Still the passages in the Luzumiyāt remained; and the explanation given of them saved the poet's orthodoxy at the expense of his ability. His eccentric opinions were attributed to the necessities of the difficult metre in which he wrote. And in general, it may be added, although Eastern writers respect the ingenuity of the Luzumiyāt, and the great command of the Arabic language which they display, they regard the contents as 'poor stuff.' It was therefore a rise in the world for these poems when the Austrian critic, Hammer-Purgstall, declared that their author showed himself in them to be a philosopher as well as a great poet. Little value was indeed assigned to Hammer-Purgstall's opinion: but a writer of great authority, Von Kremer, made them the subject of repeated study, and in his most exhaustive treatise on them declares that Abu ʿl-ʿAlī was many centuries before his time. The value of Von Kremer's essays will be acknowledged even by those who regard his estimate as seriously exaggerated. That there are suggestions contained in this Diwān which are remarkable for the age in which it was composed need not be denied: but it is very clear that the author was unconscious of their value, unable to follow them out, and unable to adhere to them consistently. The Mohammedan critics who thought he let his opinions be guided by his pen probably came near the truth. And any man who writes in such letters as the metre of the Luzumiyāt imposes can exercise but slight control over his thoughts.

Some more of his poems were yet more artificial in character than the Luzumiyāt; and one epigram in this style is preserved. A work called Forgiveness would also appear to be in existence, and to be remarkable in character. Of his philological writings we possess the first half of his commentary on Mutanabbi's, which was superseded by later works, which however mention it honourably. A worthy

---

1 Infra, p. 179.
2 Ibn Khallikan I. 42. Wallis, Anecdote I. 100, gives a pathetic account of the taking of Ma'arrah from theleasing of the Crusaders.
3 Infra, p. 479. "Nothing says 100 pages.
4 The Letter of the 'Angels.' See the Catalogue, ed. 2, I. 194.
6 Infra.
the copy whence both the Leyden and the Beyrut MSS. are derived.
that the poet's correspondence was not large is therefore erroneous.
The occasions which led to the composition of several of these
documents have already come under our notice: one or two others
refer to literary schemes or literary matters; we learn that Abu
'L-Allâh was not only visited by disciples, but that his help was sought
by persons in need of books, and that literary projects were submitted
to him by persons doubtless willing and able to remunerate them;
and though in Letter XXXVI he expresses doubts about his ability
to abridge Kahlâh wa-Dinnah for 'Aziz al-da'ûlah, we learn from the
catalogue of his writings that he actually carried this project out.
Letters II and XXVII also are connected with books; and the authors
who are congratulated in them must have felt flattered by the intimate
acquaintance which Abu 'L-Allâh displays with their writings. Letter
XXVII is not only extraordinarily learned, but also gives some in-
teresting observations on metrical questions which the ordinary hand-
books pass over. The longest, Letter XXX, as a letter of consolation
challenges comparison with the many classical attempts that have
been made to deal with this subject. A writer somewhat later than
Abu 'L-Allâh, Ibn 'Abûdîn, in composing a poetical letter of condolence,1
adopts the same line as Abu 'L-Allâh, i.e., he endeavours to make
a characteristic list of persons who had died before, and hence gives
a sketch of universal history. There is no great originality about
this idea, which was anticipated by Lucretius. The first part of Abu
'L-Allâh's list is little more than a paraphrase in rhymed prose of some
chapters of Ibn Kusâibûh's Manual of History. The second part,
containing descriptions of the animals that die, is closely modelled
on earlier performances by Arabic writers, in particular a poem by
an author called Dîk al-Îhnî, of which a large fragment is preserved
in the Aghâzî.2 The accounts of the animals are taken from many
authors,3 especially the Hudithite poets and Farazîdâl. The concluding
part of the epistle however rises to warm and affecting eloquence, of
which it may be hoped that all the force is not lost in the translation.
Those letters which have not been noticed are private and domestic

1 Published by Deyr. 2 Aghâzî XII. 147.
3 The descriptions of the lions seems modelled on that by Ibn Abl-Rahâyûbî, Aghâzî IV. 162.

THE EPISTOLARY STYLE.

in character, and can be paralleled from the correspondence of the other
eminent letter-writers, as well as from the ordinary collections of poems.
In all the style is highly artificial, and the employment of proverbs1 and
idioms carried to a degree which even native taste might not approve.
It is a style which is as far as possible removed from European ideas of
letter-writing in the nineteenth century; but it has a good deal in common
with the elegant epistle of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.4

The most striking characteristics of the epistolary style are three—
the verbosity of the proverbs, the artificial and pedantic character of
the language, and the rhyme. The epistolary style, possibly in all
three points, is said to have been started by Abu Ghâlib 'Abîd Al-
Hamîdî5 (d. 132), the secretary of the last Urnayyâd Câlîsh, Marwîn,
whose epistles were at one time greatly admired, and served as models
to later epistolographers. The employment of choice or even obsolete
diction in letters addressed to eminent persons is however earlier
than Abu Ghâlib's time; one of the correspondents of Hajjâj in the
first century, according to an off-quotation anecdote, employed a philo-
logical expert to select phrases for him;1 and those compositions
which were intended not only to convey a message of immediate
importance, but to have permanent literary value, had a tendency to
get more and more obscure; and thus the letters of Jâhîch which had
a high reputation in the third century were criticized by Abu 'L-Fadlî
of Hamadhân in the fourth as wanting in artific.5 Abu 'L-Fadlî indeed
boasted that he could employ no less than 400 different artifices in his
epistles, many of which had already been tried in poetry by Kazîm
the metrician, while others ascribed their introduction to a yet earlier
writer, Ibn Hamîsh.6 These artifices were however rarely employed
but as experiments, and in the manipulation of them Abu 'L-Fadlî
was outdone by his successor Hajjâj.

Long before Abu 'L-Allâh's time an elaborate system of conventions
had been devised, whereby the mode of address differed with the rank

1 Letter VII is in part little else than a cast of proverbs.
2 Deyr, in the proem to the Dissertation on Philology, asks if proverbs may not be used in
epistles, where may they be used?
3 Ibn Khazîlîn L. 360. 4 Kânîsh I. 164.
4 Zâhr al-Idîb II. 100.
5 Aghâzî IV. 163. 6 Aghâzî IV. 106.
of the individual addressed. As Letter IV is an apology for pitching a former letter (Letter III?) too high, it is interesting to read the rules on this subject given in a handbook some hundreds years earlier than the letter to which reference has been made. 'There is a convention,' says the author of the 'Umduh,' that the most honourable form of initial greeting is God prolong our lord, and the next most honourable God prolong the existence of my lord. They regard it as a blench to vary the mode of address in different parts of the same letter, and think any one who does so a rustic; I mean for a man to write first God prolong the existence of our or my lord, and to say in the course of the letter God accomplish your hopes, and if you think fit. . . . 'There is a convention that when a man addresses his equal he should say so, if you think fit to do so and so, you will do it, not then please yourself; but if the person addressed is slightly below the writer, he may say then please yourself or I desire that you should do so and so; but if he be considerably below the writer in station, he should write then it behoves you to do so and so; if he be lower still, he should write then do so and so.' The letters not only of Abu 'l-'Ali but of the other writers of the time show that attention had to be paid to this etiquette. The employment of rhymed prose in letters seems to have become regular and normal in the fourth century, but had been frequent far earlier. This mode of composition would seem properly to belong to solemn utterances such as oracles, religious formulæ, prayers, and elegies, and from the third of these uses its employment in addresses to princes, whether written or delivered orally, does not differ materially. The author of the Aghâni quotes lengthy encomia in rhymed prose, pronounced by poets both before pre-Mohammedan and post-Mohammedan princes; and although the genuineness of the

1 'Umduh of Abu Ja'far, Baghdad MS.
2 The title * most glorious * (الذَّاهِبَةُ إلى الفَخْرِ), given the author by Abu 'l-'Ali Hassan Ibn Sinan (Ibn H., p. 142), implied very great distinction; the Sharif al-Kufi wrote a long poem to Rafi' al-Asadi, thanking him for celebrating qadil by kadi (Qinha, p. 273).
3 See the discussion on rhymed prose in Jihâd, Tihmin I. 111-115; it would seem that Mohammed discouraged its use, yet that its popularity won the day.
4 Aghâni III. 6.
5 Jihâd, Tihmin II. 81.
6 Aghâni XIV. 136.

former composition is more than doubtful, the opinion of this very learned writer who regards such a composition as no anachronism is worthy of consideration. It is probable however that it was employed in addresses from men to their superiors long before it became usual in letters between equals; and thus we find no trace of it in the famous correspondence between the Caliph Al-Mansûr and 'Uthmân ibn Mâin, and that between the same Caliph and Mohammed Ibn Al-Hāsân;6 but the letter to Hârûn Al-Rashid's minister, which according to Al-Jâhîz was known by heart by the people of Baghdad, was in rhyme throughout; and the fact that Al-Jâhîz wrote letters in simple prose may perhaps have occasioned the criticism of his style to which reference has been made. It may be observed however that the oldest writers are not slaves to the rhyme, but occasionally, for variety or some other effect, abandon it.

Abu 'l-'Ali died in 449 at an advanced age, after three days' illness. Many men of letters attended his funeral, and many dirges were composed in his honour, of some of which fragments remain. Dibahâh's biography contains some interesting notices of visits paid to his tomb, which seems to have survived the storming of Ma'arrarah by the Franks, but of which recent explorers seem to have found no trace. For those who were curious about the final doom of this free-thinker, a 'worthy man' recounted a dream in which Abu 'l-'Ali's terrible fate was revealed to him; while his admirers in their turn ascribed to him an escape from the hands of the governor of Haleb by means only to be paralleled from the histories of Elijah and Elisha. Neither his letters nor the rest of his published writings seem to make any allusion to his two brothers, Mohammed and Abu 'l-Hâjîtham, who are both said to have acquired some fame as poets.

1 Tahâf III. 546.
2 Khânif II. ad fin.
3 Jihâd, Tihmin II. 114.
4 Zahir al-Ahâl II. 66.
5 Ibn H., p. 179.
6 Preface to S. Z., p. 3. Soefli tells the same story at greater length.
7 Soefli after Ibn Al-Munir and Yûnus.
DATES OF THE CHIEF EVENTS IN ABU 'L-ALÁ'S LIFE.

A.H. 763 Rabî‘ I. #8, Abu 'l-Áli born.
764 Sa‘d al-dúsáh takes Huls.
765-766 Abu 'l-Áli visits various Syrian towns.
767 Death of Sa‘d al-dúsáh. Accession of Sa‘d al-dúsáh.
770 Al-Maghribi sent to Huls.
785 Ma‘arrah revolts from Huls.
786 Death of Sa‘d al-dúsáh. Lu‘lu‘a’ puts his infant son on the throne.
794 Lu‘lu‘a with his son Mūtaдж al-dúsáh undertakes the government.
798 Journey to Baghdad.
800 Abu 'l-Áli returns from Baghdad. His mother dies.
807 A‘zíz al-dúsáh governor of Huls.
808 ‘Aṣṣ al-dúsáh killed.
814 Súdí al-dúsáh governor of Huls; ousted by Súlíh b. Múdásh.
818 Ma‘arrah invaded by Súlíh.
829 Súlíh killed. His son Súlíh al-dúsáh governor.
829 Mūnakháh al-dúsáh governor of Huls and Syria.
832 Death of Mūnakháh al-dúsáh. Mūtasim al-dúsáh, son of Súlíh, governor of Huls.
839 Ma‘arrah taken by the Egyptians.
849 Mútaníb al-dúsáh governor of Huls.
850 Rabî‘ I, death of Abu 'l-Áli.

LETTERS OF ABU 'L-ÁLI AL-MA’ARRI.

Letters of Abu 'l-Áli Ahmad son of Abdullah of the tribe of Taníkh, p. 3 the Blind, the twice-bound captive; with other fragments of his writings.

Note.—His correspondence was not copious, being merely occasional.

LETTER I. [Before 399 A.H.]

To 'Abú 'l-Kásim al-Husayn son of 'Áli al-Maghribi. This letter is known (6) as 'THE FIRST OF THE FIFTY LETTERS.'

