer, was born at Ghernateh (Granada) A.D. 1218 and died at Tunis A.D. 1286. He had travelled in Egypt and lived at Cairo in the middle of the thirteenth century, and the above passage, which occurs in a description of the latter city, is quoted by El Meccari from a work of his which is not now extant,⁽²⁴⁷⁾ so that it is impossible to verify the citation. The surname El Curtubi⁽²⁴⁸⁾ was common to several Spanish-Arabic authors, but the one from whom Ibn Saïd in his turn quotes is apparently Abou Jaafer ibn Abdulhecc el Khezraji,⁽²⁴⁹⁾ author of a history of the Khalifs. He flourished in the middle of the twelfth century, but no work of his is, to the best of my knowledge, extant for reference. On the strength of this passage, it is argued that the collection existed, as a well-known work, in the middle of the twelfth century, and this argument is supported by the statement that the same quotation (from Ibn Saïd) occurs in the Khitet of El Mecrizi, the Egyptian historian and topographer, who died A.D. 1444 ; but the evidence adduced is deprived of much (if not all) of its value by the fact that the passage in the Khitet relates (as I find by reference to a MS. copy of that work in the British Museum) to the Thousand Nights, *not* the Thousand and One Nights. The following is a translation of the passage in question:

"The Khalif El Aamir bi-ahkam-illah set apart, in the neighbourhood of the Chosen Garden of the island Er Rauzeh, a place for his beloved the Bedouin maid [Aaliyeh⁽²⁵⁰⁾], which he named El Houdej. Quoth Ibn Saïd, in the book El Muhella bi-l-ashar,⁽²⁵¹⁾ from the History of El Curtubi, concerning the traditions of the folk of the story of the Bedouin maid and Ibn Menah [Meyyah⁽²⁵²⁾] of the sons of her uncle and what hangs thereby of

the mention of the Khalif El Aamir bi-ahkam-illah, so that their traditions [or tales] upon the garden became like unto El Bettal and the *Thousand Nights* and what resembleth them."

El Aamir bi-ahkam-illah (A.D. 31101-2g) was the seventh Fatimite Khalif of Egypt, and had El Meczizi mentioned the Thousand Nights and One Night, as he mentions the Thousand Nights, this would have been pretty conclusive proof of the existence of the former collection in the thirteenth, if not in the twelfth century; but, as the passage stands, the work referred to appears to be the lost Arabic version of the lost Hezar Efsan. El Meczizi, who lived but a hundred and fifty years after Ibn Said, is much less likely than El Meccari, whom more than twice that time separated from the age of the Granadan historian, to have erred in citing from the latter's work, and the reasons before stated in support of the theory that the Thousand and One Nights were originally composed in the fourteenth century appear to me to preclude the possibility that the discrepancy in the two passages quoted is owing to an error on the part of the author or copyist of the Khitet and that the work referred to in the latter as the Thousand Nights could have been the extant collection. The fact that Hajji Khelfeh, in his great Bibliographical Dictionary, composed at the end of the seventeenth century, names (and only names) the Thousand Nights and makes no mention of the Thousand and One, which has been adduced as an argument in favour of the probability of the identity of the two works, seems to me rather to tell against the theory, as it is evident, from the note appended to Galland's MS. and from El Meccari's history, that the collection known as the Thousand and One Nights bore that name long before Hajji Khelfeh's time, whilst the latter, with the proverbial contempt of the Oriental (and too often, indeed, of the European) savant for romantic literature, would have been almost certain to discard the comparatively modern Thousand and One Nights as a mere collection of "silly stories" (to quote the words of the author of the Fihrist apropos of the; Hezar Efsan), whilst conceding to the sheer antiquity of the Thousand Nights the barren honour of a bare mention in his learned pages.

The third question, to wit, the nationality of the person or persons to whom the original work is due, appears to me to have been generally confounded by the opponents of De Sacy's theory with that of the supposed reviser or editor of the completed collection, who is pretty generally allowed to have been an Egyptian, as suggested by

the great French Orientalist, and no considerable objection appears to have been raised to the latter's conclusion that the original work was written in Syria; but from internal evidence it seems probable that one or more of its authors belonged to Irak Arabi or Mesopotamia and especially to Mosul, of the peculiar dialect of which place (as well as of Aleppo) the composition, in the opinion of competent judges, bears considerable trace, and the very objections raised, as before stated, to De Sacy's theory of the age of the original, on the ground that it is characterized by the employment of names and titles which were not in use in Egypt until a later period than that assigned by internal evidence to the work, but which appear to have been early employed in the disputed sense in the metropolitan or home provinces of the Khalifate, seem to me to tell strongly in favour of this latter hypothesis.

After its original composition, which (as I have said) I believe De Sacy to have been justified in assigning to the 14th century, the work appears to have been gradually swollen to its present bulk by the addition. at various times and by various hands, of tales and anecdotes of all kinds and drawn from a variety of sources, some having been expressly composed or rewritten for the purpose, whilst others are in whole or in part borrowed or adapted from independent works. Some of these additions, such as The Malice of Women (almost the only survival in which story of the old Book of Sindibad appears to be the framework, the short stories for the introduction of which it serves as an excuse being, with occasional exceptions, purely Arabic in character and bearing signs of a comparatively modern redaction, subject, of course, to the limitation implied in the absence of any mention of firearms or coffee), Jelyaad and Shimas (apparently an old Indian story which has undergone comparatively little alteration) and Seif el Mulouk are proved to have existed in an independent form before the middle of the eleventh century. The Queen of the Serpents is also, in all probability, a very old story of Persian origin, largely altered (especially in the two incidental tales, the Adventures of Beloukiya⁽²⁵³⁾ and the Story of Janshah) by the Arab author or authors in the process of adaptation to Muslim manners and customs, and the History of Gherib and his brother Agib is, to all appearance, a rearrangement of some old Bedouin romance, ⁽²⁵⁴⁾ notwithstanding the mention⁽²⁵⁵⁾ therein of arquebuses, by which word, in deference to lexicographic authority, I have rendered the modern Arabic *bundukiyat*, although it is not improbable that it was inserted by

some modern copyist in the place of *benadic* or *kisiy el benadic*, pellet-bows, as opposed to quarrel-bows (*khetatif*).⁽²⁵⁶⁾ The word *bundukiyeh* (sing. of *bundukiyat*) means literally an implement for throwing pellets (*bunduc*) of clay or lead, and (although I cannot find any example of its use in any sense other than that of "gun") was doubtless originally synonymous with *caus el bunduc* (sing. of *kisiy el benadic*), a stone or pellet bow, as was the earlier name of the hand-gun, *bunduc*, so used metonymically for *caus el bunduc*. The names of the old *armes de jet* were, on the introduction of firearms, transferred to the new weapons, e.g. *midfaa*, a cannon, lit. a pushing implement, hence a spring and (by metonymy) the tube in which the spring worked, a spring-gun, even as the word *arquebuse* itself appears to have been originally applied to the *arbalest* or pellet-bow, *arcubalista*, from which latter word or the Italian arcibugio (bow-hole or tube) it is much more probable that it had its derivation than from the German *haken-büchse* or the Dutch *haekbus*.⁽²⁵⁷⁾ The Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor, though forming part of almost all known copies of the complete collection, are, as I have before observed, an independent work and are so treated by the Editor of the (unfinished) Calcutta edition of 1814-118, who inserts them at the end of his two hundredth (and last) night, dividing them, not into nights, but into seven tales or voyages, as in Galland's MS. Some Oriental scholars are of opinion that this tale is of Persian extraction and describes the voyages (attributed, as is often the case in popular tales, to a single person) of a colony of Persians, who are known to have of old settled on the East Coast of Africa, to Ceylon, Sumatra and other islands of the Indian Sea; but, whatever may have been the primitive derivation of the incidents described in the work known to us as the Voyages of Sindbad, it appears almost certain that it was suggested by and mainly composed of extracts and adaptations from the writings of well-known Arab geographers and cosmographers, such as El Edrisi, El Cazwini and Ibn el Werdi, who flourished respectively in the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries, and it may, therefore, in all likelihood, be attributed to an Arab author of (at earliest) the beginning of the fifteenth century. The History of King Omar ben Ennuman and his sons Sherkan and Zoulmekan, with the exception of the interpolated story of Taj el Mulouk and that (probably Egyptian) of Aziz and Azizeh, may probably be attributed to a native of Syria, where the memories of the Ommiade Khalifs (with anecdotes of whom, to the exclusion of their rivals and successors of the house of Abbas, the story abounds), long tenaciously survived, and appears to have been written before the introduction of firearms, although the

gross anachronisms⁽²⁵⁸⁾ with which it swarms would seem to point to a later date. *Uns el Wujoud* affords internal evidence of Egyptian and comparatively modern origin and is one of the stories that are known to exist in an independent form. The same maybe said of *The Rogueries of Delileh* and the *Adventures of Quicksilver Ali* (practically one and the same tale), in which the constant employment of Egyptian words, such as *kaak* (gimblet-cakes), *khelbous* (buffoon), *mehremeh* (for *mendil*, handkerchief), etc., etc., is especially notable. The mention of the firing of cannon, as a signal or salute, by the Genoese Corsair-captain⁽²⁵⁹⁾ in *Alaeddin Abou esh Shamat* brings the date of this story down to the fifteenth century, whilst the anachronisms (e.g. the making the tomb of the dervish-saint *Abdulgadir el Jinani*, who died in the latter part of the twelfth century, exist at Baghdad in the time of *Haroun er Reshid*), which characterize it, point to its having been composed at a comparatively recent period, when the memories of the time of which it treats had become confused, and the author would appear, from internal evidence, to have been a foreigner to Baghdad, probably an inhabitant of Cairo. *Ardeshir* and *Heyat en Yofous*, as well as its apparent prototype *Taj el Mulouk*, would seem to be a story of Persian origin, composed or remodelled shortly after the date of the original work by an Arab of the metropolitan provinces, and the same remark applies to *Hassan of Bassora*, which is apparently (in part at least) an adaptation of *Janshah*. *Ali Shar* and *Zumurrud* may perhaps also be referred to a like date and origin, but *Taweddud* is probably the work of some Egyptian savant of the *Shafiy* school, who used a conventional cadre of story, with the obligato laying of scene in the court and time of *Er Reshid*, to exhibit his learning, the comparatively advanced views of anatomy, medicine, astronomy and other sciences pointing to a modern origin and the extracts (inter alia) from Coptic almanacks⁽²⁶⁰⁾ demonstrating, beyond reasonable doubt, the Egyptian nationality of the author. *The City of Brass* is in part a transcript or adaptation from *Et Teberi* and other Arabic historians and topographers, and the gross anachronisms which occur in it, (such, for instance, as the making the prae-Islamitic poet *En Nabigheh edh Dhubyani* a contemporary of the Ommiade Khalif *Abdumelik ben Merwan* (A.D. 685-705) and attributing to the same time the discovery of an ancient tablet⁽²⁶¹⁾ deploring the fate of "him who dwelt in *Tenjeh* (*Tangiers*) whilere," i.e. the last Edriside sovereign of Northern Africa, who was, early in the tenth century, dethroned and put to death, with all the members of his family, by the soi-disant *Uehdi*, *Ubeidallah*, founder of the *Fatimite* dynasty), point to its having been composed by a foreigner, probably

a native of Spain or Northern Africa, at a comparatively late period. The mention, in Jouder and his Brothers, Kemerezzeman and the Jeweller's Wife and Marouf, of the Sheikh el Islam, an office said to have been first instituted by Mohammed II. in the fifteenth century, after the taking of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, brings the date of the composition of these stories down to the early part of the sixteenth century, after the establishment of the Turkish power in Egypt, and the second (Kemerezzeman and the Jeweller's Wife) is probably the latest of the three, coffee being mentioned in it with a frequency which shows that it had, at the time of the composition of the tale, been long in common use. In this latter story also occurs ⁽²⁶²⁾ the only mention in the Nights of a watch and this may perhaps be taken as corroborative evidence of the comparative modernity of the tale, although the inference by no means follows as a matter of course. According to Beckmann, ⁽²⁶³⁾ the first known mention of a watch occurs in a sonnet of the Italian poet Visconti in the last decade of the fifteenth century, but, as the Arabs early brought the clepsydra or water-clock ⁽²⁶⁴⁾ to perfection (*teste* that said to have been presented by Er Reshid to Charlemagne and others yet more elaborate mentioned in Oriental works), and are known to have used weight-clocks striking the hours, at least as early as the twelfth century, ⁽²⁶⁵⁾ whereas such clocks were, as far as can be ascertained, not introduced into Europe till nearly two centuries later, ⁽²⁶⁶⁾ to say nothing of the probability (supported by no despicable arguments) of their having been the first to apply the principle of the pendulum to horology, ⁽²⁶⁷⁾ it seems only reasonable to suppose that they invented watches (or portable clocks) at a proportionately early period, say at the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century. Abdallah ben Fazil and his Brothers (apparently a modern and greatly improved version or adaptation of the Eldest Lady's Story in Vol. I.) is also a story of non-Chaldæan authorship, as is manifest from mistakes such as the supposing El Kerkh (the well-known principal quarter of Baghdad) to be a city on the Euphrates, and the use of Egyptian words (such as *derfil* for *dukhes*, dolphin) stamps it as of Egyptian origin, whilst the mention of coffee establishes its comparative modernity. The same remarks apply to Ali Nouredin and the Frank King's daughter and the Haunted House in Baghdad, in both of which coffee ⁽²⁶⁸⁾ is introduced, whilst the mention ⁽²⁶⁹⁾ of tobacco (which was introduced into Europe by Jean Nicot in 1560 and the use of which did not probably become common in the East until (at earliest) the next century), stamps the

(Egyptian) story of Aboukir and Abousir as the most modern of the whole collection. Zein el Mewasif is also an undoubtedly Egyptian and modern story, as well as the story of the Two Abdallahs, though the former appears to be somewhat less recent than the latter in date, whilst the Merchant of Oman, Ibrahim and Jemileh ⁽²⁷⁰⁾ and Aboulhusn of Khorassan, all three of which are free from the gross anachronisms and historical and topographical errors that characterize so many of the stories whose scene is laid in Baghdad in the reign of Er Reshid and his immediate successors, may therefore, in the absence of any distinctive sign of foreign origin, be supposed to have been written by a native of one of the metropolitan provinces of the Khalifate, soon after the composition of the original work.