If scholarship (God give your honour a long life!) emits any fragrance, or wit any flame; even at this distance (4) we have felt the perfume of your scholarship, and your wit has turned our darkness into day; it has suspended

(4) After his return to Ma‘arrah, he shut himself up in his house, as we shall see in Letter VII below. The two prisons to which this same notice sees his seclusion and his blindness. In Lm. p. 410 (Ed.) he speaks of three prisons, including his body among them. Compare Lm. p. 112 (Beoh.), where he speaks of his ‘three nights,’ the third being most of religion and guidance.

(6) A distinguished contemporary, 370-418 A.H., whose biography is given by Ibn Khallikan (L. 152, ed. Bodl.), whose notice however, like the references in Ibn al-Áli’s history, deals with a period after the date of this letter, which is fixed within certain limits by the references to Al-Maghribi’s residence in Egypt. According to Al-Dhahabi (MS. of the British Museum) the father of the person addressed, also named Abu ‘l-Kásim, was born in Huls, where he became vizier to the governor Sa‘d al-dúsáh (son of Súdí al-dúsáh), whom he helped to defeat the Ghurids in 371; but having fallen out with Sa‘d al-dúsáh, he in 378 joined the latter’s enemy Bakı‘ir, then supreme at Bakı‘ir, and when the latter invaded Huls, finding his counsel neglected, escaped before Bakı‘ir’s defeat

(4) See next page.]
LETTERS OF ABU 'L-ALA AL-MAQARRI

on our ears ornaments never to be detached, and kindled in the secret chambers of our hearts stars that will never set. For to us, the inhabitants of this town, a great honour has been given, and "there has been delivered unto us an honourable missive", proceeding from the residence of the great Doctor, who holds the reins of prose and verse: a missive which it is an act to Ralph, but on Surd al-dralah's approach fled to Kufah, and thence to Al-AI's, Fatimid Caliph in Egypt, who is the following year (382) sent him as a general whom he excreted with the invasion of Jihah. He would seem to have remained in the neighbourhood of Jihah some years, intermixing with the inhabitants against his fellow-communard; and it is probably during this period that the services which Abu 'l-ASH acknowledges were rendered. He was finally recalled by Al-AI, but seems to have been restored to favour by his successor Al-Hakim (396-417); for ever since his prince his son was given custody of the Khilaf al-Ash-sawd', whereas he was ejected through the influence of Mu'mar Ibn al-Abbas; and though he gained a temporary advantage over Mu'mar, the latter, coming to power again, restored the death of Al-Magshidi and his son Muhammad, about A.D. 390, Al-Madda's wounding. These details are taken from the fragmentary history of Jihah called al-rajwaal wa-al-ad-dar (382, March 60), and the valuable 'Appendix to the History of Damascus' (MS. Horsley 157), both these seen to enrol the father with the son. After the murder of his father and brother (who deplores in verses cited by the geographer Yushit, and more fully in the Appendix quoted) Al-Hakim escaped to Arama, and there united another descendant of Al-AI, named Abu 'l-Farid, to avenging in our Al-Hakim. Felling in this plot, he fled to Tarf, where he obtained the permission of Abu Ghabul Fath al-aswad', who however, owing to the representations of the Caliph Al-Hakim, was compelled to discharge him, when he became secretary for a time to Kwaresh al-Mawali. In 414 he became Vizier to Mahrukh al-dralah at Baghdad, but held office for ten months only; and being again given offence to the Caliph, he took refuge with Ban Marwan at Deipulais. He died at Mityan. The character given him by Ibn Al-AI (420, 414) is valued: "he was low-minded, deceitful, and cowardly."

The title is derived from the opening words, and the ellipsis on p. 4 l. 9. The word means literally arrow which got no share of the camel for which the arrows were tossed in the celebrated pre-Islamic game referred to, of which most of the introductions to the story of Mahrukh contain some account.

* The distance between Ma'arrat and Egypt.

It would seem that a public letter had been addressed to Ma'arrat by Al-Magshidi. According to MS. March 60, when in 386 the Egyptian forces were besieging Jihah, Ma'arrat, which was in the territory of Jihah, entered the Egyptians; it was attacked by the Jihahites, but rescued by an Egyptian force. It is probable that the conqueror of Al-Magshidi with this town began at that time.

Kunia XXVIII. 3, referring to Solomon's letter to the Queen of Sheba.

Although the author of Al-Fidakhu says that the passage in Abu 'l-ASH's letters first called his attention to the eminence of Al-Magshidi as a writer, the phrase used is narrowly an exclamation. More than two and a half centuries later he is still speaking of him as the 'perfect Vizier' by the geographer Yushit, who refers to the work spoken of in the following letter as an authority on questions of language; while fine verses of his are quoted by

LETTER I.

of piety to read, and whose peroration, or rather whose entirety, is frankness, "impute it who can!" It is too grand to be kissed, kisses are for its shadow: p. 4 too precious to be handled about, let that be done with copies! For us it is a sort of Sacred Book! Were we not so chary of its witty contents, and so afraid of its ink running, and the light of its ideas being blurred, every mouth would have hastened to kiss it, and every nose to inhale its perfume. Its lines would have become the cherry-colour on the lips, the scar produced by prussaï on the (4) brow. Were it not, then, that our religion forbids gleaming, and represents the practices of our ignorant forefathers,—were it not, in other words, that the code of Islam objects to the turning of the arrows, we should have tossed for it with the seven that win, and the three that lose. But sound sense [219] preponderates that the enquiring and interested mind should be satisfied with the decision of the winning and losing arrows! And the friends of my lord (God give him the blessings of the stars) and the Debarra" (it) could only cast lots for hanging the letter in their (10) houses that they might have it for a constant companion, not to obtain portions of that written parchment. They would only throw for it the sort of lots that were thrown by the Rabbis for the guardianship of the Virgin, or that would settle which of the Prophet's wives were to accompany him on a journey. O how grand a document, the honour of which will make us surpass our rivals everywhere! Adorned with every gem that is sweeter than new-made wine, and fairer than genuine coin! Appearing like a flash of lightning, or a rising sun! I have never ceased yearning for a sight of your honour as the captive girl years

In hac Kulliyat and others. Extracts from his letters are given as models of style in the Mawri' al-Jam'id of his Nishab (ch. 76).}

1. Kunia LXXXIII. 36.
2. The custom of kissing letters is not unfrequently alluded to. See e.g. Letters of Hakam-din, Baynai ed., p. 72a.
3. In Kunia XLVIII. 315 the Believers are said to show a mark on their foreheads produced by constant prussia. The anecdotes are in doubt whether it should be a blushing of the skin or an actual scar. The Koran asserts that this description of the Believers is to be found in the Gospel and the Law, perhaps referring in the former case to Rev. vii. 5.
4. In Kunia L. 32 'scented' is pronounced. The phrase has a flavour of impiety.
5. Explained by the Koran as challenged against the Jinn who endeavoured to cry into the heavenly counsels.
6. This circumstance was considered unlikely, Kasidah 1. 77. In Ashur 185. 185 a poet says that after some one's death the good holm has all left the Surd and attached itself to Al-Dalunaw.
8. This is not mentioned in the ordinary Lives of the Prophet.
(14) after the life of the pampered beauty, or as those who are stricken with sickness
year after the dawn of health. Could my desire for your honour but take shape
and form—could it enter into a body and be examined—it would fill the world
in both directions, and occupy the whole space between heaven and earth. It
would not rest satisfied till it had forced its stride to cover a valley, and its hand
to spread out like a plain.

I have received your greeting, which if it passed by a flinty rock would
(20) moisture it, or by a bare tree would give it leaves: and the joy of it set me as it
were on the horns of an antelope, or the wings of a sparrow. I felt as though
I had been uplifted by the pole, or addressed by an angel—so elated was I with
what, were an alternation of one's nature possible, would have metamorphosed me
from my humble birth to a man of exalted pedigree, as an elixir might turn
a quicksilvered coin into a mass of fine gold. Indeed, were it not for the dangers
which encompass this place, and all hearts being possessed by the fire of thirst,
I might have thought your greeting that which is mentioned by the Blessed
Creator, when he says, 'Enter it with greeting, safely.'

(25) Is then our township Paradise, or have its inhabitants been granted forgiveness? Have they been
restored to life after burial, or 'been compassed with the seventh heaven for their
patience, and are they receiving therein greeting and salutation'? Still,
though through your favour they have received some of the privileges of the
blessed saints, one characteristic of the damned is to be found with them; and
that is that they are torn by the demons of rhetoric, that they are tongue-tied
by its cords, and rendered dumb. You might think they had heard the words,
'This is a day wherein they shall not speak, nor leave to be given to them to make
excuse.' Really they are silent because they are drowned in your wit, and the
flashes of your eloquence have rendered them speechless. The pen of their ready
(30) writer has become the stick wherewith a bewildered man scratches the ground; and the ready response of their orators has turned into the silence of amazement.
Fain would they have rounded an answer, but they have been checked; they
became aware of your superiority and acknowledged it; looking up from their
camels' kneading-places they espied you among the thrones on the constellations,
and their ambition excited them to approach you, but they failed and they
promised their minds that they would be foolish, and were as good as their word.

1 The scarcity of water at Makkah is insisted on by the geographers. See also Letter XX.
2 Koran XIX, 92. 3 Koran XIX, 24.
4 Compare Swinburne, "Septem Trees from Somaliland," p. 87: "Then he looked down
and began about mistily, as though the earth with a bit of sickle." Of Tamer III, 347.
LETTERS OF ABU 'LALĀ' AL-MĀARRI.

Now among men of bygone days there were some who employed epistles as links, and adorned themselves with rhyme as a young horse does with a trott; but none of them have risen to your eminence, nor even set foot upon your path. They differed in style without being distinguished; and they had contents but were no priors. Had they wanted to suit such compositions (1) as these, they might have smothered a life of hardship for one of dignity, have trodged on many a hard road, and eaten much humble pie, ere they could attain what you have attained without trouble or expense. And each of them, had they seen you, would have been right glad to be the last horse in the race in which you came in first; or the butt-end of the lance of which you were the head.

Now when your servant Moses arrived, bringing these welcome gifts, these (10) precious securities—they seemed like the nine signs which God gave to Amram’s son, to dissolve the spell of the magicians, and sweep off the chaff of the poet. On his tables there came two rods, the poems rhyming in ws and ws respectively. You found in your country various lengthy metres desquitting themselves, various intellectual sand-heaps collapsing; ‘to him Moses cast down his rod, and behold it swelled up their devices’ (2). I speak only of what I know, and testify to that which I have proved. In what I have heard I have witnessed the compression (15) of ideas into brief verses like the image of Kier in the drinking cup, or the effigy of Cæsar on the golden coins. You are not humiliated by the smallness of your quarters; your love-verses are like the shrobbery of the lyre; your grave periods like the reverberation of the thunder. You indeed—long may the earth boast of you—may think little of what we make much of, and deprecate the learning which we prize; but so do the cattle marvel how the kite can perch himself on the pinnacle of a castle, while the kite thinks little of his performance and regards it as no great flight. Still if our weak minds have some stress left, and the vessel of our intelligence some trace of polish, they may get some good out of you (God bless you!), and shine with rays borrowed from you, as copper shines when it faces the bright luminaries. The reflection of the Great Bear, lovely

---

1 Such as Abu 7-Fadl Al-Hamadânî and Abu Farîd Al-Khushnî.
2 Such a context is described at length in Abu 7-Fadl’s letter.
3 The place is from Jami’ (Aghâvî VII, 97).
4 Koran XXVI, 41.
5 References to cups with an image of Kier at the bottom are not uncommon; see Kitâb of Muhammed, ed. Eq. II, 95, Wâ, p. 334, where several verses are quoted on this subject. Shlûh is said to have been recognized at a banquet by his image being on the cup (Tasmûlí Al-A’mâl XI, 169).
6 Of course there were none on the Mohammedan coins.

---

LETTER I.