Many of the short stories and anecdotes of historical places and persons, Khalifs, Sultans, princes, princesses and men of letters and poets, appear to have been transcribed or adapted from the works of well-known historians and geographers and from such famous collections as the Helbeit el Kumeit and the Kitab el Aghani. For instance, the story of Yehya ben Khalid and the Forger (Vol. IV.) is found (in almost exactly the same terms) in Fekhreddin Razi, the anecdote of Omar ben el Khettab and the poor woman (Vol. II. pp. 88 and 89) as well as the story of the Muslim Champion (Vol. V.) and others in Et Teberi, The City of Irem (Vol. III.) in El Mesoudi, The City of Lebtait (Vol. III.) in a Spanish-Arabic historian, The Khalif El Mamoun and the Pyramids (Vol. IV.) and The Justice of Providence (Vol. V.) as well as certain parts of the Voyages of Sindbad and Seif el Mulouk, in El Cazwini, Younus the Scribe (Vol. VI.), Musab ben ez Zubeir (Vol. IV.) and The Lovers of the Benou Udhreh (Vol. VI. p. 208) in the Kitab el Aghani, Ibrahim of Mosul and the Devil (Vol. VI.) in the Helbeit el Kumeit, The Devout Prince (Vol. IV.) in Ibn el Jauzi, Ibrahim ben el Mehdi and the Barber Surgeon (Vol. III.) in the Spanish historian Ibrahim el Andalusi, The Imam Abou Yousuf with Er Reshid and Jaafer (Vol. IV.) in the Mirat el Jenan, Abdurrehman the Moor's Story of the Roc (Vol. IV.) in Ibn el Werdi, etc., etc. To conclude this cursory sketch, I have but to mention that the fables and apologues, which form another considerable feature of the work, have apparently been added to the collection from time to time and appear to be mostly derived from Greek, Persian and Indian sources, such as the Hitopadesa, the Fables of AEsop and Kelileh wa Dimneh.

II.

I have already cited Mr. Lane's opinion that the Thousand and One Nights can only be said to be borrowed from the Hezar Efsan in the sense in which the Aeneid is said to be borrowed from the Odyssey; but even this comparison does not seem to me to do justice to the originality of the Arabic work, as there is certainly no trace in it of an influence exerted by any Persian writer in a similar manner to that exercised by Homer over Virgil; and putting aside the purely Arabic element, the foreign portion of the work appears to have been taken quite as freely from other sources, such as Greek, Indian and (perhaps) even Chinese and Japanese, as from Persian. Of this, well-known instances exist in the evident affinity of the incident of the cannibal giant in the Third Voyage of Sindbad and in Seif el Mulouk with the story of Ulysses and Polyphemus, and of the Arabian traveller's escape from the underground burial-place with the similar passage in Pausanias, relating the deliverance of the Messenian leader Aristomenes; in the stories of the Barber's Fifth Brother, the Prince and the Afrit's Mistress, the Merchant's Wife and the Parrot, the Fakir and the Pot of Butter, etc., which have been traced back to the Hitopadesa, Panchatantra, Kathasaritsagara, etc., in the apologue of the Hedgehog and the Pigeons, which has its apparent prototype in stories common to the Sanscrit, Chinese and Japanese languages, in the version of the legend of Susannah and the Elders, evidently borrowed from the Apocryphal Book of Daniel, in the fables of the Sparrow and the Eagle, the Cat and the Crow, the Falcon and the Birds, etc., apparently derived from AEsop (with whom, by the way, the celebrated Oriental fabulist Lucman or Lokman, quoted in the Koran, is supposed to be identical, though by some Arabic authors he is stated to have been a black slave, living in the time of David, and by others an Arab of the time of Job and a kinsman of that patriarch), and in numerous other fables, parables and legends of saints and hermits, evidently referable to Christian, Jewish, Brahman or Buddhist sources.

Nevertheless, numerous as are the instances in which the authors of the Thousand and One Nights have drawn upon foreign sources, the general tone of the work is distinctly and almost exclusively Arabic, and Arabic of Syria, Egypt and Chaldaea (or Irak-Arabi) ; whether the scene is laid in Persia, India, Anatolia, Armenia, Arabia, Greece, France, Genoa, Ceylon, Tartary, China or any other actually existing country or in such

fantastic and imaginary portions of the ideal world as Jinnistan, the Mountain Caf, the White, Blue, Black or Green Countries, the Camphor, the Ebony, the Khalidan or the Wac-Wac Islands, and whether the persons who figure in the stories are men or Jinn, Afrits or Angels, Indians or Chinese, Christians or Jews, Magians or Idolaters, the scenery and manners described, the persons, things and way of thought and action are distinctly those of such cities as Baghdad, Bassora, Mosul and Cairo. Even in tales like the Queen of the Serpents, whose Persian origin is unmistakable and whose scene is laid in a remote prae-Mohammedan age, the Arab author has apparently most carefully everywhere substituted, for the traces of Zendic or Sabman formulas and doctrines that may be supposed to have existed in the original, the distinctive legends and catchwords of the Muslim faith and cosmogony, whilst avoiding a too obvious exposure to the charge of anachronism by such expedients as the substitution of Solomon and Abraham for the greater prophet whose name is so constantly in the mouth of the personages of Arab fiction. And this adaptation of the scenes and persons of foreign countries to the illustration and glorification of Arab thought and Arab personality is still more accentuated by the fact that the men and manners represented are for the most part limited to those of the period of the early Baghdadi Khalifs of the house of Abbas, commencing with the second of that dynasty, Abou Jaafer el Mensour (A.D. 754) and practically ending with the sixteenth, his great-grandson's great-grandson Aboulabbas el Mutezid Billah, A.D. 892-922. ⁽²⁷¹⁾ Of this period far the most brilliant portion is that comprised between the years 786 and 809 and wholly occupied by the reign of the fifth Khalif of the house of Abbas, the celebrated Haroun er Reshid Billah, Aaron the Orthodox (or Well- advised⁽²⁷²⁾) in or by God, *not* the just, as in most versions. (The first four successors of Mohammed, Aboubekr, Omar, Othman and Ali, are known as *el Khulfaa er rashidoun*, ⁽²⁷³⁾ i.e. "the orthodox Khalifs.") This title was not, as is commonly supposed, adjudged to Haroun by his subjects in recognition of his qualities, as in the case of Louis XIII. of France, dubbed (wildly enough) "le Juste," but was conferred on him by his father El Mehdi, four years before his coming to the throne, on the occasion of his formal nomination as heir-presumptive (his brother El Hadi being heir-apparent) to the Khalifate, in conformity with the habit of the Khalifs, the ecclesiastical nature of whose dignity is peculiarly apparent in the hieratic titles assumed by them and answering to the *agnomina* bestowed (with the title of *Caesar*) by the Roman Emperors upon their successors-elect. Haroun, at all events, justified his title, for, if anything but just, he

certainly was *orthodox*, ⁽²⁷⁴⁾ at least in outward appearance, being a strict observer (in public at least) of the burdensome ritual of Muslim prayer and visiting offences against orthodoxy with the utmost rigour. He made eight or more pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina (all of which he is said to have performed *on foot*), attended by a splendid suite, and defrayed, on a princely scale, the expenses of some hundreds of pilgrims of the flower of the learned and orthodox of his time, in the years when he himself refrained from accomplishing the rite. He lavished money and gifts upon the inhabitants of the Holy Cities and expended infinite pains and wealth in assuring the pilgrim-track against the Bedouins. (His wife Zubeideh also was prodigal in her expenditure upon pilgrimages and the improvement and embellishment of Mecca and Medina, the great aqueduct that supplies the former with water having been built by her at an enormous cost.) In private, Er Reshid was a voluptuary, whom the prohibitions of religion availed not to restrain from the indulgence of his every passion: his physicians attributed his last illness and premature death to immoderate sexual commerce and there seems no doubt that he was an habitual wine-bibber, that is to say, a drinker to intoxication (after the manner of the Easterns, who conceive no other aim in the consumption of intoxicants than intoxication and have therefore always preferred spirits of various kinds, such as *seker* or date-brandy, etc., to wine) of strong drinks, and not, as pretended by his apologists, of the harmless *nebiz*, a very slightly fermented infusion of raisins, whose use is sanctioned by the example of Mohammed. The historian Shemseddin Yousuf Ibn el Jauzi (author of the great Chronicle, *Mirat ex Zeman*, the Mirror of Time) naively pleads, by way of excuse for Haroun's offending in this respect, that he never got drunk except behind a curtain, a trait which, if true, is sufficiently characteristic of the hypocritical nature of the Khalif.

This prince is undoubtedly the hero of "The Thousand and One Nights"; no other name occurs with a quarter of the same frequency and upon no other character is bestowed such wholesale laudation; indeed, we may well suspect, from the prominence that is given to him and the frequency with which anecdotes of his reign recur, that a portion of the collection was taken bodily from notes or compilations prepared at his especial instance, by the celebrated poets and musicians (for the two offices were frequently combined) who illustrated his court. Never was reputation so ill-deserved as that of the "good" Haroun er Reshid, who seems to have been a happy compound of the worst characteristics of such despots as Philip II. of Spain, Francis I. and Henry VIII.,

combining, with the superstitious bigotry of the first, the insatiable rapacity of the second and the ferocious sensuality of the third, a bloodthirsty savagery, peculiarly his own and only to be equalled by a king of Dahomey, and the almost hysterical sensitiveness to music, poetry and wit that distinguishes the Arab and has so often been found to exist side by side with the most complete lack of moral consciousness and the most refined excesses of unrelenting barbarity. This artistic sensibility he appears to have shared with the majority of his subjects (for there is no point in which there is such general consent in Arabic literature as the seemingly universal facility with which prince and peasant, merchant and Bedouin, courtier and water-carrier, alike appear to have at their command the resources of music and poetry, the poorest fisherman spontaneously reciting or composing the most elegant verses in moments of emotion or emergency and showing as exquisite a sensitiveness to the exercise of the two arts in others as the best educated and most refined noble) and to have carried to such an excess that the apposite repetition of a witty story or of a harmonious piece of verse, either remembered or extempore, frequently sufficed to secure for the astute reciter the highest honours at the Khalif's disposal or to save the greatest criminal or the most hated enemy from the consequences of the furious outbursts of passionate frenzy to which the monarch was subject. This characteristic it was which led him to encourage the arts and to select as his intimate companions the best-known poets and musicians of the time, (of whom two or three were always in attendance upon him at all hours of the day and night,) upon whom he lavished, with reckless prodigality, the immense sums ⁽²⁷⁵⁾ he wrung from his subjects and from whose venal praises later historians drew the false data on which they moulded the imaginary character of the great and good Khalif of the "golden prime" of Islam, a character as fabulous as that of the Cid, whom modern research has proved to have been a sort of Schinderhannes-Dalgetty, a brutal and venal swashbuckler, "fighting for his own hand," under Arab or Spaniard, king or condottiere, as it paid him best, and solacing his leisures with the innocent pastimes of Jew-roasting and captive-baiting. ⁽²⁷⁶⁾ Like Louis XIV., one of the most contemptible princes that ever sat on the throne of France, his memory is glorified by the borrowed lustre of the many men of genius and distinction who flourished in his reign. Quoth a MS. history cited by Dr. Weil, "Grave and pleasant people gathered to Er Reshid as to none other; the Barmecides the noblest men of the world, were his viziers; Abou Yousuf was his Cadi; Merwan Ibn Abi Hefseh, who in his century stood as high as earlier Jerir, ⁽²⁷⁷⁾ was his

poet ; Ibrahim el Mausili, unique in his time, his singer ; Zulzul and Bersoum his musicians."

Haroun's reign was indeed rich in great men; in addition to those named above and to the distinguished statesmen, generals and men of learning who surrounded him, the poets En Nemri, Er Recashi, Dibil el Khuzai, Salih ben Tarif, El Asmal, Abou Nuwas, El Etabi, Muslim ibn el Welid, Aboulatahiyeh, Abou Ubeideh and many others and the famous musician Isaac of Mosul, Ibn Jami and Mukharik adorned his court, and Baghdad swarmed with jurisconsults and legists of the highest distinction, who officiated as judges and to whose wise and impartial administration of the laws he owed his reputation for justice. He was the last Khalif who held, undiminished (with the exception of Spain, which was conquered A.D. 756 by the Ommiade⁽²⁷⁸⁾ Abdurrehman, who there founded the independent Khalifate of Cordova), the empire won by the early successors of Mohammed and the Benou Umeyyeh; even in his reign, the dominions of the Khalifate were curtailed by the defection of his governor of Africa, Ibrahim ibn Aghleb, and the revolt of the Alide Edris and the consequent foundation of independent kingdoms in Sicily and Northern Africa; under his successors province after province fell away, till the dominion of the last Abbaside Khalifs was practically limited to the city of Baghdad; hence his reign is not unnaturally chosen by the Muslim historian to represent the golden age of the Khalifate. Again, he was lavish in the decoration and enrichment of Baghdad (which under him attained its highest point of glory and prosperity), at the expense of the provinces, which were disaffected to him and continually in revolt against him; and these reasons, combined with the acts and character of the able ministers by whom the empire was ruled during the greater part of his reign and the fact that, like many other cruel and unscrupulous despots, he affected especially to cherish and be accessible to his humbler subjects, amply suffice to account for the most unmerited halo that has so long clung about his name.