...as it is, may yet be seen in the water of a pool; by the blessing of the Shâ’id the wood will produce leaves; and the pulkies will swell when the moon is in the Lion’s Bowl. Could theickle speak, or the lowly be proud, Mâarrî would (14) spread its sails and rear its crest, glorifying in the fact of your bestowing on it even a mixed and angry glance, supposing you did not speak of it in terms of steadied pl. 7 pulse. Leaving it, you are like a living body transferred from the shell to the air; while Mâarrî is left like the coquette’s perfume-pot, when the perfume is gone and only the receptacle remains. Its only title to be respected more than other cities in the vicinity lies in your residing there during those days, and bidding to sleep the eyes of famine that were gazing on its inhabitants; since which time (3) Mâarrî is known by you and takes rank from you, as indeed happens to every dwelling you inhabit; for the abodes wherein you take up your residence are like those northern and southern constellations, twenty-eight in number, which only are famous because the moon takes up its quarters in them, and to which in consequence the Arabs ascribe every rain-bringing nita. Many a shining sphere there is in the blue ether which, because the moon avoids it in its orbit, has no renown, neither gets credit for any drop that ever drizzled from a cloud.

It is I, feel, incumbent upon a serious student to make the places where your (10) feet have trod (hard luck to your enemies!) shrines of learning and gathering places for ardent devotees, just as a piscis posteriorly turns the places where painted ancestors have walked into temples of choice purity and moorages favoured for their associations. As Shiâ deserve its fame from Moses, and the Stone from Meccah from Abraham, so might we through being your neighbours, before converting with you, have enjoyed honour similar to that which accrues to the inhabitant of Medinâ from the neighbourhood of the Prophet! It may be that Mâarrî (15) has taken a correct, or rather indisputable view of the matter, and perceived that you are too fine a necklace for her neck, too grand a bracelet for her wrist, too massive a crown for her head, too bright a star for her horizon; and indeed you are like a pearl transferred from the shell to the head of a mighty king, while your former home is like a tree after the fruit is plucked, an oyster without the jewel, a quiver without the arrows, a rain-cloud without the rain.
(20) Now we know well that the rain is imprisoned in a cell of fog, and that the flower is more honourable than the stalk, which bears it: the moon was not created for the benefit of the darkness. The borrower should not regard the loan as a gift, or think it a shame to have to restore it to its lender; on the contrary, it is an honour to a poor man to be allowed to borrow from a king. Now this region won far-reaching fame and held the reins of fair forums, what time happy circumstances placed it in your hands, and virtue entrusted it to the noble qualities of your heart and tongue: so now that you are departed your odour still remains, and the tent of your fame is still standing though you yourself are gone; and Ma‘arrath is like the two moons called Spring, which originally were at the beginning of the year, but afterwards shifted to the middle, and two others called Frost, which from the days of frozen water have shifted to those p. 9 of windless heat; yet their titles have refused to change through all these years, and the names remain the same though the characteristics have altered. And were it not that dates and stones are unable to assume the character of their neighbour, the squares of Ma‘arrath would by now be devoted to learning, and the supplies of eloquence would be drawn from its inhabitants.

Now it is said the origin of perfume among the Ishberis4 was that the blessed Adam fell in the place where it grows. Yet the hard rock refused to be imbued with noble qualities, even as the fire, southerly in ashes, has good excuse for going out. Your fellow-man would seem better suited to assimilate character, and his oozes are better fitted for the pursuit of virtue. Why then, when they were exhorted, did they not wake up? Why not, when they counterfeited, counterfeit what had been shown them? True, the raven cannot think of hunting the gazelle, still less can it pick up a camel in its beard, or cover a donkey with its wing. A tent cannot be spread out of a strap, nor a sword-belt be cut out of a shoe-latchet. It would be clear injustice—not to speak of the impossibility—to compel the pale on the ground to approach the pale in the sky, or to force the fest of the hoof to leap like the fest of the marsh. And if ever

1 Lit. the Bedshith. The story is told by Mackit, Abou‘ el-Ma‘aroj: “Adam fell in Ceylon on mount Bishiti. And it is said (with whatever truth) that the reason why so many sorts of perfume grow in Jaffa is that when Adam was exiled from Paradise, he took with him a bag containing various sorts of spice, etc.”

2 Apparently, the people of Ma‘arrath.

3 The reading does not seem quite certain. The Beytrot editor reads starajj, meaning a cow whose milk flows soldierly.

4 The Arabic has a kind of them.

5 The Arabic signifies ‘valorous;’ the pan has therefore been altered.

[II. 195]
For off as our habituation is from years, and many as are the hills and dates (26) that come between us, we are sure to receive from you some correction of our faults and guidance to the right way through the wise letters you send us and the p. p. ingenuous counsel you bestowed; just as Jupiter and Venus, though they be distant, still bring the objects of desire to those whose circular stars they are—in the opinion, of course, of the astrologers and certain of the ancient philosophers—(God forbid that we should say the same or plunge into the paths of paganism! However, when a phrase has become popular, people instinctively employ it). (3) And so, although you have pitched the tent of your sojourning in Egypt, making light of all business, however heavy; yet our villages are still by God’s grace under your protection, and the fields of Ma’arrah among the territory which you guard and save. Just as, according to them, the trancelage of a single planet may extend to distant climates and different zones.

Every man of pure metal and ancient vein, every one with a trace of intelligence that he can call into play, and a touch of discrimination on which he can rely, even since he heard the first droppings of your shower, and pictured to himself in thought the brightness of your blade, has been as dumb as a crab, and as (16) numb as Saturn. Their silence is longer than a bridal veil, and their memory drier than a mother’s breast. Well would it be for them if they were like semi-articulate animals, or people with a twist in their tongues! For a foreign accent is better than dullness; and it is better to stammer than to be tongue-tied. However to regret a lost chance is like trying to raise the dead, and a killock cannot be turned into a garden any more than Saturday can be turned into Friday. And it is useless to say one’s prayers before prayer-time comes, and to (15) adopt the pilgrim costume after the sacred month is passed. And albeit their bawdy utterances have no value in themselves, and win no attention from literary folk; still the delight of the finder in a coin which he picks up is no less than that of the lady’s maid in the central pearl of the necklace. The beauty of a fair girl does not persuade the mother of an ugly one to hate her: on the contrary, she will curse her ugly daughter all her life, and mourn over her Jos in whose place is gone. It is a shame to slaughter a camel because it is not equal to the load of an elephant; to knock down a humble cottage because it is outstretched by a lofty (20) castle, to break the arrow because it is shorter than a spear, to bury the old camel because it cannot keep pace with the young. On any such principle we ought to abandon all utterances except ‘yea’ or ‘nay’ to express our meaning, and:

---

1. Allusion to his visit at the Deyr el-Bahri.
2. Literally, “every man in whose which bears the same name as the sword is ancient.”
3. See the description of this in Khun’s Nine Months in the Hejaz.
not yet realized, 'it is as though they were.' Had they moved before they got
embedded in the mud, and had they relied on God to help them to make way
before they grew tired, then the refuge would have benefited by his flight; and
the buck would have had a respite to lay down its burden. And how long can
the camel behind which the hunter shelters himself endure the cost of the white-braided beast, or the mouse the cat? Although the acquisition of the necessary
equipment be harder than the plucking of thistles 14, yet is the pack saddle of a
swift camel easier to ride than a horse with a ring of hair on its back 15, and
a bed of little use to a porcupine. The singers among them produce their
music, and the distinguished among them shine amongst men whose waking
time is shorter than the twirling of their eyes, and whose sleep is longer than their
year, who think good lik the fias of their accomplishments, and fine paper the
name of eloquence. Supposing if, when one of them produce some milk and
water, another pronounce it mighty fine—well, many a wretch bowed down before
16 Isaf, and dates have been offered as idols. The termite takes an upper chamber
for its use, and often the sheep have been humiliated by the lamb, and a woman's
well has been put on the face of an ass. Seaweed 17 is no luxurious food. Moreover,
reflection should come before hasty action, and woeing before marriage. In
your presence however (God preserve your life until the midday hurries into the
day of dawn as fast as the midday prayer flies from abbreviation 18) nothing will
serve them but capitation and surrender at discretion: and if you hear such
a statement as that the digger of a well came upon pure milk, or that honey has
been drawn from camels, or that a spring of wine appeared in a desert place—
your eloquence knows best how to refute such a statement, and the force of your
intellect to prove it false. Sufficient for the soul is a tear-drop to quench the
moaner's grief; sufficient for the site-camel is a milking pull when its udders are
full; sufficient for a well in flat ground if it serve instead of rain-clouds.

Your bestowing on me epiphoria equal to your favours is a service to which my
gratitude is unequal, and which I shall rise from my grave reflecting on; it has
planted joy in my heart, and taught me to think much of myself, and filled

---

1 Part of a verse of Rukshah; see Mufidat, sect. 377.
2 This appears to be the meaning. The Bayyaz elahi takes another view.
3 Mayidat II. 106.
4 Said to be a bad sign in a horse. There is a play on the word in the original.
5 Name of a pre-Mohammedan idol, according to some set up in the Rukshah, according to others on Sufis.
6 Mayidat III. 85. The proverb is ٍشَرَهرْیلْ ۖاَلِمسَهیه‌ی ۖاَلِمسَهیه‌ی ۖاَلِمسَهیه‌ی. We should therefore alter the text accordingly.
7 Mayidat II. 121.
8 i.e. the reduction of the number of pronouncements.
9 Deep given for the word in the text the equivalent shimaana sadasas.
10 Name given to the fruit of the arid when ripe.
11 A mythical king of Yemen, who endeavoured to settle the splendor of Paradise with his
wealth.
12 This probably means Ullina AL-THI; the occasion on which he slaughtered the horses is
described Aghani XVI. 100.
13 Lit. "Thithbi," name of a mountain in the neighbourhood of Mecca.
14 See p. 1, n. 1. His favours to Abu 7,\-\-Alh are otherwise unknown.
prolonged favours on me sufficient to attach me to him, and benefits that
it would be tedious to recount; but, because you have been given the keys of
style, and the sentences you utter are like ‘the stars that hide behind Hujar’
and you occupy a place among the devotees of learning similar to that of Tabbâsh,
among the Arab giants, I have grown as much attached to you as are the populace
in a magnificient king, when he practises generosity and decides suits with
justice.
Hence I am as faithful to you as was the house to Solomon, and answere
with an oath what I have asserted about your goodness. Those assertions are
to the letter, and my oath most solemn, and I repeat them till the ignorant
account me foolish, and the vain talkers would prove me wrong. For not satisfied
with placing you above the moderns, I have exalted you above those that are in
their graves as well, and have declared you superior not only to those that remain
but also to those that have gone before. I have gagged the loud snorter, and
given the prize to the last-comer; for the victory is not to him that comes first in
time, neither is the prize given to antiquity: the rhyming letter comes after the
vowel called say, and the horse Aking is earlier than Al-’Abî.
And even though the fact be unanswerable, and there be no pleasure in recounting it,
still it must be confessed that the guin comes before the wheat, and the grey
before the dawn. No person has denied your brilliancy, nor rivalled what you have
written: only people have bantered after what is old, and any deviation from
the beaten track throws a cloud of dust on people’s minds, aye, tinges with
blackness, like that of lava, their immortal brains; even so did not the worshippers
of Allah and Al-’Uzza find fault with the texts revealed by the Blessed Mohammed?;
God is my witness that I have not caused dyeing the sky with red, and
Tamzin the earth with fog; all both lusty youths and decayed old men, and those between
who are approaching maturity or turning grey, have shown themselves to belong
to one of two classes, either intelligent and wise from the chinks of the ignorant,
or unthinking and servile to authority.