As an instance of the enormous sums which Er Reshid lavished upon his favourites, during the heyday of their prosperity, a historian states that, in the accounts of the royal expenditure *for one year alone*, the sum of thirty millions of dirhems⁽²⁷⁹⁾ is entered as the aggregate amount bestowed, in money and goods, on Jaafer the Barmecide, and Fekhreiddin Razi mentions (on the authority of the historian El Amrani), as occurring in a similar list shortly before Jaafer's death, the almost incredible item, "Four hundred thousand dinars⁽²⁸⁰⁾ for a

dress of honour ⁽²⁸¹⁾ for the Vizier Jaafer ben Yehya," to be shortly followed by the entry, tragic in its terrible contrast, "Ten carats ⁽²⁸²⁾ for naphtha and reeds for burning the body of Jaafer the Barmecide." Again, at the instance of his great vizier, he gave Abdulmelik es Salih a sum of four millions of dirhems; ⁽²⁸³⁾ nor was he less lavish in his gifts to the poets, musicians and literati who tickled his intellectual palate with apropos recitals, songs, stories and pleasantries, as well as to the men of learning and chicane who extricated him by their ready wit from some dilemma of conscience or by a legal quibble enabled him to conciliate orthodoxy with the enjoyment of some prohibited pleasure. His wife Zubeideh was equally prodigal, especially in matters religious, having (according to Ibn el Jauzi) spent three millions of dinars, ⁽²⁸⁴⁾ in the course of a single pilgrimage, in expenses, gifts to the learned men of Mecca and Medina and public works.

Notwithstanding his apparent liberality, Er Reshid was greedy and rapacious and procured the money for his prodigalities by a system of the most unscrupulous robbery and extortion. The legitimate income of the Khalifate is said to have been about twenty-six million dinars, ⁽²⁸⁵⁾ yet so far did the treasures he accumulated, by fair means or foul, under the mask of extravagant liberality, exceed the wealth he flung away upon his caprices that he is said to have left nearly a thousand millions of dinars, ⁽²⁸⁶⁾ besides a fabulous quantity of precious stones and other effects (among the rest, thirty thousand beasts of burden, a hundred camel-loads of jewels and twenty thousand male slaves) representing, in all probability, a much larger sum; and these enormous riches it is evident from the accounts of Arabian chroniclers that he amassed by the vilest and most oppressive means. "He overwhelmed the people," says a modern historian, "with taxes and imposts and not infrequently despoiled his generals and governors of the wealth they had gained in his service." Abdulmelik es Salih, mentioned above, whom, at Jaafer's prompting, he had appointed governor of Egypt and married to his daughter, he shortly afterward, on pretence of his intention to aspire to the Khalifate, stripped of all his property and cast into prison, where he remained till the death of the tyrant, when the latter's successor, El Amin, released him and made him governor of Syria, thus manifesting the utter groundlessness of the accusation. Mohammed ben Suleiman ben Ali, a distant cousin of the Khalif, died leaving property worth sixty millions of dirhems, ⁽²⁸⁷⁾ apparently inherited from his father, and Haroun seized upon the whole estate, though near

relatives came forward to claim it, justifying his high-handed dealing with the futile pretext that he had proof of the deceased's intention to revolt against his authority and was therefore entitled to confiscate his property. Again, the Viceroy of Khorassan, Ali ben Isa el Mahani, had, by oppression and extortion, wrung immense sums from his subjects, which coming to the ears of the Khalif, he summoned the offending governor before himself, but, instead of compelling him to make restitution, he compounded with him for the payment of a heavy bribe and continued him in his government. This criminal transaction he several times renewed, till, at last, finding probably that Ibn Mahan became more and more difficult to squeeze, he seized on his person by treachery and made himself master of his wealth (said to have amounted to eighty millions of dirhems ⁽²⁸⁸⁾ in gold and plate alone, besides fifteen hundred camel-loads of precious stuffs), all of which, instead of restoring to its lawful owners, he applied to his own uses. These are a few instances only of the greed and rapacity with which his left hand still took back all and more than his right had given and of the criminal meanness by which he too often filled his treasuries, and so notorious, indeed, were the extortion and tyranny to which he owed his riches, that the celebrated ascetic Fuzail ibn Iyaz refused, though at the risk of his head, to accept a gift that the Khalif wished to bestow on him, alleging, as the ground of his refusal, that the giver's wealth had not been honestly come by.

The instances of his cruelty and treachery, that confront us in Muslim records, are no less numerous and flagrant; and the words of Sismondi, in his unsparing condemnation of the monster Alexander Borgia, we are warranted by historical evidence in applying to Er Reshid, who seems indeed to have been "a man whom no good faith bound in his engagements, no sentiment of justice checked in his policy, no compassion moderated in his vengeance." Every means was good to him to destroy his enemies, whether personal or political, and he thought nothing of violating the most solemn oaths, when he desired to rid himself of a hated or suspected person, hated and suspected often upon grounds that owed their existence to his own jaundiced imagination. He began his reign by putting to death the Amir Abou Isma, one of his brother's counsellors, nominally because he was one of those who had persuaded El Hadi to proclaim his own son Jaafer heir-apparent to the Khalifate, to the exclusion of himself and in contravention of the will of their father El Mehdi, but really from one of the pettiest motives of personal spite, because the unlucky Abou Isma had, on one occasion, given Jaafer the

precedence over Haroun, when the two princes were about to pass over a bridge. There can be little doubt that he was an accessory to the murder of his brother El Hadi by the contrivance of their mother Kheizuran ; but this latter crime may be said to have been committed in self-defence and therefore to some extent excusable, as El Hadi had resolved upon the assassination of Haroun, to remove him from his son's path. Another of the earliest acts by which he signalized his accession was to procure the poisoning of the Alide Edris ben Abdallah, who, after the failure of his kinsman Hussein ben Ali's attempt to seize the Khalifate at Medina and the death of the latter at the battle of Fakh (A.D. 786), fled to North-western Africa and there founded the Edriside kingdom of *Mughred* or Morocco; and not content with the success of his murderous plot, he caused put to death an Egyptian postmaster, Wezih by name, who had sheltered the fugitive and furthered his escape to Morocco, rewarding the poisoner, Shemmekh, with the latter's post. The Alide Mousa ben Jaafer, one of the most venerated elders of the Shiah sect, he cast into prison and caused to be secretly murdered, because, on a certain occasion, when both were visiting the Prophet's tomb at Medina, after Er Reshid had greeted Mohammed with "Peace be on thee, O cousin!" [\(289\)](#) Mousa followed suit with "Peace be on thee, O father!" as was indeed his right, [\(290\)](#) and his treatment of Yehya ben Abdallah, another descendant of Ali, was yet more dastardly and barbarous. Yehya, who was the uncle of Hussein ben Ali above mentioned and fought by his side at the disastrous battle of Fakh, fled, after the loss of that day, to Media, where he established himself so strongly and became so formidable that Er Reshid despatched against him El Fezl the Barmecide, who, with his usual politic mansuetude, succeeded in inducing the rebel to renounce his pretensions in favour of the regnant prince, on promise of fair treatment by the latter. A formal treaty, embodying the terms of compromise, being entered into and solemnly ratified by Er Reshid, Yehya proceeded to Baghdad and surrendered himself to the Khalif, who received him with all the external signs of distinguished honour, but shortly after, on pretext of some formal flaw in the contract, discovered by the crown lawyers (from whom the declaration is said to have been extorted by main force), cast the unlucky Alide into prison, committing him to the custody of Jaafer. The generous Barmecide, revolted at his master's signal ill faith, took pity on the prisoner and connived at his escape; but Er Reshid afterwards recaptured him and again cast him into prison, where he caused him to be secretly murdered, He put to death Abou Hureireh, Viceroy of Mesopotamia, because he had suffered defeat at the hands of the

Kharijites, and caused the Khuramiyeh heretics, followers of the Persian socialist Mezdek, on the suppression of their revolt in Azerbaijan by Abdallah ibn Malik, to be put to the sword and their women and children sold as slaves; nor was it without extreme difficulty that the sanguinary monarch was prevented from exterminating the inhabitants of Mosul and razing that great city to the ground, after the putting down of a popular rising led by Ettal ben Sufyan. During his last illness, having captured Beshr ibn Leith, brother of the rebel Refia ben Leith, who had established himself in Transoxania, he caused him to be dissected alive by a butcher, whom he summoned for that purpose, and bidding his attendants lay before him the fourteen pieces into which the unfortunate prisoner had been divided, gloated over them till he fell into a swoon. This was the last public act of the "good" Haroun er Reshid, who expired three days later, after having, almost with his latest breath, ordered the execution, upon some trifling occasion of offence, of his physician the Christian Jebril (Gabriel) ibn Bekhtiyeshou. Jebril was however saved from his threatened doom by the death of his ferocious master in the night.

These are some of the enormities committed by the "good" Khalif, and these, although they sink into insignificance compared with the fiendish barbarity and ingratitude of his treatment of the Barmecides (an account of which I reserve for another page), suffice to show that he can lay no claim to the attributes of goodness, generosity and justice with which popular tradition has so persistently credited him, and I confess that, for my own part, I cannot discover any reason why he should be gratified, with the name of "Great," except upon the principle is accordance with which that title is awarded to the contemptible Louis XIV., whose only claim to greatness lay in the fact that great men lived and worked (and often starved) whilst he ate and drank and dallied with his titled harlots. ⁽²⁹¹⁾ In reality, he appears to have been a morose and fantastic despot, pursued, like Philip II. of Spain, by the spectres of his own crimes, tormented at once by superstitious remorse and jealous suspicion, which, while oppressing his waking hours and troubling his natural rest with the tortures of gloomy and foreboding thought, again and again impelled him to commit anew the misdeeds whose recollection embittered his existence and to deprive himself, at their malignant instance, of the only men about him on whom he could reckon for fidelity and ability combined. His fits of gloomy depression and his chronic restlessness by night and day are constantly referred to in "The Thousand and One Nights," and it was in

endeavouring to shake off these haunting miseries that he seems to have met with the many adventures that are recorded of him and of which a considerable portion may fairly be supposed to have been invented and arranged for him by the distinguished poets who were his constant associates.

One of the latter, Abou Nuwas ibn Hani, is a curious figure in the history of literature. A debauchee of the most debased and sensual order, he, nevertheless, in addition to his undoubtedly high poetical genius, too often prostituted to the vilest purposes, seems to have been remarkably free from the servility that generally distinguishes the courtly poet and to have cherished a rude but real love of independence and a sense of the beauties of freedom which led him to prefer the rough licence of the wine-shop and the pleasure-garden to all the luxurious allurements of the Court; and we find the Khalif, who set on his society a value equivalent to the difficulty he found in procuring it, often reduced to all sorts of expedients to drag him from his favourite haunts. Like the great anacreontic poet of early mediaeval China, Li-tai-pe (with whom he was nearly contemporary), ⁽²⁹²⁾ the messengers of his royal master were frequently compelled to force him from the taverns, where he revelled with his low associates, for the purpose of amusing the Khalif in his fits of depression or of advising him upon state and general matters; and long before Walter de Mapes or Hafiz, he declared his intention of ending his days in the exclusive worship of the divinities of wine and pleasure, rhyming in Arabian verse his version of "Mihi est propositum in taberna mori." Nor in this avowed devotion to the forbidden delights of conviviality was he alone among the denizens of the court of the Khalifs. Baghdad, in the reign of Er Reshid, seems to have been preeminently a city of pleasure. Thither flocked from all parts of the Oriental world the most noted and capable poets, musicians and artificers of the time; and the first thought of the Arabian or Persian craftsman who had completed some specially curious or attractive specimen of his art was to repair to the capital of the Muslim world, to submit it to the Commander of the Faithful, from whom he rarely failed to receive a rich reward for his labours. Surrounded by pleasure-gardens and groves of orange, tamarisk and myrtle, refreshed by an unfailing luxuriance of running streams, supplied either by art or nature, the great city on the Tigris is the theme of many an admiring ode or laudatory ghazel; and the poets of the time all agree in describing it as being, under the rule of the great Khalif, a sort of terrestrial paradise of idlesse and luxury, where, to use their own expressions, the ground was irrigated with rose-water and the dust of the roads

was musk, where flowers and verdure overhung the ways and the air was perpetually sweet with the many-voiced song of birds, and where the chirp of lutes, the dulcet warble of flutes and the silver sound of singing houris rose and fell in harmonious cadence from every corner of the streets of palaces that stood in vast succession in the midst of their gardens and orchards, ⁽²⁹³⁾ gifted with perpetual verdure by the silver abundance of the Tigris, as it sped its arrowy flight through the thrice-blest town.

Baghdad, indeed, was in many respects emphatically a "città cortigiana," a sort of Vienna or Bucharest of the olden time, carried to the higher evolution correspondent with the more sensuous influences of the luxuriant East; and the state of public morality there was naturally of the laxest. Especially was this the case with the higher classes. Drunkenness and debauchery of the most uncompromising kind prevailed amongst them in despite of the precepts of the Koran; and men and women seemed to vie with each other in refinements of luxury and dissipation. ⁽²⁹⁴⁾ As was the case in a period that offers no small analogy to that of which I speak, the epoch of the Roman decadence, the women of the upper classes, to whom was apparently allowed an amount of liberty, or rather licence, curiously at variance with our Western ideas of Eastern domestic polity, appear to have been especially corrupt; and many are the tales of their licentious habits and adventures found in the Thousand and One Nights, reminding us of the Memoirs of Casanova, although almost always redeemed by touches of pathos, poetry or romance, which are wanting to the tatter's dry and unattractive records of commonplace galanterie. The Story of the Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad, that of the Barber's Second Brother and several others contained in the old version, give some idea of the licence of the time, and examples are still more abundant and circumstantial in the tales that compose the comparatively unknown portion of the collection.