1 The حَمَانَة of the constellation are mentioned in a verse quoted in the ٍنَبِي: اَيِّ اَنْتَ بَيْنَ اَلْخَمْيَانِ + حَمَانَةَ مَا اَشْرَعْتُ وَمَا أَدْرَاْ. L. V. 176.
2 See below, Letter XXX.
3 Koran, Surah XXVII.
4 Vowel preceding the rhyming letter, when no vowel follows it.
5 A horse or a mule, the supposed progenitor of a breed called Alderin.
6 Stallion of Gulf of Asir (T. A. X. 456). It is not clear how Abu ’l-’Abî knew their
respective names.
7 On the Justice of this see Guilielmus, Abhandlungen aus arabischen Philologie, I. e. II.
8 Perhaps this means working day and night.
9 The ٍسِلْسِلَة.
10 A lion in Ibn al-Sawad I. 37 may be compared.
11 The original is excessively difficult, and I give this translation as a tentative one.
12 Matthew i. 36. The smith is supposed to declare he is going away in order to barry an
estates.
black. Lengthy as is my discourse, I am still like one floundering in the dark or stretching out a maimed hand. Were I to produce a bushel of indigo, it would not be comparable with one fine pearl, nor is a whole flock of sheep; however big, equal to one kite, however lean and small. It is foolish to play off a candle against the sun, or a lump of glass against moon. Al-Ithlā. And my learning looks up to yours as a nearby camel might look up to the tract of the sky which (15) the stars of the Shu-qestile. What is the water as compared with the sky, or a torrent as compared with Canopus' rising-place? What are straw ostriches as compared with those that give their name to a mansion of the moon? And shall I play off my few drops against your sea? No man ever comes to grief who knows his place!"

P. 14

LETTER II. [After the last: not later than 399 A.H.]

Copy of the letter called 'The palm-flowers', addressed to Ali ibn Al-Shihab. The writer, in addition to the abovementioned letter, had composed of Al-Shihab Al-Manṣūrī. The letter contains an account of the campaign, which is complemented for its excellence and utility.

Hail to thee, O Westerner! I have wisdom in Arabic words! What air bred thee? (d) What rain fed thee? Its lightning flashes must have been like sullen dye, its

1 The Egyptian portico, smaller than our portico, something like a pixenugus, with head shaped like a quail (Dray).—Described Agisla VII. 187.
2 Yūnīj gives a number of suggestions for the locality of this mountainside of the author's place in the Safinān.
3 Night stars which shine on the 3rd of December. Fear in the middle way we called Al-Ithlāh; fear out of it are called Al-Asghūrī; meaning respectively the stars that have gone down to drink, and those that have drunk. Xerxes I. 84.
4 Myriam H. 112.
5 Two works of importance bear this name: one by Ibn Al-Silākī (oh. 1343), the verses quoted in which are commented on by Abu-Sulīf (oh. 1352), to whose father frequent allusion is made in these letters; the other by Abu-Durāth Al-Maḍlid Al-Dhahabī. Although Abu-Talib's letters (infra, p. 329, L. 15) imply that it was the former work which Al-Maḍlid Al-Dhahabī elaborated, Ulujji Khalilah (to. 292) wrongly states that it was the latter. Ibn Khalilah (to. 241) states that Ibn Al-Silākī's work was elaborated by Al-Maḍlid Al-Dhahabī, and (L. 192) in an account of this performance which follows with Abu-Talib's description, asserts on the authority of Al-Maḍlid Al-Dhahabī's father that it was finished before the author had attained his twentieth year. The present letter cannot therefore have been written before 357, and is probably not very much later than that date. See p. 2, s. 2.
6 Allusion to the author's name Al-Maḍlid. Ibn Khalilah mentions that there was a controversy as to the origin of this name, and settles in favour of the supposition that the family originally came from the Maghreb.

LETTER II.

drops like palm-flowers! Thou hast alighted on a hill-top, where thou art safe from the dust, and I say unto thee what the brother of Numair 3 said to the lady of the Râm Umar—

1 A lucky star rise for thee, and blame pass away from thee, and fair auspices bid thee good morning,

for I regret thy presence more than the ravens of Hijja his fair attire when, having gone into the wilderness, and become a wayfarer, he approaches the hills of Râm in a season which brings down the snow-flakes from the air, and looking at his side finds it has turned grey, which grieves him so much that neglecting or forgetting to crook, he falls to earth, and walking as though in letters, beholds him of the verse of Durãd 5—

3 He passed his prime in pastimes all the grey rose to his head, and when it

4 and longing to return to that robe, and fearing the fates of his enemies, he pines till he dies. Now many an admiral by excess of Colby renders himself tedious,—

5 the Arabic idiom may mean either the production of tedium or of that sloth, I refer to the former,—so I will merely pray that God may guard you till a F 15 (15) conduce with a H, which is equal to eternal protection, for these two letters are connated and analogous to the third, being respectively the top and bottom of the thread, and in respect of cleanliness and dullness of utterance as distinct as 30-day from to-morrow. God make your road, which is like that of the subject and the agent, also resemble the verb in that it never declines! For you have made me to be known about if I be present, and my existence not p. 13 to be forgotten if I be absent, like the air of the vocative and the ominous indicative in such sentences as Zaid, come here, and the camel, the camels? after being like the H of the pause which it is necessary in certain cases to omit, and nowhere necessary to employ.

Truly, though I find myself in a period of friendship, like the H of the moments which is attached to the masculine form and violates all analogy,—in my relations with a friend who regards me essentially as an Alif al-maṣūl, which he pronounces (4)

3 The 'brother' sometimes stands for the member of a tribe; e.g. Agisla VII. 244 sq. is said if he can exult over any of the verses of the brother of Khelalih, and asks in reply which brother? The poet credibly knows as Al-Numairi was Mohammed ibn Abdallah (Agisla VII. 243). Another was Abu-Talib who is frequently cited in Al-Malik's Kamil, and may be the author of the verse referred to. Another was the poet known as Al-Shihab the camel-driving (Agisla VI. 195).
without emphasis, and omits when he can dispense with it; and circumstances like the هسمات, which undergo essential changes, becoming sometimes intermediate between a vowel and a consonant, sometimes a long vowel and sometimes a noun, a letter which has no consistent representation and no peculiar form; and among events which reduce the great to the small as though they were the multitudinous diminutive which reduces مثاني to مهاني and مكه to مكاه,—still I prolong my commination of your favours as the Kufi reader prolongs his voice in al-ka'di', albeit I abbreviate my messages to you, the great Doctor, as the reader of Medinah abbreviates such هسمات as can be.

If I address you an epistle, it is not because I wish to be answered. If I am verbose in my thanks, it is not because I wish for a reward. I am quite satisfied with such favours as I have already received, and the abundant benefits bestowed on me by your illustrious father. God maintain your power so long as the first form of the توسط metre remains sound, and the موعظة remains light and free; and contract the hand of your enemies from the attainment of all success, even as the first hemistich of the first metre on the table is contractured.

May humiliation and arrest be united in his case as they are in the second species of مالح.

May your enemy be pared like a nail and damaged like the seven-styled word in راش.

God bend mishief round the subjected head of him that hates you, even as the third form of ديكة is sound when the last foot is omitted.

May, may the earth hide him as the third form of تيمن is hidden, and may he be precluded from all hope! And may you and your father and all you both love and honour be sound, sound as the middle letter in the compound پگ, which is safe from

1 The Kufi reader was "Asim.

2 The shortening of the هسمات was supposed to be a peculiarity of the dialect of Kufah; and hence the readers of Mecaw and Medinah carried this process out whenever possible.

3 The first metre on the table is the توسط. The first form of this has the possessive vowel of the first half shortener, an alteration of which the technical name is سفت. (Al-Fahd, note 32.)

4 In the first half of the second form of مالح the foot سفت is substituted for سفتانة.

5 Damaging" means altering the second and fourth letters. By this process the foot مثاني is reduced to سفتانة. This change occurs in the last forms of راش.

6 To "click" means to substitute سفت for a vowel in the fifth place; in the form of verbs allowed to مثاني for سفتانة.

7 To "table" means to substitute سفت for a vowel in the second place. This form of contraction is not peculiar to the third form of تيمن.

8 The compound پگ, if the author refer to this, is a word like گیاه, of which the middle letter is a. According to the Arabic metric the پگ is so named because it is not liable to alteration.
friend, or he have been bereaved of a first-born son. Nay, say, O mourner—in the morning only dost thou mourn, but at eventide thou dost feel forgetfulness! No matter, no matter! I know nought stranger than the wailing dove: unbaited she complains, and is silent when her wing is broken! Longing is his whose memory

(10) is at all times awake and is not dulled by the rolling years!

You, dear sir, whose existence God prolongs, are the author of verses as beautiful as the moon, indestructible as gems: whose opening lines are like a crown raised far above the brow, and whose conclusion like an anklet on the foot: compressing noble sentiments in scanty words, just as the venom of the viper is scanty but incurable. Your poetry is grand when rough, and not trivial when smooth. Now the softness of the main indicates the high breeding of the steed, and the roughness of the coin the gentleness of the metal. All other verses after yours

(15) are like the a of Salam, which is indeed expressed in pronunciation, but represented by no sign after the I in writing. Your verses come out of criticism as unsearchable as gold from the fire, or silver from the hands of the smith; they are like a spray of pearls on beauty's neck, while all others might be a string of ground-seeds on the neck of a cat. The force of your faithful intellect never leaves you in the lurch, nor has any one detected in your compositions a false rhyme or a false stop.

What has the Lion's Noise! to do with a false step, or the Pintle with a thornbush? He that would rival your verses had best ride the staff of the man with eyes, — even the Staff of Bayt! will not do! My conviction on this matter is as

(20) immovable as an indelible vow, and I assert it without reservation: an oath is unnecessary, but is not lacking; and in the oath which I swear I neither procure myself, nor shall repent. And just as the pearl is only hidden in its shell for the sake of fair ladies, so oaths are only lavished when an object of value is at stake. And how precious must your mind, which can produce silver out of gold, and date-branches out of gravel! Still, oftentimes resemblance disguises, and a man fails to resemble his father; nor is this strange, seeing that the green plant gives birth to flame, and a headache is the product of the grape. Even so have you, dear sir, produced out of the magic of the ancients wisdom for the pious

p. 17 followers of Muhammad! How many a rhyme is yours guaranteeing your

1 Name of a tree.

2 Al-Ara was the name of the horse of Bayt, the Lollimita, a pre-Islamic hero, supposed to be the fastest horse of the time. Several verses are connected with the fortunes of this horse and his hero, which are collected by Mayyiti, VII. 42; in Frank's Poems and Stories, L. 245-4. Bayt (the man with eyes) was the name of a famous letter-writer (Abu Ali), of the third century, specimens of whose style are given in the Khadij of Abu Ja'far Ahmos (Bolusian MS.). As we are told that he pondered long over an epistle before writing, the 'Staff of Bayt' will refer to the staff used during the process of deliberation.

3 Innum 'al-Kais in a well-known line.

4 Innum 'al-Kais (Ahmedhi, Emissary of the six most ancient Arabic poets) XIX. 46.

5 The white spot on a horse's forehead.

6 The good and bad signs in horses are enumerated in 'Abu Al-Ma'aniya's Book of Excellence of the Horse (MS. Extrel. 450). A horse with one eye grey was said to be ill-omened (p. 147).

7 This man was at first thought unlucky, afterwards lucky: yet some said that such a horse could never win a race (L. O. p. 147).

8 Also a bad sign (L. O. p. 120).

9 Name of a famous horse, mentioned in a verse of the Ethyes of Hatheil.

10 Reference to Innum 'al-Kais XIX. 37, 39, where the mare is said to look like a pumpkin from the front, and like a tripod from behind.

sceptre, and discomposing the envious, till they become like those who are slain by old red wine, whose resurrection is at hand, with redbud for their rejoicing! Where are those who compare the camel to a castle, or the pin to a silken robe? 'Tis time to leave the house that has stood too long! A poet has arisen after them, compared with whom they are mere slaves! When any one in his quiet home hears your description of the broad desert or the worn-out camel, he wishes that the camel-cloth were between his sides, and that he had liquid pitch for incantation, and dreams when he is asleep of the long necks of camels, and forgets camels' nose rings from the ankles of white-skinned maidens: abhorring the pearls that are for the neck and Hiri's eyes, and taken with affection for trickling milk and eyes like wells! He exchanges the moans that dwell in his harem for camels as sterile as the moons that rise over barren land (are of rain): camels that are bent as bows, and fleet as the east of the desert. Or, if you begin to describe a horse, how utterly deluded is he who compared the wild beasts to things that arelettered, and the hoof to a child's ankle? Your description makes the half-bred easy the (10) thorough-bred, and the hawk the queen-bee, which has been given a privilege which many of the birds of prey have not, since small as she is, she is the name-sake of certain kinds of 'blana. And the time is past and the doctrine obsolete that the horse with a ring of hair on its back had the worst of auguries, and that the grey horse was to be avoided because one haunch was higher than the other!—at present the horses are safe from such caprices, and share each other's good fortune: the horse with two rings on his forehand is confident that his master will not come to grief, and the rider of the beast with a ring on his chest is sure to fall. (15) The driver of the spotty shall not be robbed, and the leader of the animal with white on his hind legs need not come down. And even if any blame attach to Al-Leh, yet the dashing-horses are free from it. Said Innum 'al-Kais's mare Kithalbah: 'the pumpkin is for the housekeeper, and the tripod for the ample pot' —objecting to his comparing her mane to a bride's tresses, and her brow to the
well-modelled shield. And whence had Imnun’s-kaši rhymes such as yours, which are like the camel’s prayer, Agudiyah and Zafirin met together!