As may well be supposed, under these circumstances, the upper classes of the time were not characterised by any especial fervour of religious devotion. Notwithstanding the fanatical orthodoxy of the Khalif and of his chief wife and cousin, Zubeideh, a woman as superstitious, as cruel and as cultivated as himself, ⁽²⁹⁵⁾ the general religious sentiment of the Court of Baghdad appears to have been a sort of refined atheism, borrowed from Persia and having in all probability some affinity with Soufi quietism, which, whilst conforming in

outward matters to Muslim observances, was yet, in the spirit of the Persian usage expressed by the word *ketman* (concealment), perfectly well understood and recognised. This tendency had apparently its origin with the illustrious Barmecide (properly Bermeki) family; and their opinions, whilst not interfering with a professed conformity to the tenets of Islam, appear to have been shared by most of the great officers and nobles of the kingdom, in the same manner as the religious doctrine known as Bâbism is said at the present day to underlie the higher ranks of modern Persian society. Nevertheless, the lower and middle classes of the people were still profoundly and fanatically attached to the Faith of the Unity of God; nor were examples of Mohammedan fervour and zealotry wanting that would not have misbeseeemed the strictest epochs of religious enthusiasm. Er Reshid himself was completely under ecclesiastical control, especially that of the Chief Imam of his reign, the Sheikh Abou Yousuf, who seems to have been more of a courtier than a priest and to have ingratiated himself with the Khalif by his audacious adroitness (of which at least one instance finds mention in *The Thousand and One Nights*) in twisting the interminable subtleties of Mohammedan ritual and dogma to suit the monarch's varying caprices and inclinations; and one of the most salient examples of ascetic devotion that mark the history of Islam is recorded in the person of the Khalif's own son, who, no doubt impelled by disgust at his father's cruelty and rapacity, as well as at the licence of his luxurious court, became a hermit, saint or "friend of God" (as the Muslims have it), under the circumstances detailed in the story of *The Devout Prince*.

Under Haroun er Reshid, Baghdad was undoubtedly the metropolis of Muslim civilisation. ⁽²⁹⁶⁾ It is said to have been as populous as modern Paris, ⁽²⁹⁷⁾ and the rapid growth of its manufactures and the immense trade attracted from all parts of the world by the presence of a brilliant and prodigal court, early resulted in making the great body of its population well-to-do and contented. It was one of the most orderly and well-governed cities in the world of its day, and such was the comparative quiet and security for life and property that reigned within its walls, (thanks to the astute administration of the Barmecide Viziers, who anticipated Fourier's doctrine of the "passionel" treatment of criminal inclinations, carrying out the theory of "set a thief to catch a thief" with the greatest success and effectually keeping under roguery and crime by employing certain selected rascals of high capacity, such as Ahmed ed Denef, Hassan Shouman and Ali Zibec, mentioned in the *Thousand*

and One Nights, as subordinate prefects of police to coerce and checkmate their former comrades,) that the city was generally known by the sobriquet of *Dar es Selam* ⁽²⁹⁸⁾ or Abode of Peace.

It was, indeed, to the great statesmen of the house of Bermek that the reigns of the early Abbaside Khalifs owed almost the whole of the prosperity and brilliancy that distinguished them. Of an ancient and noble Persian family, ⁽²⁹⁹⁾ Khalid ben Bermek, the first of the house that appears upon the scene of Arabian history, became Vizier and Minister of Finance to the founder of the Abbaside dynasty, Aboulabbas the Blood-shedder, and after serving his successor El Mensour in a like capacity, was appointed to the government of Mosul and Azerbaijan, which post he held till his death. Aboul abbas was the first to institute the office of Vizier and Khalid was the earliest of the great ministers who ruled the immense dominions of the Khalifs with almost regal power. During his long tenure of office he practically governed the empire, the Khalifs of the house of Abbas taking little personal part in the burdensome task of administration. He appears to have shown the highest talents for government and was particularly successful in consolidating and setting in order the finances. It was under his direction that the city of Baghdad was built in the reign of El Mensour, when that prince elected to abandon the former capital of the Khalifs, Damascus, for a spot less impregnated with the memories of the fallen dynasty, and it is to his wise, just and liberal rule that the rapid prosperity of the new capital must be ascribed. According to El Mesoudi, Khalid surpassed, in prudence, bravery, learning, generosity and noble qualities and accomplishments, even his more celebrated descendants.

His son Yehya we first meet with as governor of Armenia under El Mensour. Under the latter's successor, El Mehdi, he became Secretary of State and was entrusted by the Khalif with the charge of his son Haroun's education. Yehya was the foster-father of this prince, who was born nearly at the same time as his own son El Fezl, and an exchange of infants for some reason took place between the mothers, Kheizuran suckling Fezl and Zubeideh (Yehya's wife) Haroun. The two boys thus became foster-brothers (a quasi-relation which, though merely nominal in Europe, is invested by Mohammedan law with rights and obligations nearly akin to those of actual brotherhood), and in consequence of this and of the semi-paternal authority exercised over him by Yehya, in his capacity of governor, Haroun was wont to call the latter father. It was to the prudence and boldness with

which, during the short and stormy reign of the crackbrained tyrant El Hadi, Yehya played the difficult and dangerous part of governor and adviser of the heir presumptive (a role to which he clung with extraordinary fidelity and magnanimity, under the most discouraging circumstances), that the latter owed his throne and indeed his life, and the Barmecide came near to paying dear for his loyalty to the youth whom his royal father had committed to his care, El Hadi, exasperated by the courage and skill with which he opposed his scheme for substituting his own son Jaafer for Haroun in the succession, having cast him into prison, where he would certainly have perished, but for the opportune intervention of Kheizuran, whose favourite he was and who procured the timely assassination of the Khalif. Immediately after El Hadi's death, Yehya was released and at once applied himself to securing the accession of his pupil, whom he succeeded in seating on the throne, without serious opposition. Haroun, thus become Khalif, hastened to acknowledge his obligations to Yehya and without delay appointed him his Chief Vizier, handing him (in token of investment with the executive power) his signet-ring, with the words, "My dear father, it is owing to the blessings and good fortune that attend you and to your excellent management that I am now seated on this throne, wherefore I confide to you the direction of affairs." Yehya was the wisest statesman, the most benevolent and magnanimous man of his time. Quoth Ibn Khellikan, "He was perfect in talent, judgment and noble qualities, highly distinguished for wisdom, nobleness of mind and elegance of language." He is called by a contemporary man of letters "the president of the Divan (or Board) of generous actions," and Oriental writers agree in ascribing to him all noble qualities that can combine in a man to compel the love and reverence of his kind. From the time of Haroun's accession to that of the horrible catastrophe which extinguished the house of Barmek (i.e.,--with an insignificant interregnum, during which, for some unexplained cause, El Fezl ben Rebya, the bitter and unscrupulous foe of the Barmecides, was entrusted with the Vizierate,--from A.D. 786 to A.D. 803), Yehya and his sons Fezl and Jaafer wielded, with practically uncontrolled authority, the sovereignty of the East, Er Reshid (who seems from the moment of his sudden elevation to the throne to have devoted himself well-nigh exclusively to the curious mixture of debauchery and religious observances by which he endeavoured to conciliate his passion for all kinds of pleasure with the superstitious regard for the external appearances of orthodoxy that was no less pronounced a feature of his character and to have concerned himself little with the business of government),

entirely devolving on them the executive power and endorsing all their acts and orders with a servility of which some singular instances are given in Muslim records. By his wise and high-minded administration, the great Vizier completely reorganized the vast empire of the Khalifs, still somewhat shattered by the intestine disorders that had troubled the last years of the Ommiade princes and the reigns of their immediate successors and raised it to a height of general prosperity which was the wonder of the world. He regulated the incidence of the taxes on a principle that, whilst benefiting the treasury by the increased return it occasioned, alleviated the burdens of the poorer classes, established a complete system of posts all over the empire, expended a great part of the revenue upon all sorts of magnificent public works, making roads and building mosques, caravanserais, bridges, etc., etc., on every side, improved and perfected the organization of the police, encouraged agriculture and industry, procuring the introduction and cultivation of new arts and dividing the various crafts into guilds or syndicates, charged with the office of regularizing trade and the prevention of fraud, and by proper regulations immensely augmented the yield of the mines and other sources of natural wealth, organized public education on a liberal basis, founding schools, colleges and libraries in profusion and extending the most lavish encouragement to scholars, literati and men of science, native and foreign, continuing and fostering the splendid civilisation of the Persians and Graeco-Latins and revivifying its partial effeteness with the quickening energy of the Arab genius; in short, he established and set in working order all the various and elaborate machinery of government that is necessary to the political and social economy of a great and heterogeneous empire, and founding law, order and justice everywhere, brought the dominions of the Khalifate to a pitch of civilisation and prosperity, moral and material, which Europe did not even begin to emulate till many centuries later and of which no country of that time, with the exception, perhaps, of China, then in the full flower of its civilisation, under the great dynasty of the Thangs, could offer even a partial example.

Yehya's four sons, Fezl, Jaafer, Mohammed and Mousa, were renowned for the same qualities and virtues as their illustrious father and all ordered their lives and actions in the spirit of his magnanimous saying, "This life is a series of vicissitudes and wealth is but a loan; let us, then, follow the models offered by our predecessors and leave a good example to those who come after." The Khalif el Mamoun⁽³⁰⁰⁾ is reported to have said, "Yehya ben Khalid and his sons had none [to equal them] in ability, in culture, in liberality and in bravery: it

was well said by a poet, 'The sons of Yehya are four in number, like the elements: when put to the test, they will be found the elements of beneficence.' Quoth the poet Merwan ibn Abi Hefseh, 'The power of doing good is in the hands of princes; but the noble Barmecides did good and harmed not.' 'Their hands,' says Mohammed ibn Munadhir, 'were created for nought but deeds of beneficence and their feet for the boards of the pulpit;' and quoth El Atawi, 'The generous Barmecides learned beneficence and taught it to the human race; when they planted, they watered, and they never let the edifice they founded fall into ruin; when they conferred favours on mankind, they clothed their bounties in a raiment that endured for ever.'" The romantic generosity of the Barmecides it would, indeed, be difficult to exaggerate. Incredible as the instances of their liberality given in the Thousand and One Nights may appear, they are but one or two of hundreds of similar and well-authenticated anecdotes of the munificence of this truly princely house, and it is hardly too much to say that the history of the world makes no mention of a family every member of which was distinguished by so extraordinary a combination of the noblest qualities of heart and head. No contemporary historian or poet can name them without breaking out into passionate praise of their nobleness and as passionate lament for their unmerited fate. "Alas for the sons of Bermek," cries Salih ben Tarif, "and the happy days of their power! With them the world was as a bride; but now it is widowed and bereft of its children." "The Barmecides," says Fekhreiddin Razi, "were to their time as a plume to the brow, as a crown to the head. The world was requickened under their administration and the empire carried to the highest pinnacle of splendour. They were the refuge of the afflicted, the providence of the unfortunate." And all who speak of them echo the same strain. Each of the four sons was distinguished by some special quality, in addition to the virtues which were the general appanage of the family, and the only weak point in their character appears to have been the noble fault they shared with Julius Caesar⁽³⁰¹⁾ and Napoleon III. and to which they, like their compeers of the West, in all probability owed their ruin, i.e. the generous magnanimity and high-souled mansuetude, which led them to regard with heroic indifference the miserable plots of the enviers and calumniators, the assassins and intriguants, the "fishers in troubled water," the Fezl ben Rebyas and Mohammed ibn Abi Leiths, the Cassii and Cascae, the Gambettas and Rocheforts, the professional seditionists and Bulgarian-Atrocity-mongers of their time, and forbade them to crush, by severe but just and necessary measures of repression, which, timely employed, might probably have

preserved them for the general benefit of humanity, the dastardly intrigues which resulted in their destruction.
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Uniformly gifted as were the four sons of Yehya, Jaafer appears to have surpassed his brothers in mental power and accomplishments, whilst in no way yielding to them in all the virtues and nobilities for which they were conspicuous, and to have been distinguished, in particular, by a sweetness of temper and a chivalrous courtesy of demeanour, which Fezl, eminently good and noble as he was, lacked, of his own confession, he having a certain abruptness of manner that made him, though more in appearance than in reality, savour somewhat of the *Burbero Benefice* (the beneficent curmudgeon) of Goldoni.

Jaafer was indeed a remarkable and attractive figure in the history of the time. To the virtues of liberality, beneficence and hospitality that distinguished almost to excess all the members of his illustrious house, he added accomplishments and qualities which were peculiarly his own and which make him by far the most loveable and attractive character of the many that live for us in *The Thousand and One Nights*. "In the high rank which he attained," says Ibn Khellikan, "and the great power which he wielded, in loftiness of spirit and in the esteem and favour shown him by the Khalif, he stood without a rival. His disposition was generous, his looks encouraging, his demeanour kind; his liberality and munificence, the richness and prodigality of his donations are too well known to require mention." He had been educated with Er Reshid, and for some years after the latter's accession, served him as secretary of petitions, an arduous office (especially in the case of a monarch whose peculiar pretension it was to be always accessible to any of his subjects who had a request to make or a grievance to state), which he seems to have filled with the utmost brilliancy, showing, in particular, an intimate acquaintance with the bewildering subtleties of Mohammedan law and jurisprudence. He was a man of exquisite culture and was accounted the best stylist of his day. He seems, indeed, to have been possessed, in a remarkable degree, of all the accomplishments of his time; and in particular, his knowledge of and power of composition in classical Arabic was so extensive and so elegant that amateurs of the pure literary style are said to have purchased, for their weight in gold, the scraps of parchment on which, as secretary of petitions, he had been wont to inscribe his decisions. His knowledge of law and jurisprudence was phenomenal and in these

branches of learning he had been the favourite pupil of the celebrated Abou Yousuf, the first legist of his time. "He expressed his thoughts with great elegance and was remarkable for his eloquence and command of language; it is recorded that one night he wrote, in presence of Er Reshid, upwards of a thousand decisions on as many memorials that had been presented to the Khalif and that not one of these deviated in the least from what was warranted by the law."