The rippling of water may be heard in your erotic verses, and youth is lodged in your poems. Without being anastronomical, so well do your rhymes vouch for the heart, that they combine the brightness of polished steel with the noise of the drinking of thirsty antelopes. Your himistich is like the stranger’s looking-glass, counterfeiting both beauty and its reverse, so as to show the fair one how fair she is, and the ugly one what gives her pain. And wine, when you describe it, becomes a cure for old age, and disbelief the vine to claim descent from the generous vine; and the casks, disconsolate with their pitch, and the coloves on their shoulders, put on embroidered raiment, and change their tar into gold-leaf. And I have heard you describe a tent in such wise that the mask entices the ground on which it is set up, and the stars in Aquarius called Sa’d of the tabernacles with they were Sa’d of the tents.

I have also come across the Aburidgment of the Reform of the Disasters, the titles of the chapters of which almost serve as a substitute for the rest of the book; and I marvelled at your being able to tie camels with umbilical cords; and to pour the ocean into the hollow of the chest, and to make the embryos fly through a needle’s eye. Noble composition which sets all doubts at rest, and makes Al-Amma’s unnecessary! Which expresses by a hint sentences of vast content, (a) just as a pronoun expresses a lengthy name! I say in narration: I commanded Abu-Abd Al-Jabbar; but if I, substituting a pronoun, say ‘I commanded him,’ I am understood. A book whose constitution has been freed from weakness and disease by the omission of the poetic examples, which have been reduced to the condition of witnesses who have been testifying to what is false before a judge who knows their faith to be infirm, and who, being acquainted by personal knowledge with the truth of what they impugn, is in need of no demonstration. Now having examined the proof-passages quoted in the book which you have abjured,

* In verses 32 and 33 of the same poem. Abu 3-AlA wrote a book in which dialogues were assigned to thein.
* From a passage quoted in the Novelle of Abu Zaid (Isayt, 1894, p. 16), from a poet of the days of paganism, Ghibran B. Kthb B. ‘Amr B. Sa’d. Agudiyah and Zafirin are the names of two camels.
* Kishiri (Eq.) I. 3. ‘A woman among strangers would keep her mirror bright.’
* Famous grammarians of the days of Hilat Al-Sunbul, who died 1044. Constant reference is made to his philological writings.

I found them to be of ten sorts, the same number as the brethren of Joseph who conspired together to do wrong, plus one sort, like that brother of Joseph (10) who was not there. Now ancient poetry, although it be worthy of admiration, and an archive of memorable deeds, nevertheless is false in its statements, and given to drawing the ‘long bow.’ The first of the Meš’alikahs, beautiful as it is, and venerable as is its antiquity, nevertheless confesses to acts sufficient to invalidate the testimony of a man of acknowledged authority, not to speak of a woman of doubtful character. A curse upon her for a lag, who had she been a human being, would have been among the most misused of the race! Now the author of the Reform of the Disasters (God have mercy on him!) went far afield in his search for proof-passages—he even quoted the ‘Rhyme of the Lizard’ which (16) annoyed the Arabs very much; for when the language is so rich, must it help itself with loans, and obtain assistance from vermin? What, when even Ru’bah (17) is of no account with them, should they imitate the language of a lizard with bleeding claws? Whoever examines our author’s work will find it curiously arranged, except the portion dealing with the rhymes and the verb, which is arranged in twenty letters, six pronounced with the tip of the tongue, three with the roof of the mouth, four with the tip, one screech, two dental spurt (THL and DFL), one rising letter, and the two ‘strangers,’ ‘ân and ‘ibâ; and Sâb included in the province of R. God have mercy on him! Were he alive, he would die (90) of laughing or burst with jealousy! He outstripped all others did Ibn Al-Stikhi, (1) See various readings.
* This name is clearly applied to the Meš’alikah itself. The immorality of the first Meš’alikah was criticized at an early period; even by Jarî (Agb. VII. 60), who might be supposed indifferent to such matters.
* One Reje of the Lizard is quoted in Kishiri (Eq.) I. 385; another in L. A. IV. 406, on the authority of Abu Haylan; some one said to the Lizard ‘Would you have me take advantage of you?’ and it replied

I am a Chaldean bird; I am not a birâ. I am a bird; I am a birâ, and a birâ. And the suffix ‘îbâ is not used with the verb ‘âmar, as you say.

1 Writer of Reje, ob. 914. Reje was not accustomed a sufficiently literary performance to deserve to be cited as an authority. The reference to Meš’alik (the Araby) is from the tradition quoted by Ibn Khaliik (I. 1:44); it may refer to the grammarian Yânas the etymology of the name Ru’bah, which he said he had himself not know. Where applied, ‘perhaps you think that Meš’alik the son of ‘Adhan speaks more correctly than he and his father.
2 According to the narrator Dâmiri, the lizard was put by its claw by digging its hole in rock.
3 S.S. 122.
4 The grammatical elements eight, WJD T R 8 RT.
5 The grammatical elements seven, the same as those in note 7, together with KHN R 8 RT.
and now is become the last horse in the race! After being at the top of the tree, he is turned into a tent peg! His book was like rough gold, lying in a mine, amid rubbish dry and moist; then you come to extract and refine it, to polish it and elaborate it with your ingenuity! And now the stars may envy its brightness and the brilliancy of its polish. And it is no worthless friend, albeit it appears (49) with a new face—a friend who never tells tales nor bears malice, a friend who never speaks and yet is never silent! It has acquired the same place in the ancient language of the Arabs that the astrologer’s glass holds in the science of p. 10 astrology—a thin but compact object that contains sun, moon, and stars’. Let me add besides in respect of his reported treatment of the same word, that to mention the same word twice in a literary work is like uniting two sisters in marriage at once. Marriage with one may be lawful and desirable; with the second it is unlawful and horrible. How can one letter contain two ‘fair ones’, or the week two Thursdays? Mother of the lasses, enough of the name Hind! (50) Cinth of the lads, enough of the Sa’di! Name thy daughters, thou, Zainab and Da’di; and name thy sons, O man, with any name but Sa’di! The precious are few, but the names are many. The author of the Reformed Discourse was like a coquette, who sets plenty of ornaments on her neck, but leaves her waist and ankles without ornament.

The day the copy of your work arrived was a frosty day, which penned up beasts and men, and annexed the genius to the heterogeneous. It brought no bonds on the antelopes, neither did it throw the wild beasts in danger’s way. However, opposition can be united and obey the same law, and be handled at once with (100) pleasure and without injury. Your servant Moses, meeting me without previous appointment, said: ‘Here is a book which will be a credit to you, and a proof of your close connection with our master whom God preserve!’ And I read aloud to him the two texts: ‘There thou shalt neither be hungry nor naked!’ (101) ‘There thou shalt not thirst nor suffer heat.’ And methinks you must have seen the light of supranomy, and called out to those that are behind you what Moses, the blessed, called out to his people, ‘Verily I have seen a flame, perhaps I may bring you a spark therefrom, or find guidance at the fire!’ And would I knew whether the spark you went to seek is a spark of flame or a spark of gold; what (150) ever it be, the brilliancy of your character was admiration, and its purity means

1. Comp. Luke (Rc.) p. 300, ‘The astrologer’s glass, small though it be, shows him all the inhabited world and deserts.’
2. The names Sa’d and Sa’di were the most hackneyed forms of appellation. There was a proverb, ‘Wherever I turn, I must see Sa’di!;’ ‘every horse is a Hind!’ (Zahir al-Ašāb II. 111.)
4. Koran XX. 90.
6. Ma’sūmī; compare the description below, Letter XX.
7. The title Abl al-Malātīn is mentioned in Abl. IX. 17; Sa’di 6:6 in later works. ‘The source of the patronage in the text is not clear. Compare however the proverb’ ‘Ragatyy the pot of the Kudūshī’ in Abl. XXII. 121; and for the glory of Abl al-Malātīn, Kūf 9:36, 72. ‘Wild names’ and ‘Ammūde præsidentem (Diocletian and Theodosius). Both were regarded as excellent pastures; there is a proverb, ‘Pasture, but not like an ass’s.’ In L. A. II. 44: the two are custom to rendering the entire list and their milk exploit. See also Al-Mahbūbī’s Kūf 9:27.
8. Mentioned as the food of donkeys in Abl. XVII. 167; ‘We are always whose actions are habit.’
9. The meaning seems to be that he had to get all his learning from books.
10. Capparis spinosa.
me between them as between a watchful night such as is my year, and a milk-camel which forms my property and my food. Now a little may be made the means of acquiring a great deal, even as he that prays seeks for light by projecting his shadow, and atonement for his sins by walking in the night; and he who visits God’s house washes away his sins by the long privations he undergoes.

(10) In writing to you, dear sir, and refraining from doing so to your noble father (whose reign God prolong!), I am like Saba son of Ya’rub when he tried to conciliate the Creator of light and Governor of the world: looking about and finding nothing more generous than the sun, he bowed down and worshipped that. Nor is your father to be blamed for condemning the spring anemones, and the hypocritical compliments addressed to him, out of dislike for the people of the town that is named, like the anemones, after Nsain; only one would have no excuse for basing on their account the line of the founder. The people of that town in relation to his sublime majesty are of two classes, impudent beggars and infectious orators. And I hid myself from them as the hungry stomach is hidden by a garment, or as one who, having committed a fault, lies low. But I was forced out by your generosity, which is like the dawn, the appearance of which is a signal for each animal to set about its business, for the jerboa to come out of its hole, and the king out of his lordly mansion. And the ape would fail chatter in the desert before the savoy lion.

(15) Having been told that my former letter was exhibited in your sublime residence, this encouraged me to let its sister go, hoping to enjoy similar fortunes: for surely falling in the sea, she must be wetted. Right proud is she to think whom she is to visit; but I had the first been shut out, the second would never have started.

p. 87

To one of the Sultan’s ministers to intercede for a friend, who had been governor of a province, named Al-Husayn b. Abid of Yamhun.

This letter is addressed to a minister whom God keep long at the head of affairs, treading on the necks of the ages; a letter written in circumstances such as engender gratitude, and favours that should not be disdained; albeit

LETTER III.