Universally gifted, he put down, by fair means, the troublesome tribal war in Syria, and as viceroy of all the provinces of the East, restored peace and good government to the sorely mismanaged African provinces, whilst his brother Fezl performed the like office for Khorassan and the Western provinces of the empire. He educated the young prince El Mamoun, who never forgot his wise and noble teachings and lived to honour them by proving the best and most high-minded monarch of the house of Abbas, ⁽³⁰³⁾ and being, on the death of the queen-mother Kheizuran, appointed chief Vizier, continued during the remainder of his life to exercise the functions of that high office with as much wisdom, justice, generosity and benefit to the kingdom as his father, brother and grandfather. Compassionate and forgiving almost to excess, no trait is recorded of him that shows any bitterness against personal enemies, nor does he ever appear to have availed himself of his immense power to punish the attempts that were perpetually made to injure him by men jealous of his character and position. On the contrary, such was his mansuetude and sweetness of nature, that he was always ready to intercede for the culprits, in cases where they had exposed themselves to the Khalif's displeasure. His strength of mind and moral courage were no less remarkable than his patience; the innate nobility of the man shines out in every act and every word; and he was always ready, often at the imminent risk of his own life, to intervene between the royal tiger whom he served and the unfortunate people under his control. Kindly, generous and charitable to excess and at the same time a firm, just and far-sighted administrator, he was passionately beloved by the people of Baghdad, whose miseries he spared no pains to alleviate and whose general prosperity may, in no small degree, be attributed to the untiring courage and self-sacrifice with which he was always ready to shield them, to the utmost of his power, from the ferocity and rapacity of his royal master.

Fezl, as the foster-brother of Er Reshid, was originally his most intimate friend and the companion of his

private pleasures, being his constant associate in the carouses in which the Khalif passed his evenings, in the midst of his favourite women and musicians. For some unexplained reason, he appears to have become converted to the renunciation of such enjoyments as wine-bibbing and listening to music and tale-telling (forbidden to the strict Muslim) and to have abruptly withdrawn from the intimacy of the Khalif and forsworn association in his pleasures. This conduct on Fezl's part being probably construed by the umbrageous monarch as an implied censure on himself, he transferred his especial favour to Jaafer, a man of more savoir-vivre and easier composition than his austerer brother and more richly gifted with those social qualities of wit and gay and gallant humour so highly prized by Eastern princes in the companions of their pleasures; and he presently further emphasized his displeasure with Fezl by transferring the seals of government from him to Jaafer, as soon as the death of his mother Kheizuran, whose favourite Fezl was, left him at liberty to do so, appointing the deposed minister, whose services were too necessary to the empire to be altogether dispensed with, to the most important extra-metropolitan post at his disposal, i.e. the government of Khorassan, an office involving the administration of nearly one-half of the dominions of the Khalifate. The manner in which this transfer of power was received by the Barmecides, as told by Ibn Khellikan, is strikingly illustrative of the magnanimity of the members of that illustrious house and their invincible attachment to one another. According to the famous biographer, Er Reshid said to Yehya, "Dear father, I wish to transfer to Jaafer the signet now held by my brother Fezl. I am ashamed to write that order to Fezl: do it for me." Yehya accordingly wrote to Fezl, saying, "The Commander of the Faithful commands that the signet be passed from thy right hand to thy left;" to which Fezl made answer in these words: "I hear and obey the word of the Commander of the Faithful concerning my brother. No favour is lost to me, which goes from me to Jaafer, and no rank is taken from me, when he receives it." On hearing this reply, Jaafer exclaimed, "What an admirable being is my brother! How noble is his soul!"

Naturally enough, Jaafer and his brilliant kinsmen were the objects of the bitterest jealousy and hatred to the courtiers and ecclesiastics of the day,--to the former especially for their Persian origin and for their commanding talents and popularity, and to the latter more particularly for their tolerance and their well-known, or at least shrewdly-suspected, adherence to some form of Persian Rationalism,--and many were the efforts, supported by lies and calumnies of the most unscrupulous character, made by the enemies of the Bermekis to

induce Er Reshid to withdraw his favour from them. These were long unsuccessful and would doubtless have continued to prove so (for, morose and passionate despot as he was, Er Reshid seems to have cherished a real affection for the brave and brilliant companion of his youth and to have estimated, at his real value to himself, the just, wise and gentle counsellor of his mature years), but for a circumstance that quickened the smouldering distrust and jealousy of the tyrant into an irrepressible outburst of fury and caused him to commit an act of which he afterwards bitterly repented, when (in Arabic phrase) repentance might no longer profit him. The circumstance in question was of a curious character. Jaafer appears to have, by the brilliancy of his conversational and other accomplishments, rendered himself so indispensable to the Khalif as a companion, as well as a minister, that the latter could not bear to be an hour without his company and for the purpose of having him always within call, insisted upon his occupying apartments within the private portion or serai of the palace; but, as royal etiquette, to which Er Reshid was devoutly attached, forbade the extension of this favour to any but actual members of the royal family, he conceived the plan of marrying Jaafer, *pro formâ*, to his favourite sister, the Princess Abbaseh. ⁽³⁰⁴⁾ The marriage was concluded, but the Khalif, with the unreasonable pride of an Eastern despot, forbade the parties to cohabit, an injunction which Jaafer himself made no effort to disobey. Abbaseh, however, was an exceedingly beautiful woman and she and Jaafer (who was then in the prime of manhood and one of the handsomest men of his day) fell passionately in love with each other, nor was it long before mutual desire prevailed to overleap the prohibited bounds. The most probable account of the way in which this came about seems that of Jafei (the author of the *Mirat el Jenan*), who represents the princess as having prevailed, by mingled threats and persuasions, upon Jaafer's mother Ettabeh to present her to him, whilst under the influence of wine, in the guise of the female slave of whom it was her habit to make her son a gift every Friday. This was accordingly done, and Abbaseh, after having passed some time in Jaafer's company, discovered herself to him, whereupon alarm dispelled the fumes of the wine and he sought out his mother and said to her, "Mother, thou hast ruined me." His words were prophetic. Abbaseh proved with child and gave birth to twins, ⁽³⁰⁵⁾ who were at once despatched to Mecca and there reared in secret by two devoted female attendants. The secret was kept from Er Reshid for about a twelvemonth, but was at last discovered to him in consequence of an incident peculiarly characteristic of the East. Abbaseh, with the unreflecting passion of

Eastern ladies of high rank, beat one of her women with whom she was vexed, and the girl, in her spite, revealed the fatal secret to Zubeideh, who seized an early opportunity of gratifying her rancour against both her husband's favourite sister and the Barmecides (especially Yehya, who, as intendant of the palace, enforced the rules of harem discipline with a strictness that was far from pleasing to the imperious Sultana), by repeating it to Er Reshid. Haroun's mind would already appear to have been poisoned against the Barmecides, not only by the inherent jealousy of a mean nature against the overwhelming superiority of the family in all qualities that confer distinction on their possessors, but by the enormous popularity which their good deeds had won them and the venomous insinuations of those miserable reptiles that thrive by calumny and treachery, whose role has always been so considerable in Oriental, even more than in European, courts, and by whose reports he was (or feigned to be) persuaded that Yehya and his sons aspired to oust himself from the Khalifate, an accusation for which no shadow of reason appears. Other subjects of displeasure are mentioned by historians as probable reasons for his treatment of the Barmecides, such as the conduct of Fezl above mentioned and that of Jaafer in releasing the unhappy betrayed Alide Yehya; but there can be no doubt that Haroun's chief and indeed only reason was his jealousy of the great family to whom he owed life, kingdom and renown. As to this, contemporary authorities are unanimous; according to Ibn Khellikan, Said ben Salim (a well-known grammarian and traditionist of the time⁽³⁰⁶⁾), when asked what crime the Barmecides had committed, answered, "Of a truth, they did nothing to warrant Er Reshid's conduct towards them; but their day had been long and that which continues long becomes irksome. There were persons of the best of men, who were fatigued with the length of the reign of the Khalif Omar [ibn el Khettab], though its like was never seen for justice, security, wealth and victories; they also bore with impatience the sway of Othman, and both were murdered. Besides, Er Reshid saw that generosity was become their wont, that the people were loud in their praise and that men's hopes were fixed on them and not on himself. Less than this suffices to excite the jealousy of princes; so Er Reshid conceived ill will against them, wreaked his vengeance on them and tried to find out faults. Besides this, a certain degree of presumption was sometimes visible in the conduct of Jaafer and Fezl, although Yehya was exempt from this; for he had more solid experience than his sons and better skill in affairs. This induced some of their enemies, such as Fezl ben Rebya, [Mohammed ibn Abi Leith and others, to have

recourse to Er Reshid, from whom they concealed the good done by the Barmecides and only told him of their faults, till they brought about what took place."

That the discovery of the disobedience of his orders by Jaafer and Abbaseh was not (as is contended by some historians) the real cause of Er Reshid's rage against the Barmecides, but only an additional element of exasperation and perhaps indeed a mere pretext, is evident from the deliberation with which he set about the ruin of the house, the time which he allowed to elapse between his discovery of the fatal secret and the execution of his vengeance and the sudden and treacherous manner in which he carried out his sanguinary purpose. Nearly a year⁽³⁰⁷⁾ would appear to have intervened between Zubeideh's malicious denunciation and the Khalif's return from Mecca, whither he had betaken himself, under pretence of pilgrimage, for the express purpose of verifying her disclosures. Here he found out Abbaseh's children and convinced by their resemblance to both parents of the truth of the story, caused them to be secretly conveyed to Irak, without letting any one know of the matter. With the Barmecides, meanwhile, he dissembled, showing them, if possible, more than his usual favour, till his return, when he halted at a place near Ambar, on the Euphrates, and after bestowing rich dresses of honour on the brothers and treacherously lulling to sleep any suspicions that Jaafer might have conceived⁽³⁰⁸⁾ by insisting upon his giving himself up to conviviality in his own tent, what while he himself indulged in wine and mirth in the royal pavilion, suddenly, in the dead of the night, summoned one of his pages, Yasir⁽³⁰⁹⁾ by name, and commanded him to go at once and bring him Jaafer's head. Yasir, greatly shocked, exclaimed, "Would I had died before this hour!" but dared not disobey and repaired to Jaafer's tent, where he found him carousing and acquainted him with his dreadful errand. Jaafer prevailed upon the messenger, who, like all the world, was indebted to him for many a favour, to return to the Khalif and tell him that he had put him to death. "If he expresses regret," said the Vizier, "I shall owe you my life; and if not, God's will be done." Yasir accordingly returned, leaving Jaafer without the tent, to Er Reshid, who said to him, "Well?" Whereupon he told him what had passed between himself and the Vizier. "Vile wretch," cried the Khalif, making use of the foulest imprecation known to the Arabs, "if thou answer me another word, I will send thee before him to the next world!" The page accordingly went out and striking off Jaafer's head, carried it to Er Reshid, who looked

at it awhile, then bade him fetch two persons whom he named and whom, on their appearance, he commanded to strike off Yasir's head, alleging, with characteristic hypocrisy, that he could not bear the sight of Jaafer's murderer. [\(310\)](#)

Before giving the order for Jaafer's execution, Er Reshid had despatched an express to his chief of the police at Baghdad, bidding him seize Yehya and Fezl, before the news got wind, and cast them into the *Hebs ez Zenadikeh* [\(311\)](#) at Baghdad, and after secure the persons of their brothers, sons, grandchildren and all their other relatives and connections, even to their clerks. The order reached the Master of police in the middle of the night and he at once proceeded to execute it, securing the persons of the whole of the Barmecide family, as well as of their agents and dependents. According to Et Teberi, not a single person who had ever been connected with them was allowed to escape: every member of the family (with three exceptions) was put to death, even to their infant children, to the number, it is said, of over a thousand persons, and it need hardly be added that the "good" Haroun er Reshid confiscated to his own use the whole of their immense possessions. The race was absolutely exterminated, Yehya, Fezl and a brother of the former, Mohammed ben Khalid by name, being the only persons who appear to have survived this frightful massacre. The latter languished in prison during Er Reshid's life and was liberated by his successor. Some historians cast doubt upon this wholesale slaughter, but it is sufficient to ask, if it did not take place, how comes it that so numerous and notorious a family should all at once have so completely disappeared from the face of the earth as to leave no trace behind them?

The only members of the family whose fate is circumstantially related are Yehya and Fezl. With the former the sanguinary tyrant appears to have played as a cat with a mouse, hypocritically offering him his liberty; to which he replied that he preferred to remain with his son, with whom he was imprisoned, under circumstances of the greatest rigour, till his death, which occurred (A.D. 805) at the age of 74, after two years' imprisonment. His foster-brother Fezl Er Reshid caused to be beaten till he was well-nigh dead, to wring from him a confession that he had secreted property beyond the immense amount that the Khalif had confiscated, but to no avail. Fezl was healed of the frightful wounds caused by this horrible treatment [\(312\)](#) by a doctor, to whom, on his recovery, he sent twenty thousand dirhems [\(313\)](#) that he had borrowed from a friend; but the doctor, though poor and in

great distress, with rare magnanimity refused the money, saying, "I cannot accept payment for curing the greatest of the generous." In this wretched plight the two unfortunate survivors of the great Persian house displayed all the magnanimity for which they had been renowned in the days of their prosperity, supporting with high-souled patience and the noblest philosophy the miseries inflicted on them by the base rancour of the despot they had so faithfully served. The following touching anecdote will give some idea of the magnanimous spirit of the younger prisoner and Yehya yielded nothing to his son in the heroic long-suffering with which he bore his most unmerited woes. Fezl's love for his father was extreme: when in prison in winter they could not get warm water, which was necessary for Yehya, an old man over seventy, Fezl would take the copper ewer and apply it to his own stomach, so as in some measure to take off the chill for his father's use. He survived the latter three years and died in prison in November 808, four months only before the death of Er Reshid. [\(314\)](#)

The mock repentance shown by the latter, as evinced in his unreasoning anger against the innocent minister of his vengeance upon Jaafer, did not prevent him from offering the last indignities to the great Vizier's remains. His head he caused to be hung up at one and his trunk at the other end of the bridge over the Tigris, opposite the, part where the Serat, the canal on which Baghdad was originally built, joins that river, [\(315\)](#) Here they remained for some months, till Er Reshid, being about to leave Baghdad, caused them to be taken down and burnt like those of the vilest criminal, the greatest indignity that could be offered to a Muslim, whose religion attaches the utmost importance to due burial and inculcates the necessity of appearing before God whole as at birth.

Authorities differ as to what became of Abbaseh, the hapless cause of this horrible tragedy ; but, according to the most credible accounts, she was shut up in a chest and thrown into a pit, which her terrible brother caused to be then and there dug under the floor of her apartment. Then he sent for her children, who (says the old chronicler) showed like two pearls, looked upon them pitifully and with tears in his eyes and commanded them to be cast alive into the pit, which he then caused to be closed up, weeping crocodile-tears the while. Thus a MS. history, whose writer is unknown, but other authorities state that he had the children burnt alive. Ibn el Jauzi relates that Yehya's wife Zubeideh, Haroun's fostermother, after with great difficulty forcing her way into

his presence, showed him his milk teeth and the curls of hair that she had kept from his childhood and conjured him by these tokens of her claim upon him for fosterage (one of those most sacred to a Muslim) to spare her husband and son. The mean-minded Khalif was not to be moved, but offered to buy the relics of her; whereupon she, in her indignation, threw them down at his feet, saying, "I make thee a present of them." It is related by Mohammed ibn er Rehman, a contemporary *aalim* or man of learning and a member of the Khalif's family (the Hashimis), that he once saw at his mother's a woman of reverend mien, but poorly clad, who was introduced to him as the mother of Jaafer the Barmecide and said to him, "There was a time when four hundred female slaves stood awaiting my orders and yet I thought that my son did not provide for me in a manner adequate to my rank; but now my only wish is to have two sheepskins, one for a bed and the other for a covering." Mohammed gave her five hundred dirhems, [\(316\)](#) and she well-nigh died for excess of joy.

Among the various pretexts put forward by Er Reshid to cover the real reason of his rancorous spite against the Barmecides, he caused it to be bruited abroad that they were, though Muslims in outward show, fire-worshippers, like their ancestors, at heart; but the futility of this accusation is evident from the single fact that Fezl, when governor of Khorassan, pulled down the ancient temple (i.e. the Noubehar before mentioned) of the Fire, of which his forefathers had been the officiating priests, and built a magnificent mosque, exceeding in splendour the Temple at Mecca, in its stead. A more probable accusation is that they were at heart Zendics or Mundanists, a sect of Epicurean freethinkers, whose opinions, after a more primitive and practical fashion, followed in much the same Positivist track as those of the disciples of Auguste Comte in the present day and to which many of the most distinguished and ablest men of the day belonged. It is, therefore, not impossible or improbable that the Barmecides belonged to this sect; but it is fair to state that no shadow of proof exists of this. On the contrary, although they did not carry out the observances of Muslim ritual with the same mechanical exactitude as the hypocritical and superstitious tyrant their master, who is said to have prayed a hundred inclinations (*rekaät*) a day, they seem to have in no way offended against the tenets of Mohammedanism and to have fulfilled its external requirements with the moderate strictness of men of the world who made no pretension to pietism. Haroun attempted to give substance to this accusation by ordering Yehya and Fezl (as has been before mentioned) to the prison of the Zendics (*Hebs es Zenadikeh*).

The horror and discontent excited in Baghdad by the miserable fate of the much and justly loved family was extreme and neither the sanguinary edict issued by the tyrant, to the effect that all who mourned the Barmecides should share their fate, nor the executions that followed it, availed to silence the popular grief and indignation. Elegies were composed by hundreds upon the fallen house and all the poets of the time (even those attached to the court) mourned them. "It was a heavy blow for me," cries Er Recashi, one of Er Reshid's "boon companions," "to lose those princely stars by whose generous showers we were watered, when the skies withheld their rain. Let beneficence and the world say adieu to the glory of the Barmecides. By Allah, O son of Yehya, but for fear of spies and of the Khalif's eye, which sleeps not, we should compass thy gibbet [like the Kaabeh] and kiss it as men kiss the Sacred Stone!" "On seeing the sword fall on Jaafer," says Dibil el Khuzai, "and hearing the Khalif's crier proclaim vengeance on Yehya, I wept for the world and felt how true it is that the goal of man's life is the quitting it." And indeed it would be hard to name a poet of the day who did not tune his lyre to the same sorrowful strain.

The following anecdotes will give some idea of the violence of the popular mourning for the Barmecides. The Khalif, hearing that, despite his prohibition, an old man named Mundir used every day to take his station before one of their ruined houses and harangue the passers-by on the great and noble deeds of the fallen family, sent for him and sentenced him to death; but Mundir, obtaining leave to speak, drew so affecting a picture of the beneficence by which the Barmecides had rescued him from ruin and misery, that Haroun, moved to momentary repentance, not only pardoned him, but made him a present of a plate of gold, which the incorrigible old man received without a word of thanks, remarking only, "Yet another benefit that I owe to the Barmecides!" Abou Zekkar, a blind singer of Baghdad attached to Jaafer's household, who was present when Mesrour (or Yasir) cut off the letter's head, was instant with the executioner to slay him also and spare him (as he said) the misery of surviving his noble benefactor; which, being told to Haroun, he was touched by his fidelity and ordered him to be attached to his own suite, at the same salary as that allowed him by Jaafer. Ibrahim Ibn Othman ibn Nuheik was not so fortunate. Haroun, having heard of his lamentation for the Barmecides, invited him to the palace and after plying him freely with wine, drew from him, by hypocritical professions of regret for Jaafer's death, the avowal that he could not approve of his sovereign's treatment of so

excellent a man and his opinion that it would be difficult to replace him; whereupon the treacherous tyrant threw off the mask and saying, "God damn thee!" ordered him to immediate execution.

After endeavouring in vain, by measures of the utmost rigour, to suppress the public manifestations of regret and love for the Barmecides, Er Reshid was ultimately compelled to desist and allow the people to give vent to their feelings as they pleased; but the popular indignation and disaffection rose to such a pitch that he thought it well to leave Baghdad (whither he never returned) and take up his residence at Rekkeh, a city on the Euphrates, 115 miles E. of Aleppo. He soon felt the void left by the loss of his great ministers and gave way to bitter and unavailing remorse, in which, however, repentance had no part, it being merely sorrow for the results of the sin and not for the sin itself. "It is observed," says Price in his History of Mohammedanism, "that, on the extermination of the Barmecides, the affairs of Haroun fell into immediate and ir retrievable confusion. Treason, revolt and rebellion assailed him in different parts of the empire [especially in Khorassan, where Fezl's beneficent government had not been forgotten and which was the native country of the family. He felt himself from disease (and natural incapacity) unequal to the cares of government and expiated, by a tardy and unavailing regret, his unfeeling cruelty to the lamented race of Bermek." Fezl ben Rebya, whose treacherous malice had been largely instrumental in procuring the fall of the Barmecides, succeeded to their honours, but proved utterly unable to supply their place, and of this Er Reshid himself soon became conscious, as is shown by the following anecdote, related by El Jihshyari in his History of the Viziers. "Er Reshid," says he, "repented of his conduct to the Barmecides and deeply regretted the manner in which he had treated them. He said, before some of his brothers, that, were he but assured of the fidelity [that is to say, of the forgiveness of Yehya and Fezl, he would reinstate them in their offices. He used also to say [alluding evidently to Fezl ben Rebya], "Some people prompted us to punish our ablest and most faithful advisers and made us believe that themselves were capable of replacing them; but, when we did their will, they were not of the least use to us." And he recited the following line

God curse your ancestors! Spare us your calumnies or fill their place.

The royal murderer appears never to have recovered his peace of mind; it is said that he never knew refreshing

sleep after Jaafer's death and his confession is recorded that he would have given his whole realm to have called him back to life. According to Ibn Bedroun, his sister Uleiyeh once said to him, "My lord, I have not seen you enjoy a day of perfect happiness, since you put Jaafer to death. Why did you so?" To which Er Reshid replied, "If I thought my shirt knew the reason, I would tear it in pieces." When, after he had become convinced of the irreparableness of his loss, any blamed the Barmecides in his presence, he would say, "Perdition to your fathers! Cease to blame them or fill the void they have left." After the death of Jaafer and the imprisonment of Yehya and Fezl, he had no one in whom he could trust, having committed the fatal error of dividing his kingdom between his sons in his lifetime, and went in continual apprehension of being poisoned by the latter, fearing even to confide the knowledge of the lingering disease by which he died to his physicians, whom he suspected (not, it would seem, without cause) of being his sons' creatures, and it is said that even his old servant Mesrou, whom he had overwhelmed with bounties, but who was in the pay of El Amin, brought him during his last journey a bad (i.e. a hard-trotting camel), to the intent that his ailment might be aggravated thereby. When (in 805) his old and faithful servant and foster-father Yehya died in his prison, there was found in his pocket a paper on which he had written these words, "The accuser is gone before and the accused will soon follow: the Cadi will be that equitable judge who is never unjust and who hath no need of evidence." This paper was sent to Er Reshid, who wept the rest of the day, and his face for some days after bore striking marks of sorrow. In November, 808, the noble Fezl was also, at the age of forty-six, released by death from his sufferings and the Khalif, on hearing of his decease, said, "My term is near unto his." His presentiments did not deceive him, for he survived the foster-brother and friend, to whom he was so deeply indebted and whom he had so cruelly wronged, but four months. His last act was to sentence to death, on some fancied slight, his physician Jebril ibn Bekhtiyeshou, [\(317\)](#) but, having respited him till the morrow, he himself died in the night of the 23rd March, 809, at Tous in Khorassan, where the rapid progress of his disease had compelled him to suspend his campaign against the Transoxanian insurgents. He was forty-seven years of age and had reigned upwards of twenty-three. Such was the miserable end of the "great" Khalif.

III.

The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night contains two hundred and sixty-four stories of all lengths, from an anecdote of half a page to a "history" of several hundred pages. The stories are very unequally distributed over the different Nights, which again vary greatly in length, the first fifty or sixty being nearly three times the average length of those in the remaining portion of the work. The stories may be roughly divided into five principal categories, as follows

(I) "Histories" or long romances, founded or professing to be founded upon historical data and containing references to events which actually happened, such as the conquest of Syria and Persia by the Arabs and the wars between the Khalifs and the Emperors of Custentiniyeh or Constantinople. These are of comparatively rare occurrence, but comprise the longest stories in the collection, such as the history of King Omar ben Ennuman and his sons Sherkan and Zoulmekan (which alone occupies nearly an eighth part of the entire work and in which occur incidentally the subordinate stories of Taj el Mulouk and Aziz and Azizeh), and that of Gherib and his brother Agib, a romance of apparently Bedouin origin, much resembling such stories as Antar and Abou Zeid.

(2) Anecdotes and short stories dealing with historical personages and with incidents and adventures belonging to the actual every-day life of the periods to which they refer. These are very numerous and relate for the most part to the epoch of the Abbaside Khalifs. To this category belong the many stories and anecdotes in which Er Reshid, his wife Zubeideh, his sons El Amin, El Mamoun and Abou Isa, his brother Ibrahim ben el Mehdi, the poets and musicians Isaac of Mosul and his father Ibrahim, El Asmai, Abou Nuwas, etc., the Imam Abou Yousuf, the Barmecide princes Yehya, Fezl and Jaafer, and the various officers, governors and notables of the Khalifate, besides the Khosroes or ancient kings of Persia, Alexander the Great (Iskender the Two-horned, as the Orientals call him), and the Khalifs Omar ben el Khettab, Muawiyeh, Merwan, Abdulmelik, Suleiman, Omar ben Abdulaziz, Hisham and Welid ben Sehl (all of the house of Umeyyeh), the Abbaside Khalifs El Mensour, El Mutawekkil, El Mutezid and El Mustensir, the Fatimite Khalif El Hakim bi-amrillah, the Eyoubite Sultan El Melik en Nasir Selaheddin of Egypt (Saladin) and other historical personages figure. To this category

also belong the stories (so common among the Arabs and Persians) celebrating the extravagant generosity and hospitality of such typical personages as Hatim Tai, Maan ben Zaideh and the princes of the house of Bermek, and short isolated fragments of description, dealing, from a curiously distorted and mythical point of view, with historical or quasi-historical events. Of these latter singular examples are the story of the Khalif El Mamoun and the Pyramids of Egypt and the very curious version of the legend of Don Rodrigo (the last Gothic King of Spain) and the Tower of Hercules, called the City of Lebtaït⁽³¹⁸⁾ and containing a description (evidently mythical) of the wonderful treasures and rarities (among others the enchanted table of Suleiman ben Daoud) found by the Arab conquerors in the city. The town in question is of course intended for Toledo, but it is always somewhat difficult to identify the European cities and places referred to in Arabic fiction, or indeed history, as the Muslim conquerors were not content with Arabicizing the Spanish names, but actually (apparently moved by a sort of nostalgic impulse) applied to such cities as Seville, Granada, Jaen, Xeres, Murcia, Malaga, etc., the designations of towns and provinces in Egypt, Syria and other Mohammedan countries, such as Hems, Damascus, Kinesrin, Arden, Palestine, Misr (Egypt), Fustat (old Cairo), etc.