I confess that I fall short of the gratitude which is your due, and if I reveal some of your favours, I conceal others. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and His favour on His chosen saints! I swear the most solemn oath that no dove with inseparable collar, and garments never snipped of, the gift of spring, which, when the early rain has been bounteous to her, strikes up, and, refusing to be comforted, deplores her case—which, mounting some lofty tree-tufts, neither in heaven nor under cards, repays her refrain in both major and minor keys—no such dove, I say, longs more for her mate than I do to see you; or grieves more over than I grieve over the occasions when I have missed the opportunity of serving (10) you. If, however, I have neglected to write, thereby violating my inclinations as the lizard violates its clipping 1 or the robber his hand, 2 this is to be attributed to anxieties and distractions, to the desire of sparing you, and unwillingness to trouble you; for in truth I long for you as the aged beast longs for the familiar spot, or one interfacing branch for another; and sigh all the time after an interview with you as the she-camel sighs after the calves or the thirsty ones after the water-wrench. Your guest have not to pass the night in the wilderness, nor your neighbours to toss stones down murky wells. I snuff after the fragrant news of you (14) as men snuff after the scent of flowers, and look eagerly for them every night and morning: I feel about them as the thirsty one feels about the drops of morning rain. The early comer and the late returner alike gladden me if they bring them. God make them always to have smiling faces, rejoicing both friends and comrades! Your friendship makes me as compegnous as a black ewe 3 and the finger is pointed at me as one who knows you, just as it is pointed at the lightning by him who looks for it. Did I attempt to conceal the fact, my heart would betray me as the philial betrays the wine 4 or the palm-tree betrays itself in the open plain. 5 And how can he be hidden who goes before the camel? or who goes through the mounitions? 6 Now one look from a lover 7 is sufficient, and the first taste of water after a day of thirst sufficient. Now I know well that if a man stay in your court the anelespotes will not come in his way, nor will any of his secrets be revealed. He has not to drink the water of Nqāṭ 8 nor does there befal him that

1. The terms in the original are technical.
2. Mayyid II. 494. The Israelite pointed to Eostra being pregnante (Daniel xiv, v.), whereas the proverb.
3. Which is cut off when he is caught.
4. Mayyid I. 355. The Arbic is "a pregnant assile."  
5. Mayyid II. 318. The proverb is "More treacherous than a lion's ear.
9. Nqāṭ was the name of a well at Khatar supposed to produce liquid; Yūhā and T. A.
which doubles the ring on the forehead. But—so secure is he—he sleeps as
soundly as the slave-girl when the clouds of night are passing, and his thoughts
cast away care as a runaway slave casts away his fagot, or a disappointed
fisherman his net. Those on the other hand who are other men's guests are
'the chestnut, which, if it come first, has its throat cut; if last, is
hamstrung.'

Now my friend Abu —— has not ceased to be enchanted with your gifts, and
indeed through your care for him he is safe after his wounds and rescued after his
illness. Otherwise he would have been reckoned the first comer's spoil, and
a stone for him that drives away camels to pick up. He would have been given
fish to drink, and would have been left abandoned 'like Mina on the night when
the pilgrims leave it.' But God has mercifully saved him through you from
emptiness of pocket, and a deserted courtyard; and has given you a permanent
reward as well as temporary gratitude. You have kept him from being 'chopped
up like a log,' from being picked off like resin from an acacia, from being thrown
out like the tooth of a ten-year-old, from turning colour like water at the bottom
of a new waterskin. These are 'handles that have been tied' and cords that
have been fastened; since your attentions were 'close at hand for him,' and out
of other men's reach; and you were his companion in solitude, and where the
gazelles lick their young into shape. You 'drink in safe places,' and light your
fires on a high hill:

'This friend are a circle who fear not in the combat, and eloquent orators.'

'For the same to him what time you come to him, whether at the time he
feels misfortune or in the day of prosperity.'

Every third day there comes a letter from him enclosing heavy loads of gratitude,
constantly recurring to the theme. And herein he has started no strange byway,
but followed any discreet track; he has followed a course which in his family is
smooth as the back of a serpent, or the mane of the skilled maker;

both quote a verse in which a man in a fever is compared to one who had drunk
of Nabel.

1 A single ring on a horse's forehead was thought to be lucky, but a double one unlucky.

(The Ktis'neh-spelled in Shah Al-Ma'ari's Book of the Horrors of the Horse.)

2 The verse is not clear.

Mayyilil II. 129. The colour was supposed to be unlucky.

Mayyilil II. 243. Literally, at the top of the 'Zamuz. This grass (Panicum dichotomum)
is supposed to be so low that the top of it is within any one's reach.

Mayyilil II. 152.

Mayyilil I. 101. i.e. in the desert.

Mayyilil I. 101; i.e. are a good guide.

From Al-Khawr al-'ab.'

22 Zaliki III. 49.

Can the spears-wood be produced save by its own tree? can palms be planted
save in their own ground?

Small blame to him who is fond of fame, for that is the fairest mistress one
can visit, the most enduring treasure one can store up! He who praises you
gives you full payment for your gift, and acknowledgement is sufficient recompense
for a benefit. Now the family of Abu —— have offered prayers in every chapel
for you, and have been hoping for you as men hope for the spring min—

'For their unflagging fowls, like cacklers of the 'Alif, when her delay seems <10>
long to those who are unable to rise with their red crops.'

Now he and I are two branches of one tree, two stalks of one orchard plant, two
birds of one nest, two habitants of one mound; the same cloud keeps the heat off
both of us, and one flame gives us both light; indeed I may, improving on this p. 72
simile, say that we are two fingers of one hand, two feathers of one wing, two
wings of one branch. If the wind bend him, I bend; and if it deal gently with
him, I feel it gentle; and my tongue interprets his mind as the flame speaks
for the mouth of him who blows it, or the sitting for the fingers of him that
plays upon it.

Now I have fallen short of what is due to your lordship, even as the stature
of a girl falls short of the length of a spear, or as the contents of a mountain
puddle fail to sustain a galloping herd. Nor do I now know what turn I had
better take. 'Let him whose mouth is empty greet thee! I can speak to
no one, nor ask any one that answers. It is enough for the tongue to praise
its benefactor, and for the heart to love its generous friend.

Still I shall not cease to ask for further favours, although these be sufficient,
or do to our fresh points of liberality, although they abound. Now to perfect
a kindness is like letting a horse follow its bridle or a camel its rein; and even so
were it to help Abu —— with word after word and counsel after counsel, till
he be restored to his children, who are pining by reason of his absence, and
asking constantly concerning his fate, just as the sufferer from drought asks about
fodder, or the lonely about company; and who await his emerging as the young
in a bed which awaits the arrival of their mothers with water. But your good

1 Verse of Zahiri, Abidward, p. 91, cf. Aghafl IX. 128 and Al-Turid Al-Thirid II. 2.
2 Verse of Al-Jami'ukid in Khawatul-Abidward, p. 177.
3 Mayyilil I. 166. A man who was sitting made this excuse for not setting.
4 The naturalists (e.g. Daud) state that the 'Alif goes to very long distances to fetch water
for its young.
health is the greater matter, and the favour which is beyond all others: and if you have any request, honour me by mentioning it, and stake my thirst by letting me serve you.

LETTER IV.

To a friend who asked him to place him lower in the rank of his correspondent.

This letter (God preserve the prince to whom it is addressed, who excels all others without exception, and is clad in the garments of praise!) is written from a place haunted by his holy memory, and inhabited by persons who are indebted to his favours, and proceeds from a heart that swears in affection for him like a bubble in a pond or a raindrop in a mountain tarn. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, and His favour be upon His chosen servants! My longing for a sight of your beloved person is like wine which gets better with age, or like a story-teller who acquires authority with seniority. It is a longing such as no cooing dove could adequately express, nor she-camel descended from Jafft.

Your letter when it arrived was like a bird of good tidings alighting, or refreshing water suddenly found at the bottom of a well. New loyalty in describing that of which the reality is familiar is a habit that should be avoided, just as explanation of the obvious had far better be eschewed. When I broke the seal, that letter sent forth an odour like musk or incense. And grateful did I feel to Almighty God when I read that you are covered over with salubrity as with a mantle, and that comfort is your house and home; since I regard you as my shield of defence and my permanent protection, and when any want of your virtuous catchers my nostril, or any fault of the branches of your heroism my fingers, my face brightens, and my inner man is healed. Even so does 'the handmaid of her mistress' carriage,' and the nursemaid of the fortune of the household to which she belongs.

I am aware that your delay in answering was only in order 'to bring the mischief home to its author,' and the punishment for the error to him who committed it. For I wrote after the 'leather was rotten,' and the garment decayed. Now the tears that flow slowest are those that contain most comfort for the afflicted; and the cow-camels that have been ten months with young are the hardest for men to drive.

I am aware that your counsel is cream without whey, and that you can discover the right course without a guide. My letter about Abu —— was in the first place one of thanks, and only in the second contained a reminder and a request for help; inasmuch as it is not your custom to put off your suppliants to a lengthy term, or to offer excuses to promises to those that hope in you.

'Let go your hands and be at ease; the firesticks can only be made of (10) mereh-wood.'

And as for the efforts you have made to set right such errors as have been committed — when 'the bow is given to him that can handle it,' and the steeds to them that can ride them, and the lance to him who can wield it, the foot of falsehood slips as the truth remains firm, and at the rising of the sun of veracity the darkness of deception disappears. And Abu —— has been leaning against mount Mishk, and has attached himself to the stirrup of a horse that goes not lame. It is no bluent sword that he has shaken, no stumbling steed that he has speared to the goal. Yet had it not been for your care, he would have left with his hands upon crumbling stones, and followed the lightening with his eyes, and met death 'upon the pole horse.' And even if you did not trouble your fingers to (15) write, and your pen to answer, the effects of your beneficence would have spoken, and the marks of your beneficence would have been eloquent narrators. 'The countenance shows what the lip has taken in.' Its brightness is a sufficient guide, and its openness gives full information. And your gratifying us by the restoration of Abu —— is a favour which has followed on others, and also has brought others in its train. For his presence is as grateful to the better sort as (10) addin to a camel, or the shore to an oyster. For they are all dependent on his beauty, and are plants which he has planted.

As for the section of your letter which deals with the style of address, assuredly I must mount a spear or two for one who has descended so many for me, and must (10) needs traverse a high road for the sake of one who has gone through the jungle on my account. This is merely an act of civility, 'the service of one who can render but little.' I have therefore only acted like one who stands on tiptoe to

1 There are similar letters in Al-Khwatim's collection.
2 A camel stallion supposed to have belonged to Al-Nu'man ibn al-Mutanabbi; often named together with Shadidin.
3 Maydun I, 246. A proverb used of those who boast of what is not theirs.
4 Maydun I, 174.
5 The proverbial phrases for 'the mischief had become immovable' is 'like an eye that is not kept nearer the leather is rotten,' Maydun II, 117. 'The lint was in the fire' would be our equivalent.
6 Maydun I, 245.
7 See Mosquid II, 57.
8 Mountain in Nishapur.
9 Maydun I, 141. The literal meaning is 'on a pole camel;' it is not impossible that this proverb may be distinctly connected with the familiar passage in the Apocalypse.
10 P. 79, n. 4.
11 Aphrast XVII, 15.
meet a cloud in his desire for the sweet water which has come down the whole way between heaven and earth. I had indeed wished to ask you to return to your proper style; and to treat me according to mine, but was afraid I might lay myself open to a suspicion of which I am innocent, and of the contrary of which I might be more reasonably suspected. My delaying to do this was therefore a slip, and an act of negligence; for our friend had commissioned me to move a mountain, to climb up to the shining moon. And what is the extra load to the two burdens, or a finger to the two hands? Surely I am not to be blamed if I responded with a few drops—a last squeeze—to your copious shower. You commenced by giving me titles that I did not deserve, and I answered in such wise as my duty enjoined; I could not be like the barren seed which is raised upon but produces nothing, nor like the grave which takes but never gives. I could not do less than the mirror of the stranger, or the great cistern in a rich man's house, into which the hand of a beam looks, and that endeavours to show him his like. And your stroke has the same advantage over my response that the fair face has over its image in the polished glass. And when your language recovers its youth and becomes mild and modest, I too will change my note and come down a peg, and once more adopt a humble style. New Abu — is the Painter of my nights, the rose of my spring, and the garden of my hope; and since you and he are two moons in one halo, two suns in one ring, two good words in one message,

I have contented myself with writing to one of you, and offer you both most fragrant compliments and copious solutions, to last so long as the mountains remain firm, and the salazoon has leaves.

LETTER V.

Portion of a letter written to a person who, it was supposed, had been deeply wounded by a lion after his hunter had played him false: the name of the latter being Moses.

I have been in a great state of impatience ever since we were told that it was not known where or whither he had gone. Some said you had been benighted and attacked by a lion, to which I replied, 'stiff and nonsense,' fiction and fabrication.1 A lie invented by some enemy! Nevertheless I was alarmed (2) thereat; for the tender people are, the more anxious they feel. But when Husain's caravan arrived from Aparagus, and they told me that they had seen you, I said 'the sun shines first on Thalath,' and 'none can tell you so well as he who knows.' And when your letter arrived assuring us that you had never entered Aphasis, I wondered at both Musa and Husain; hoping for the best, and fearing the birds that were on the left.1 As for Musa, he has only followed the ordinary custom of mudalers and camel-drivers, a custom as natural to them as it is to adulterate milk;2 or to put stripes on a garment. But Husain is an honest man, and must have made a mistake, or been heedless and computed without making (10) due inquiries.