(3) Romances and romantic fictions, comprising three different kinds of tales. The first subdivision includes purely romantic stories of considerable length, referring to no particular historical epoch and generally making free use of supernatural persons and agencies; such as the stories of Kemerezzeman and Budour, Aziz and Azizeh, Uns el Wujoud and the Vizier's Daughter Rosebud, The Enchanted Horse, the Queen of the Serpents, Hassan of Bassora and the King's Daughter of the Jinn, Jouder and his Brothers, Seif el Mulouk and Bediya el Jemal, Marouf, etc., etc. Under the second head may be classed stories apparently purely fictitious, but whose scene is laid in some definite historical epoch, in which are introduced historical personages and whose incidents and descriptions reproduce the manners and local circumstance of such cities as Baghdad, Bassora, Mosul, Damascus and Cairo and such periods as those of the Khalifs of the Abbaside dynasty or the Eyoubite Sultans of Egypt. These also are for the most part of considerable length and comprise such tales as the Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad, Nouredin and the Fair Persian, Ali ben Bekkar and Shemsennehar, Ghanim ben Eyoub, Alaeddin Abou esh Shamat, The Voyages of Sindbad, Abdallah ben Fazil and his brothers, Ali Nouredin and the King's Daughter of the Franks, etc., etc. In this subdivision must also be included the stories

or *nouvelles*⁽³¹⁹⁾ detailing the doings of the rogues, sharpers and impostors of the time of the Khalifs and their encounters with the police of Baghdad and Cairo (who, by the by, appear like Vidocq and others, to have been drawn almost exclusively from the criminal classes and to have held their grades as the prizes of proved eminence in successful roguery), a class of fiction much favoured in the East, of which certain examples, eg. the stories of the Barber and his Brothers, the Rogueries of Delileh the Crafty and her Daughter Zeyneb the Trickstress and the Adventures of Quicksilver Ali of Cairo (all in the Thousand and One Nights,) forcibly remind one of such "picaresque" novels of Lesage, Quevedo, Aleman and others, as Guzman de Alfarache, Lazarillo de Tormes, El Gran Tacano, Gil Blas, etc., and from which indeed it is probable that these latter had in some respects an almost direct origin. The third subdivision embraces the most numerous section of the work, i.e. such altogether fictitious short stories and legends, romantic or sentimental, as may conveniently be classed under the general heading of contes fantastiques. To this class belong the stories of miracles and saints, in which Muslim literature is so rich, such as The Apples of Paradise, The Pious Black Slave, The Blacksmith who could handle fire without hurt, The Ferryman and the Hermit, etc., etc.; the equally favourite class of stories of unfortunate lovers, such as Otbeh and Reyya and The Mad Lover, and such purely fantastic tales as Abou Mohammed the Lazy, The Man who never laughed again, The Enchanted Springs, The House with the Belvedere, The City of Irem, the three stories of the Angel of Death, etc., etc.; and lastly, such "merry gestes" and Boccaccio-like "inventions" as Ali the Persian and the Kurd Sharper, The Man of Yemen and his Six Slave-girls, The Man who saw the Night of Power, The Simpleton and the Sharper, the three stories of foolish Schoolmasters, The Lady and her Five Suitors (one of many stories of trickery practised by women upon their husbands or lovers), and most of the series of short tales known as "The Malice of Women." It is into this latter portion of the collection that European authors appear to have dipped most freely, many of the incidents in works of the Decameron and Heptameron kind and in such bodies of popular fiction as those collected or expanded by Grimm, Asbjornsen, Andersen, etc., etc., bearing unmistakable traces of affinity, immediate or derivative, with the Thousand and One Nights.

(4) Fables and apologues or short moral stories, such as The Cat and the Crow, The Birds and Beasts and the Son of Adam and the parables and moral instances of which the (Indian) story of Jelyaad and Shimas in great

part consists.

(g) Tales, so called, such as Taweddud, the examination of Nuzhet ez Zeman before Sherkan (Vol. II. pp. 80-96), of Wird Khan before his father (Vol. VIII. pp. 217-243) and the pietistic exertions of Dhat ed Dewahi and her damsels before Omar ben Ennuman (Vol. II pp. 120-134), in which. the slightest thread of story serves as an excuse for the display of the heterogeneous "learning" (as the Arabs understood the word) of the author and for endless dissertations upon all things human and divine and sundry others. This class of story, though undeniably curious from the student's point of view, has little or no interest for the general reader, who will probably be inclined to agree with De Sacy that, if, in a certain light, edifying, it is "rien moms qu'amusant."

Perhaps the most salient characteristic of the Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night is the extreme simplicity of its style. Nothing can be more unlike the idea of barbaric splendour, of excessive and heterogeneous ornament, that we are accustomed to associate with the name, than the majority of the tales that compose the collection. The life described in it is mainly that of the people, those Arabs so essentially brave, sober, hospitable and kindly, almost hysterically sensitive to emotions of love and pity, as well as to artistic impressions, yet susceptible of being roused to strange excesses of ferocity and brutality, to be soon followed by bitter and unavailing repentance--a people whom extreme sensibility of the nervous tissue inclines to excess of sensuous enjoyment, yet who are capable of enduring without a murmur the severest hardships and of suffering patiently the most cruel vicissitudes of fortune, without other complaint than that implied in the utterance of the Koranic formula (pronouncing which the Prophet has promised that no true believer shall be confounded), "There is no power and no virtue but in God the Most High, the Supreme!" Especially in that portion which deals with the life and manners of the Arabs of Syria and Chaldaea, under the Khalifate of the house of Abbas, are there to be found stories that, in their bright simplicity or poignant pathos, remind one more of an old Märchen than of what is generally known as Eastern fiction.

The Thousand and One Nights, composed, to all appearance, mainly of stories written from dictation and probably originally invented, in a quasi-extempore fashion, for public recitation, are necessarily for the most part confined to a purely conversational and so-called vulgar style. The crabbedness of classical Arabic, as

exemplified in the Koran, with its abrupt abridgments and its mysterious hiatuses, is happily in general absent from its pages, nor are they often defaced by the still more terrible refinements of the ornate manner (*el bediya*, as it is technically called), of which a favourable specimen is the celebrated Mecamat of El Heriri and driven to extremity by the ingenious perversions of whose apostles, a savant cited by the learned author of the "Prolegomena" asserts it to be the dearest wish of his heart to see the Euphuists, who cultivated the science of ornaments in prose and verse, well flogged in public, whilst a crier proclaimed aloud their misdeeds, for the edification of the literary classes. Mr. Lane, indeed, in the notes to his version, gives us the sinister intelligence that certain Egyptian rhetoricians, dissatisfied with what they considered the crude and vulgar style of the collection, had intimated their intention of revising and remodelling it; and I confess that to me such an undertaking seems as great a profanation as would be the remodelling of the Canterbury Tales or the Mort d'Arthur.

The splendour of description, the showers of barbaric pearl and gold, that are generally attributed to the work, exist but in isolated instances. The descriptions are usually of an extreme naive and sometimes almost childish kind and constantly involve repetitions and amplifications such as characterise a story told to a child. They run generally in the same grooves and have a sort of gamut of standard comparisons, out of which they rarely stray. A beautiful youth is always a full moon, a slender and graceful girl a willow-wand or a thirsty gazelle; a mole on the cheek is a globule of ambergris, the eyebrows are a bended bow, the nose a curved sabre, the lips coral or Solomon's seal; the forehead is the new moon rising from the night of the hair, the eyes are lakes of jet or narcissus, the cheeks roses or blood-red anemones, the browlocks scorpions, the ringlets chains of ambergris, upholding the lamp of the face, the shape a lance or a flowering cane set in a hill of sand, the breasts half pomegranates or caskets of ivory and the teeth a necklace of pearls, a spray of camomile petals or the glittering seeds of the pomegranate set in their ruby pulp; and emotions and sentiments are rendered in much the same kind of figurative shorthand. Nevertheless, the constant recurrence of the same elements of description does not produce monotony. Even as in music the multiform progressions of the various keys inform the unity of the unchanging gamut with limitless variations of combination and effect, so the play of sentiment and circumstance in the Arabian tales perpetually induces in the rigid scale of their ornaments fresh permutations of

shifting colour and new harmonies of phantasy and expression.

The grace of pathos that hallows so many of its pages constitutes perhaps the chief charm of the collection, although the other features whose presence should contribute to the unity of a great romantic work are no less conspicuous, when the occasion calls for their display. What can be more poignant in its sad simplicity than *The Mad Lover* or *The Lovers of the Benou Udhreh*,⁽³²⁰⁾ more dramatic in its almost tragic intensity than *The Scavenger* and the *Noble Lady of Baghdad*, more engaging, in its homely pathos, than the story of the forlorn royal children in Jerusalem and their adventures with the rascal Bedouin and the kind simple-souled stoker?⁽³²¹⁾ Where shall we find a more fervid *conts bleu* of devotion than *The Apples of Paradise*⁽³²²⁾ or *The Devout Prince* or "legendes dorées" more instinct with the austere poetry of asceticism than *The Pious Black Slave*,⁽³²³⁾ *The Ferryman* and the *Hermit*,⁽³²⁴⁾ or *Abou Durraj* and the *Leper*? For sustained romantic exultation, it would be hard to surpass *The City of Brass* or the legend of *Many-columned Irem*, and few languages can produce such masterpieces of melancholy beauty as *The Blacksmith* who could handle fire without hurt or *The Man* who never laughed again, strains that linger in the thought like the tones of that "alts, ernste Weise " which haunts the hearing of the dying *Tristan* in the greatest of musical dramas. Nor is the power of effective poetical portraiture lacking, when required, *teste* the vivid picture of the *Khalif's* pleasure garden at *Baghdad*⁽³²⁵⁾ and the exquisitely imaginative description of the lute in *Ali Nouredin* and the *Frank King's Daughter*;⁽³²⁶⁾ and when the movement of the story calls for the exercise of an austerer faculty, as in the battle-scenes of *Omar ben Ennuman* or *Gherib*, the text quickens into a stern and nervous energy, a vivid and unfaltering concision, that could hardly be excelled by *Homer* or *Dante*. Equally remarkable is the wealth of humour and wit that characterizes the work, whether (as in *Ali the Persian* and the *Kurd Sharper*) it bring to mind the headlong horseplay of *Rabelais* or (as in the episode of the *Stoker*,⁽³²⁷⁾ of the *Hashish-Eater* in *Ali Shar*,⁽³²⁸⁾ or of *Jaafer* and the old *Bedouin*) the rough but effective burlesque of *John Heywood* and the mediaeval farce-writers, whether (as in the anecdotes of *Abou Nuwas*) it recall the cynical humour of *Boccaccio*, or (as in *Kafour*⁽³²⁹⁾ and *Khelifeh*) the cudgel strokes of drollery, half naive, half caustic, of *Sancho* or *Sganarelle*, or (as in the *Man*

of Yemen and his Six Slave-girls) the deliberate wit of the *Moyen de Parvenir*, it is always apt and always effective, in *utrumque paratus*, equally at home with the rough and ready weapons of popular repartee and the more keenly attuned arms of satire and word-fence. The whole Oriental world of the Khalifate re-lives for us in these enchanted pages, from which nothing is rejected, nothing excluded as common or unclean, and in which all classes of the Muslim world are represented, king and slave, courtier and countryman, pietist and freethinker, learned and ignorant, wise and foolish, moralist and debauches. Satire and sentiment, love and lewdness, wit and wisdom, holiness and hypocrisy, chase each other through the shifting scenes of this magic lantern of the East, in which the pure and self-sacrificing tenderness of an Azizeh "sticks fiery off indeed" from the selfish sensuality of her rivals, and the strains of exalted morality and passionate devoutness, the traits of heroic faith and unwearying magnanimity, that jostle with the satyr- orgies of an Abou Nuwas and the fiendish treachery of an Aboukir, show but the goodlier for the blackness of the baseness that encompasses them.

One of the chief stumbling-blocks in the path of a translator of the *Thousand and One Nights* is the peculiar shapelessness of Arabic prose. Without stops, capital or other indications of breach of continuity and practically undivided into clauses or paragraphs, the text, if unbroken by verse, runs on in one long sentence, trailing after it a cumbrous train of accumulated "ands" and "thens," heedless of symmetry of phrase or clearness of expression and little careful to order the succession of the words in accordance with that of the sense, so that it is not uncommon to find some important member of a previous phrase cast up high and dry in the midst of a strange clause several lines in advance, for the Arab author, after he has apparently finished with one division of a subject and well entered another, thinks nothing of pulling short up and trying back for the purpose of making some addition of real or fancied necessity to the foregone passage of description or enumeration. To this most irritating peculiarity must be added a constant recurrence of useless repetitions and an all-pervading tautology, together with a habit of aggravating the (to the European ear) inherent incoherence of Eastern composition by a perpetual readiness to sacrifice directness and clarity of expression, if an *outré* turn of speech, a jingle of words or a trifling play of meanings can be secured by the employment of an obscure trope or a far-fetched synonym. One of the especial ornaments of Arabic prose (an excrescence born of the excessive facilities for rhyme afforded by a language whose every speaker is a versifier and the extravagant sensibility of Eastern peoples to

antithesis of all kinds, whether of sound or thought) is the use of what is called *seja* or rhyming prose, with whose jingling tags it is the summit of every Arab author's ambition to deck or disfigure (les deux se disent) his pages, and rare indeed is the virtue of the writer who carries self-denial so far as to neglect an opportunity of dragging in this figure, too often at the expense of sense and coherence. The Koran, which in the eyes of every true believer is impeccable and the model of all excellence, from the literary, as well as from the moral and religious point of view, is almost entirely written in this style, and as all post-Mohammedan literature, so far, at least, as the rules of composition are concerned, is modelled upon this all-sufficing volume, the use of the *seja* has, like a noxious water-weed that checks the current of a stream, overrun the native vigour of Arab prose and has by the sectaries of the *style fleuri* been carried to such an excess that its abuse has given rise to the irreverent dictum, *es seja feja*, rhyming prose is vexation of spirit. Happily, however, the Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night is written in a so-called vulgar style and is therefore, though not free from the excrescence in question, less universally disfigured by it than works of more pretension to literary merit.

In presence of these difficulties, absolute literality is impossible to the translator who has any regard for style, and he is, therefore, compelled in some sort to remodel his original, phrase by phrase and even page by page, if, with all possible respect for fidelity to word and sense, he desire to spare his reader the weariness of wading through a jungle of phrases and sentences, in which the eye of the scholar alone can discern form and coherence.

The following passage, selected almost at random from the text of the Thousand and One Night, will give some idea of the literal style of the original. Many more flagrant specimens might have been chosen and it would not be difficult to quote passages in which the faults of the composition envelope the meaning in a confusion well-nigh inextricable, especially where (as in the case of the beleaguering of Constantinople by the Muslims⁽³³⁰⁾) the resource of comparison and collation with other texts of the story is wanting, the History of King Omar ben Ennuman being omitted from the Breslau Edition; but I prefer to cite one which offers no extravagant example of the defects of which I have spoken.

When the morning morrowed, he anointed the feet of him with the water the which they two had taken it from

the herb and descended to the sea and went walking in it days and nights and he wondering at the horrors of the sea and the marvels of it and the rarities of it and he ceased not going upon the face of the water till he came to an island as indeed it [were] Paradise so Beloukiya went up to that island and became wondering at it and at the beauty of it and wandered in it and saw it a great island the dust of it saffron and the gravel of it of cornelian and precious stones and the hedges of it jessamine and the vegetation of it of the goodliest of the trees and the brightest of the sweet-scented herbs and the sweetest of them and in it springs running and the brushwood of it of the Comorin aloes and the Sumatra aloes and the reeds of it sugar-cane and around it the rose and the narcissus and the amaranth and the Billy-flower and the camomile and the lily and the violet and all that in it [were] kinds and colours and the birds of it warbled upon those trees and it was fair of attributes spacious of sides abundant of good things indeed it comprised all of beauty and charms and the warbling of the birds of it [was] pleasanter than the tones [of the chanters] of the Koran⁽³³¹⁾ and the trees of it tall and the birds of it speaking and the streams of it flowing and the springs of it running and the waters of it sweet and in it the gazelles frisked and the wild cattle came and went and the birds warbled on those branches and consoled the lover the love-afflicted.

A comparison of the above literal rendering with my previous translation (Vol. V. p. 66) of the passage will show that I have confined myself to arranging the disjecta membra of the original in their natural order, following the original wording as closely as is consistent with English idiom and the necessity of breaking up the endless phrases of the Arabic into convenient sentences and purging them from the excrescences of tautology and repetition that deface the text. Upon this principle I have throughout proceeded, endeavouring as far as possible to conciliate the claims of literality and fidelity to the characteristic idioms of the original with the genius of English prose and the exigencies of style. If, in this respect, some discrepancies should appear between the earlier and the latter parts of the translation, they must be attributed to the natural gradual change of method consequent on the experience gained in the course of the long labour of love which has occupied the leisure hours of seven years of a professional life and which I have now brought to an end, if not (in view of the enormous difficulties which the work of translation presents) with entire satisfaction to myself, at least, with the feeling that it is not for want of pains that I have, in many instances of which I am but too sensible, fallen short

of my ideal.

The following is a specimen of the rhyming prose above mentioned, rendered in the jingle of the original. It is evident that it would have been by no means difficult to keep up the imitation throughout, but, upon consideration, I came, rightly or wrongly, to the conclusion that it was undesirable to do so, as it seemed to me that the *seja*-form was utterly foreign to the genius of English prose and that its preservation would be fatal to all vigour and harmony of style.

This letter is from him whom passion wastes away and whom desire doth slay and misery destroys him and dismay, him who of life despairs and looks for nought but death to end his cares, none is there to his mourning heart comfort or succour will impart, nor for his wakeful eye 'gainst care is helper nigh; his day is past in fire, his night in torment dire; his body for emaciation's wasted sore, and there comes to him no messenger from her he doth adore.

The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night contains a very large quantity of verse, unequally distributed throughout the various tales, [\(332\)](#) and before proceeding to speak of this feature of the work, it may interest my readers if I give a brief outline of the general principles upon which the prosody of the Arabs is founded. The invariable unit, upon which Arabic (and Persian) verse is built, is the *beit* or line (usually but improperly rendered "couplet"). The word *beit* signifies literally "a house," [\(333\)](#) but by analogy "a tent" (and from this we may fairly conclude at least this fundamental part of Arabic prosody to have originated with the Bedouins or Arabs of the desert, as it is only they who would be likely to call a tent a house) [\(334\)](#) the verse being whimsically regarded by the Arabs as an erection; and this simile is carried out in the nomenclature of the different parts of the line, one foot being called a "tent-pole," another a "tent-peg" and the two hemistichs of the verse being known as the folds or leaves of the double door of the tent. Each *beit* is divided into two hemistichs of equal length, each containing three or four feet of two, three, four or five syllables, and the whole verse is known as a hexameter or octameter, according as it contains six or eight feet, or from sixteen to thirty-two syllables. A peculiarity of Arabic verse is the excess of long syllables over short and the absence of the dactyl

and dibrach, the swiftest feet in use among Europeans, a characteristic which produces a graver and more stately movement of the rhythm than is common in European poetry. I should perhaps, however, observe that the qualifications "long" and "short" are somewhat empirically applied to the syllables of Arabic feet, as their quantities appear to be hardly appreciable by an European ear, the "long," in particular, being of a shifting character, so much so, indeed, that certain readers of the Koran are said to have been known to make use of no less than seven varieties of this quantity. This being the case, it has been suggested by the eminent French Orientalist, M. Stanislas Guiraud, that musical notation should be applied to the determining of the Arabic rhythms, but, notwithstanding the ingenuity and ability of his treatise on the subject, his tentatives do not as yet appear to have brought about any very definite result. Several Arabists of distinction, German and English, have indeed endeavoured, by the use of quantitative signs, to reproduce in their own languages the precise rhythm and accent of Arabic verse; but I confess that to myself, notwithstanding the ability and ingenuity displayed by the translators (who indeed have been the first to acknowledge the ill success of their experiments and to pronounce against the feasibility of representing the Oriental metres by a similar arrangement of feet and accents in European verse), the result seems still more unsatisfactory and inartistic than that of the many unsuccessful attempts to introduce Greek and Latin rhythms into English metre. The genius of the two languages (Arabic and English) belonging, as they do, to opposite groups of speech-form, presents no point of union; and it seems to me, therefore, that the only satisfactory way of rendering Arabic poetry in English verse is to content oneself generally with observing the exterior form of the stanza, the movement of the rhyme and (as far as possible) the identity in number of the syllables composing the beits.

The principal Arabic metres are sixteen in number, each subdivided by numerous variations; and it may, perhaps, be interesting to note here the somewhat whimsical names by which they are known in the East. The generic name given to them is *behr*, literally "sea," but, by analogy, the space comprised within the walls of a tent, thus continuing the metaphor before mentioned, and they are distinguished individually as the long, the extended, the open, the copious, the perfect, the trilling, the tremulous, the running, the swift, the flowing, the light, the analogous, the improvised, the curtailed, the approximative and the consecutive. The English reader will naturally suppose that these names are in some way descriptive and will doubtless be surprised to hear (and

this fact alone will amply suffice to show how *toto coelo* the genius of Oriental prosody differs from that of the West) that, in the opinion of those scholars who have most radically studied the question, they have no analogy whatever with the character of the various metres, but were (as far, at least, as concerns the thirteen primitive metres) manufactured by the inventor, as a mere *memoria technica*, after the model (i.e. the grammatical measure) of the fundamental feet upon which the respective "circles" or groups of metres are based. I should perhaps mention here that the system of Arabic prosody is said to have been invented by one Khelil, a grammarian, and to have been suggested to him by the strokes of a blacksmith's hammer upon an anvil, not the most promising combination of circumstance for the birth of so important a branch of art.

The principal form used in Arabic poetry (and that which most frequently occurs in the Thousand and One Nights) is the *Kesideh* or *Purpose-poem*; practically identical with the better-known (Persian) form of the Ghazel or love-song par excellence, with the exception that the latter is limited to eighteen beits or verses and must contain the name of the poet in the last beit. The *Kesideh* may be composed in any one of the sixteen metres and is built upon a single rhyme, the two hemistichs of the first beit rhyming with each other and with the second hemistich of each succeeding beit to the end of the poem, however long it may be. It is a curious fact that the same prohibition of *enjambement*, or the carrying on of the sense from one verse (or pair of hemistichs) to another, obtains in Arabic as in French classic verse, it being considered a fault not to complete the sense in the one verse. It is allowable to repeat the same rhyming word, but (according to the strict laws of prosody) not unless seven verses intervene. However, this and the preceding rule are constantly violated by Arab poets, who appear to have little scruple in repeating the rhyming word whenever it suits them, and in Persian verse (whose laws are essentially the same as those of Arabic prosody) the licence is still greater, the same word in the same sense being allowed to form the rhyme throughout a whole ghazel. The *Kitah* or Fragment, which is also of frequent occurrence in the work, is only a portion of a *Kesideh*, other than the *metla*, first or double-rhyme verse. The *Rubai* or quatrain is also a common form. It consists of four hemistichs rhyming with each other. The only other verse-form that occurs with any frequency is the *Mukhemmes* or Cinquain, a succession of stanzas, each formed of two beits and a hemistich, the five hemistichs of the first stanza having the same rhyme, whilst the first four of each succeeding stanza take a new rhyme and the fifth rhymes with the first stanza to the

end of the poem. Another form of the Mukhemmes differs only from the first in that the last hemistichs of the stanzas rhyme with each other only, independently of the other hemistichs of the first stanza. The *Murebbes* or foursome song occurs once only in the Nights [\(335\)](#) and consists of a series of two-beit stanzas, the first three hemistichs of each of which rhyme with each other only, independently of the rest of the poem, and the fourth with that of every other stanza.

The *Muweshshih* or Ballad is another form which occurs once only in the Thousand and One Nights. [\(336\)](#) It is, perhaps, the most elaborate verse-form in the language and is said to have been invented by the Muslim poets of Spain, shortly after the Conquest, and to have been adopted from them by their brethren of Egypt and Syria. It consists of a succession of three-line stanzas, in the first of which all six hemistichs end with the same rhyme. In the second and succeeding stanzas, the first line and the first hemistich of the second line take a new rhyme; but the second hemistich of the second line resumes the rhyme of the first stanza and is followed by the third line of the latter, serving as a refrain to each stanza of the poem, which is often of considerable length. Other forms of the Muweshshih exist, but the above is the only one found in the Thousand and One Nights. Single lines are of frequent occurrence, which are apparently "blank" (that is to say, the two hemistichs of which do not rhyme with each other), but this is only apparent, as the verses in question are nothing more than an extract from a Kesideh, blank verse having no existence in Arab poetry.

One of the chief characteristics of Arabic verse is ingenuity and it is indeed from the Muslim poets of Spain and Portugal that the Cavalier Marino, Gongora and our own Euphuists seem, more or less directly, to have borrowed the conceits and agudezas with which their pages bristle. The Arab poet appears too often to aim at making his verse a sort of logogriph, susceptible of more than one meaning, and this peculiarity, combined with a passion for obscure synonyms and doubtful metaphors and an excessive use of syntactical and rhetorical figures (particularly those of ellipsis, enallage, anacoluthon, hyperbaton, metonymy, synecdoche and paronomasia) and the national tendency to imitate the incoherent abruptness of the Koran, too often renders Arabic verse a tangled skein, to unravel which demands an amount of labour and consideration hardly to be estimated by the result, as it appears in the form of translation. Add to this the mechanical difficulty of the

transfer of idiom and metrical form from one language to another having no point in common with it and the special crux established by the indispensable condition of the monorhyme (often carried to an extraordinary length, as in Vol. VIII. pp. 25-27, where one unlucky assonance must furnish forth no less than forty-eight rhymes), and it will be evident that the labour of rendering into isometrical English the vast body of verse contained in the Thousand and One Nights is one of no common hardship and that the translator who has, with perhaps too rash a confidence, undertaken so exacting a task, may fairly ask for no common indulgence towards the shortcomings of which he is himself abundantly conscious.

The Thousand and One Nights, apart from its attraction as the most comprehensive compendium of national romance in existence, is remarkable as presenting a singularly copious anthology of Arab verse. Almost all the great poets of the Khalifate, as well as many of those who preceded or were contemporaneous with the Prophet, are represented in its pages. Among the immense mass of metrical quotation contained in the various tales, I have been able, *currente calamo*, to identify selections from the works of no less than thirty-four of the chief poets of Islam, namely, Imrulcais, Elcameh ibn Abadeh, Antar, Adi ben Zeid, En Nabigheh edh Dhubyani, Amr ben Madi Kerib, Kab ben Zuheir, Jemil, Jerir, Uteiyeh, Abou Nuwas, Abou Temmam, El Asmai, El Mutenebbi, El Heriri, Behaeddin Zuheir, Beshr ibn Burd, Er Recashi, Abou Musab, El Buhturi, Es Senefi, En Naweji (author or compiler of the famous anacreontic collection, the *Helbeit el Kumeit* or Race Course of the Bay Horse), ⁽³³⁷⁾ Dibil el Khuzai, Muslim ben el Welid el Ansari, En Nemri, El Hajiri, El Menazi, Ibn Ebbad, Aboulfiras el Hemdani, El Muhellebi, Ion Jami, Et Tughrai, Ibn Abdoun el Andalousi and Ibn el Mutezz, and a more minute examination would no doubt largely add to the above list. As far as I can judge, from a cursory inspection, the Egyptian and Spanish Arabic poets are less fully represented in the collection than their brethren of Irak, Syria and Arabia, and it is, by the way, a notable fact, and one which tells strongly against Von Hammer's theory of the Persian origin of the work, that no single extract or translation from Persian verse is, to the best of my belief, known to exist in it.

The verse in the Thousand and One Nights is of the most various quality, ranging from high beauty to the utmost baldness. It rarely answers to our idea of that usually inserted in narrative fiction and contains little that

can be described as songs, Its quality is often rhetorical rather than lyrical, and it appears frequently to have been inserted somewhat in the same way as we should use engravings or woodcuts, to illustrate and explain the prose text, or as music is employed in melodrama. It is often made use of to express a sudden emotion or exaltation of sentiment on the part of the personages introduced, much as the prose in Shakespeare's and other plays of the Elizabethan era rises occasionally into blank or rhymed verse, under stress of increased elevation or intensity of thought and feeling. As may be expected from a list of contributors which includes so many of the most renowned singers of Muslim civilisation, we are often presented with poetry worthy of the name, whilst, on the other hand, many of the pieces [\(338\)](#) are mere rhymed amplifications of the prose text and seem to have been composed for the purpose by the compilers or the various copyists through whose hands the work must have passed. Again, (as in *Uns el Wujoud*) the verse in some of the tales has evidently been written expressly for their illustration and (though naturally of very unequal value) is often by no means lacking in poetic beauty and vigour, [\(339\)](#) thus proving that among the anonymous authors of the various parts of the work were poets of no mean ability.

The End.