And men bring thin tidings then didst not engage;3 and with whom thouatest no appointment. But since God has brought you safely home, what matters a diva in a distant spot, a torrent in Yemenah, a sly in Thamalah?

LETTER VI.

To a man who had lost another 166 dirhams with which he desired the letter to buy him bread.

1 I am writing on the first day of the month—God give us good luck on both its brightness and its dark nights! And my longing to see you is like that of the poet of Asad,4 after his mango drops, or that of the poet of the ram Numair after his camel's milk. God gather us in the shade of vanity with pitey and joy, and in the

1 Mapili I. 119, where the first words are كبيذه فی جیره. The accent given by Mapili is that a Persian trader, of such a tendency to deceive his customers by the resemblance of the Persian words ای and ای, whence his words became a proverbial expression for a fraud.

2 Mapili I. 236. According to the story told in explanation of the proverb, the pilgrim did not leave Mount Amusid till the sun shone on Mount Thalath. Here the sense must be similar to that of the next proverb quoted.

3 I. 335. 4 A verse of Abu Dhalil. الارواح فی هر الفی. نور میرک و الحمایل.

4 There are several proverbs in which 'external milk' 'figmusa, but none of them seem quite appropriate here.

5 Mapili II. 222. Taken from the Meccah of Thamalah.

6 The reference is to the verses of Abu T-Er-Rumâni Al-Asbâr quoted in Hamitâ, p. 664, commenting: 'Abu Al-Walâd for me, and tell it that all water since I have left it is divinatory. The commentators there doubt whether Al-Walâd meant for "mamge drops," or is the name of a particular fountain.

7 The poet referred to is 'Alâ-ül Husain, commonly called Al-Râf, 'the canal-head,' f. [II. 10.]

LETTER VII.

Written to his maternal uncle Abu 'l-Kitāb Allāh son of Sāharān when he came up from Baghdād and found his mother dead, not having heard of her death before his arrival. [C00 a. m.]

God preserve you as long as cloud rises or mountain pressure! This letter is written from Mu'arrah of Nu'mān, whither I have returned after fatigue like Khb's son of Mu'minā. 'We are God's, and to Him do we return!' Praise be to God, praise mixed with tears, and to which the ears are distressed through pain! And I pray God be gracious to our lord Muhammed and his family; though grief make thick the utterance of this prayer, albeit at the resurrection it will count the more therefore! And now I will tell you about myself.

owing to the frequency with which camels are described in his poems. For an account of him see Aghlabi XX, 166.

1 Some VII. 44.
2 Literally, 'if you cannot have mares, do not have camels,' Meybodi. L. 19.
3 Ibn Makkāl was a poet of the time of the Prophet, whose proper name was Tabita ibn Uthay. Accounts of him which, however, throw no light on this allusion, are given in Ibn Hisn's Biographical Dictionary, and the Kifāyat al-Adabīn.
4 A scene for the 'white' or snowy months, December and January.
5 Meybodi II. 271. A familiar phrase for promises that are not realized.
6 Sāharān is the family name, not the name of the immediate progenitor of the person addressed. Letters XVII and XVIII are addressed to the same, and also the poem in Sirāj al-Zindā L. 185. From this poem Abu 'l-Kitāb would appear to have been a great traveller; the poem is intended to dissuade him from a visit to Egypt, not from leaving the region visited by the Empress.
7 A pro-Muhammadan hero, who is said to have descended upon the wolf that was menacing a cow with a golden rope in the wilderness.

'0 would that I and he were dead! But 0 would that 'it is no help against fate!' 'Would that 'Amr (albeit 'would that' in a vain delusion) had never raised (10) Falān, nor descended on their valley!' 'Were the beginnings of things but as clear to a man as are the endings, he would never be found repenting!' God's mercy on thee who now dwellest in the grave, whose life is become as though it were yesterday!' 'Though hope be cut off from thee, yet regret shall remain for thee so long as time lasts!'

I can hope for no good after her death, nor can I do anything but plunge deeper and further into misery.

'God be gracious to thee,' how we miss thee! And how little does the (19) wilderness before thee! How canst thou, who want to be so timid, make for thy dwelling a place which the champion fears to pass?' 'God grant no blessing on our world, now that it is no longer thine!'

'0 final consummation, thy date is in the resurrection!' 'Truly a far-off term!' There is no consummation 'till the 'Amalin of the acacia-fruit return!' till Al-No'mān return to Thāb, till a prophet be raised out of Meccah. Were not it that the death days are fixed in writing, glorify should I have been killed for her sake in p. 99 cold blood! Howbeit I did tell her that I was bent on travelling, and that I was fully intent thereon, and she gave me leave. Maybe she thought it an idle fancy, the lightning of a cloud without water! However 'the term of each is fixed in writing,' and my grief over her loss is like the pleasures of Paradise, which are

1 Verse assigned to Niṣābūrī, ibid. Cf. Meybodi II. 528.
2 Verse of the poet al-Dinārī in the Ḍīlah of al-Huseyn (Nasqārāt, p. 245). It is here quoted inaccurately, the second hemistich being 455, whereas it should be 454. The author has confused it with the second part of the Ḍīlah of al-Huseyn (Walīkhānā, Ghānī, p. 1).1
3 Verse quoted in al-Balā⪵i's Abūl-Nasr. 4 Hamīsh, p. 488; by an uncertain author.
5 Hamīsh, p. 492; verses of Mawālik son of Mawālik.
6 Hamīsh, p. 541; part of a verse by Abū Sulaim the Hālafī.
7 Meybodi I. 176. The proverb is 'ill the two gatherings of the acacia-fruit return,' or 'ill the 'Amalin who collected the acacia-fruit return,' Meybodi I. 65. His name was Yāsib son of 'Amalin. See also al-Harīrī, p. 291, col. 1. In Aghlabi XVII, 152 some other proverbs of this sort are collected.
8 In the verse of Abū Dhu'ayb cited by al-Harīrī, 1. 1, (2) 'l-Kalāb be raised from the dead' is appended. The reference here is to a verse of Niṣābūrī, ibid. p. 116.
9 Korān XIII. 98.
renewed so oft as they are consumed, and to dilate thereon would weary the hearer and be waste of time. God make her and me your ransom from every ill,
and give you consolation instead of me! 'Many who have heard my story have not heard my excuse,' and indeed 'apologies are lies.' However 'the scent tells no lies to his people.' And if you say 'the milk in the skin contradicts the excuse,' and 'when you hear that the smith is going away next night, you may be sure of meeting him in the morning,' and 'even a venisonous person will tell lies at time of absence'—by him who produces the palm from the date-stone, and the fire from the flint, I have not turned away from Halab either in going or returning, except as a pearl-shell might be avoided owing to the dangers of the sea which lie between. And, as you know, though born a man, I am like a wild
animal in character.

'When the wolf howls and whines, it sounds familiar; but if a man makes a noise, I feel scared.'

'He thinks the wilderness the best society, and finds his way whithersoever the galaxy finds him.'

'He would give his nose if only the earth's surface were as clear of men as tanned leather is of hair.'

Had I entered Halab, I should have been obliged to perform certain duties
which it would have fatigued me to perform; whereas had I neglected them,
I should have been blamed and given offence. And if a man has not travelled
to Na'ain of arak, he cannot be blamed for not bringing presents of tooth-
picks; from the traveller to Hajar 11 dates are expected, and salt from the
traveller to Bahriya.асс. None the less my desire to see you is like an old man's
desire for youth, or a she-camel's for her young. Were it put on the backs of
camels, it would not allow them to gallop; or were it turned into the collars of

---

1 Maylili ii. 145.
2 Maylili ii. 160.
3 Maylili ii. 196. His interests being bound up with theirs.
4 Maylili ii. 197. The proverb refers to an excuse being conditioned by some obvious fact; the man is the legend having declared that he had nothing to offer his guest.
5 Maylili ii. 198. See above, p. 13, n. 4.
6 Maylili ii. 17 (with Add. at 3).
7 Verse quoted by Dinnick, Art. Ollie, i. 134, without giving the name of the author.
8 Homliah, p. 441 verse of Ta'ahdah Shams.
9 Author uncertain.
10 Name of a town between Na'ain and Al-Jazir, inhabited by the Hashshith. It is also the name of many other places; but the Na'ain famed for the arak is the one specified.
11 Maylili ii. 173; the words of the proverb are 'like one who imports dates to Hajar.' Notice Maylili may say Yihiya tells us to which of the towns named Hajar the proverb refers.
12 'Round Bahrain the fishery is abnormally opulent, and furnishes occupation to at least half the inhabitants of the island.' (Pilgrims, Central and Eastern Arabia.)

---

LETTER VII

ring-downs, their throats would be too tight to croo. For, indeed, the brown dove
is not more capable than a band of eloquent relatives; rich apparel is better than (60)
ruddy feathers; a house is better than a nest; and a golden collar than a black one. Nor can a she-camel compare with a man of sagacity and intelligence; the
camel-calf's mother is not an intelligent being, since all she can do is to cry and
afterwards be consolled, to be grieved and afterwards appeased; whereas my grief
over lost opportunities of being near you is like that of an anole that has nursed
a fawn in plain and desert, taking herself a house that is like a lion's lair, under
the shadow of some solitary lote, then some afternoon she falls asleep and the
fawn strays and becomes the lot and portion of the wolf. And when she wakes
(94) from her sleep, she looks and sees only some remains of skin, and is frantic and
disconsolate. And may Almighty God grant that we meet and be gathered together
like the stars of the 'Arab', which fear not separation nor diminution of their number.

I wrote to you from Rashah explaining my purpose in staying there. If that
letter have arrived, it is well; but if it have been delayed, it would be inconvenient
to restate its contents. 'Every occasion has its proper formula,' every season
its fruit, every valley its acacias. I found Baghdad 'like a pie's wing'—fair,
but carrying nothing.

'Truly 'Irak is no home for my people, and its door is shut against (3) the
Abu Ghurain.

So pile the carriage upon some powerful camel, spring from Maharah, at
whose birth the people of 'Ed'established.

'How many' an up-and-down hill-path lies between me and Mayyah, how
many a wilderness wherein the camels are left dead!
It whined for far-off Nakkah; but I said, 'fie for shame! Trouble is there;
so make for Syria. For 'Irak has no people that we love; its people are
of proud looks.'

'And if the measure of Yamamah be scanty, that of Mayyahfiikhi is not (16)
much more so.'

---

1 Four stars.
2 Maylili ii. 168; taken from a verse of Al-Jaziriyah.
3 Maylili ii. 343 has a proved 'submarine like a pie,' to which there is perhaps a reference.
4 The ill-bank was due to the habit of tossing the backs of quadrupeds practised by this bird.
5 Venues of Dha '5-Himmah.
6 Yihiya 1. 110 says this tribe was called 'Ali or 'Ali son of Na'ash son of Mabrah son of 'Isa, after which the camels are named.
7 Yihiya 4. 759 attributes these lines to Jarir, reading Mayrak for Mayyarah. In Agkini xxl.
95 they are quoted fromMusalmans with Amul for Mayyarah. See the whole poem in
Christian Arabic Poets, i. 443.
8 Yihiya iv. 797 cites this verse, but cannot specify the name of the poet. Al-Ibadh 569 cites
I say to my soul, "You disliked me when you had weary teeth, how much more when you have none?" You have defied me from youth to dotage."

"This is not your nest, be off."

"This place were best to leave."

"You spilled the milk in the summer."

"You neglected the mushroom in the spring."

"You have split the waterskin on the sand."

"Return to your proper dwelling-place."

"Mischievous! bring you to your people! What have you to do with men?"

The summit of the mountain is no fit home for the ostrich, neither is the plain the feeding ground for the young camels! (1)

"Every tribe of Ma'add has its rook or quarter whither it can flee."

Now I had thought that the days would vouchsafe to me to abide there; but the wild beast sticks tight to his hole, the maidenservant is dasy of her blow; the slave greedy of his master, the ravens shining of his dace; and I found learning at a greater discount in Baghdad than gravel at the 'Aljahb harness', cheaper than dates at Medina, more common than palm-branches in Yemena, more copious than water in the ocean. However, there is some obstacle in the way of every blessing, and some storm-cloud or roller in the way of every pearl. (20)

"If you cannot succeed in a thing, then leave it, and pass over to what you can do."

"Be satisfied with what brings you to your destination; if there is not shade enough for your whole body, there is sure to be enough for one of your members. And when the camel kicks her mallet, and the horse stops under his rider, and the bow62 besills the archer, and the cloak is not wide enough for the chilly it from Tarnab (ab. 295) from Azur from his father, and asks that 'mousse' here means 'pitch'."

Mayslon II. 5. The proverb recurs in these letters. It is supposed to have been said to a woman who, finding that she had been supplicated in her husband's absence by a worthless infant, thought that by becoming troublesomely she would gain him. Mayslon II. 6.

"Tarnab, the curious letter.

Mayslon II. 24.

Mayslon II. 26. The proverb refers to people who miss an opportunity that they have thrown away."

Mayslon II. 26.

Fat'hir on Yumada, p. 254; Freytag, Proverbs from the Qur'an, III. 1446. His translation is slightly different.

Verse of Al-Ahkam, Yumada, p. 216.

Mayslon L 254 (see Appendix). For the 'turtledove' compare Freytag, Proverbs from the Qur'an, III. 2143. "Give a slave a stone, and he will want a stone-arm" (for the rest, Mayslon II. 26, 214.

See Renne, Six Months in the Umay, where it is stated that after each pilgrimage these heaps are removed.

Verse of 'Azur Ibn Ma'dil Kunlin, Al-Ithaf Abdurrahman II. 79, Aqaineh XIV. 74.

Freytag, Proverbs from the Qur'an, III. 244. Cf. Mayslon I. 310.

weaver, and the swarm cover the face of the honey-gatherer, when the cloud descends the forage hunter, and the lightning makes a fool of the sky-gazer, and 'the supposed pasture leaves the poor shepherd in the hatch'-the dog returns to his vomit again? and Reynard behinds him of his hold, and the raven becomes contented with his nest.

All through my journey I neither entered valley nor climbed mountain, nor was carried by ship, nor bore beast save by God's grace in the first place, and in p. 31 the second your kindness, favour, and consideration: your benefit are too many for my thanks, too copious for my memory to take in; and I am aware that you deal with me in this way without thought of either recompense or gratitude. Since, however, silence is in such cases accounted rudeless by the majority, whereas gratitude is vaxtus to the door of the kindness, I find it easier to bear the blame of one than the blame of many.

Abu Tihir had given me a load of benefits to carry so great that I can scarcely summate a portion of it: you have not therefore inherited your kindness to me from a distant relation, nor taken your affection for me from a strange house. You are 'a chip of the old block.' You are but reproducing your father's conduct, and 'the undergrowth springs from the stem,' and the arrow 'from the bow'; and 'no man can be blamed for resembling his father.' Your letters constantly knock at your friends' doors, reminding them to be generous, and keeping them to non-obligitory duties, till you have made them as closely attached to me as the mane of a horse, or the coils of a rope. And whenever they offer to perform such any service, I endeavor to avoid troubling them, believing as I do in the wisdom of Zuhair's saying—

'Whosoever is ever soliciting others, and does not refrain, shall one day be humiliated and vexed.'

Had I known that I should have to come back I should not have gone upon this journey; however 'misfortune attends the tongue' and fortune is fickle; and events are like waves of the sea, some of them revealing foul vegetation, others (as) fair rows of pearls. Man knows not what his mind is attached to, nor what will come to his hand. Had I known the future, I should have got
myself great good fortune, and no harm should have touched me; there was
found written on a tablet—

‘O thou whose heart is full of care, fear not; if ever be ordained for thee,
then shall take it.’

The favour of God is upon all those whom you know in Baghdad; they treated
me with singular courtesy, and spoke well of me in my absence, and honoured me
above my equals and my peers. And when they learned that I was getting ready
to leave them, and, indeed, on the point of going, they manifested great sorrow
and said many kind words, they put on fresh garments of grief, and the eyes of
old men shed tears. ‘There is no god but God!’ What plant is there on which
nothing fresh! Every fragrant herb has some one to smell it; every chime has
P. 19 in her tank; every breast, however low, its silver; every slave-girt, however ugly,
her owner; —and so anxious were they for me to remain their neighbour, that they
gave me commands which a contenido mind forbid me to execute, and which
went beyond all that is customary. But Nadhidh 3 is at a distance from the moor-
mountains, and he who makes for the hollow takes a different direction from him
who makes for the hills.

‘Very 4 different was the day I spent upon her saddle from the day I spent
with Haysunah brother of Jabir!’

‘What’, when I am far on in years and the crown of my head is white, am
I bidden to do what was too much for me when I was heartless?’

‘Mahlwiyyah 5 , little use is wealth to a man when his throat rattles, and the
breath leaves his chest.’

God reward them! If what they did was done out of kindness, it was a great
benefit; and if they did it for pretence, still it was an act of good fellowship; and
so I left Baghdad, with my honour still in a vessel that did not leak; not one drop
of it had I split in quest of either wealth or learning. Indeed, since I passed my
(10) twentieth year, it never occurred to me to seek knowledge from any inhabitant of
either Irak or Syria. ‘He 6 whom God leads finds his way rightly, and for him
whom God causes to stray thou shalt not find a guiding friend.’ It was the Library
that attracted me thither.

‘Even 7 if I do love one who dwells in Al-Ghadh, I am not the first aspirant
after a thing who did not get it.’

1 Muyzini II. 181; with ‘twin’ for ‘three’,’
2 Name of a mountain in the Hija.
3 Verse of Al-Asha, discussed in Khilafah al-Askar III. 56.
4 Verse of Uzair Al-TIY; see Agamli XVI. 127.
5 Verse of Uzair Al-TIY; see the Cairo edition, p. 118.
6 Koran XVII. 16.
7 Mlyslan, p. 274. Verse of an unknown author: Al-Ghadh is a valley in Najj (Yath).

LETTER VII.

All honour to Baghdad and its inhabitants! And to the Tigris as a river and as a
drinking-place!

‘Truly’ 8 is in my passion for ‘Azara after the ties between us have been losed, (13)
I am like one who seeks the shadow of a cloud, which fades away so
soon as he thinks he can put himself to sleep beneath it.’

Every one whom I informed of my intended departure displayed sorrow
and looked sad. So that I concealed my intention from them as a woman conceals
her personal defects from her rival. And when the chameleon of putting climbed
his zardah 9 and the period 10 of separation perceived on its place, I, and they were like
Abu Jabirah and the Banu Rawlah 4 .

‘He spoke them fair and thanked them, and bade them a last adieu.’

So I started from Baghdad the sixth day before the end of Ramazan, with
camels piling sideways, and springs cracking, and ships expecting to sink;
a journey wherein the traveller on foot wished he were mounted, if only on a palm-
trunk; and that he were shod, if only with the skin of his face and brow; and
that he were lying down, though it were on thorns and brambles; ‘in the
morning’ 11 the people will be thankful for their night-journey; ‘troubles will then
be cleared away.’

I passed by Jabir (since I went on the road that leads by Manfl and Mayr
fi-Hilal, where are waters like those of ‘Azara’ 12 and ‘Aduh 13 , and praise be to (16)
the God of ages! —

1 Verses of Khayyam, out of a poem of which some portions are quoted in Khilafat al-
Askar II. 296-298.
2 The chameleon is said when climbing this tree (of which the authorities only know
that branches are made of its wood) not to remove more than one foot at a time.
3 None of a bard, said to be somewhat longer than a sparrow, and the sparrow’s enemy.
The grammarians maintain that it is a bird of ill-omen, but not apparently that it signified
departure.
4 The Banu-Munshi, when attacked by ‘Ism 14 the king of Peru, fled for refuge to the
isle of Tuy, who refused 15 and then was offended by the Banu Rawlah, but was swallow-
it not long to enlarge them. The story is oft told, e.g. Agamli XX. 130. The verse is by Zalabi:
Dunn Maktirith Al Shi‘a‘, p. 57. Arabi, p. 190.
5 Muyzini II. 24. ‘A valley or river in the territory of the Audites’ (Yath). ‘A well in the territory of the
Banu ‘Ushra’ (Al-Asyri).
6 Famous spring between Khidrakh and Mayshah, four miles from the first, thirty-two
from the second’ (Yath). For the waters of Aqrah, see Corp. Through Tchoqek Arabia
(1893), p. 74. ‘The river of Aqrah, the Khidrakh Su, which is identified with the Chashim
of Xenophon, is a somewhat sluggish stream wandering through orchards of nut, maple,
pepper, and other trees.’ According to this writer the water is not particularly good.
7 [II. 10.]
LETTERS OF ABU 'INAL AL-MĀ'ARRI.

p. 33

'Went down to the salt waters and bathed them; so God water my first folk and my spring!'  
Each time the ravens croaked, I said, Fair words, sweet bird, doth knowest nothing of what was or is to be; back, back! Try to frighten some one else, not me! Long time hast thou alighted upon excurses, and have children broken thy wings!  
(15) Who will tell 'Amr son of 'Uthmān, wherever among mankind he may be—
Let not the binding of spells keep thee from the pursuit of good. At one time I would never go out if I met a raven or a sparrow; but now I find the birds that fly to the right and to the left are the one as the other. And even so neither good nor evil is abiding with any one.'  
(16) And when we sighted at Hanimiyāh, the bearers of sand and of money were alike, and the day-traveller had little trouble where he should sleep, and the night-traveller where he should start and where pass the night. And we went on thus all we reached 'Ajdād, when the troubles of the road returned, and the travellers were again involved in dangers.  
'You brought us home half-dead yourself, without marrow in the bones and without a bump.'  
Being unable them to remain in the spot I had chosen, I decided upon isolation such as should make me like an antelope in its lair, and should completely cut me off from mankind, except, indeed, those with whom God should join me as the arm is joined to the hand, or night to morning. And I beg to offer you and your father (God help me by preserving you both!) salutations as beautiful as the 'Ajrān, as clear as water, as sweet as honey, as continuous as raindrops, as enduring as the stars, as fragrant as the 'Ajrān, as brilliant as the lightning.

LETTER VIII.

p. 34

Written to the people of Ma'arrat, when he was coming from Baghdad, before his arrival.  

In the name of God the merciful and clement! This letter is addressed to the people of Ma'arrat (whom God encomasses with happiness) by Abdallāh son of 'Abdallāh son of 'Amr bin Yūnus, and is meant for his acquaintance and kindred.  

1 Verses of Al-Kūnai Bur Lakshan, quoted L. A. XVII. 190, and in part XV. 40. They are also a commonplace in anthologies, where the worthlessness of orphans is discussed (Aqīq. IX. 164, Zohr al-Adhīb H. 79). See also Christian Arabic Poetry, L. 106.  
2 'Towns to the east of Damascus, two days' journey from Humār al-Umayr' (Vib).  
3 Author unknown.  
4 An evanescent love.  
5 Said to be the Jusur.

God give peace to all these and abandon them not, and gather them and grieve them not.

This is my address to them at the time of my returning from 'Irāq, the gathering place of the wranglers, and the home of the remainder of antiquity: after having (9) ended my youth and hidden farewell to my spring-time; after 'walking' all the  
(10) udders of time, and proving its good and evil. I have found the best course for me to pursue in the days of my life is to go into retreat, such as shall make me stand towards mankind in the relation that the camels in the plain stands to the  
(11) etamines that are there. Nor have I been a bad counsellor to myself, nor have I failed to secure my fair share of benefits. So I decided upon this course after asking God's help, and revealing my idea to a few friends on whose characters reliance could be placed, all of whom thought it wise, and considered it could be carried out with prudence. And it is a course (12) which night-journeys have been undertaken, which has been 'sentit' at Bāqkhāsh, and 'carried' on the  
(13) carriage's back. It is no offspring of an hour, no mauling of a month or a year; it is the child of past years and the product of reflection. I have hastened to inform you of this for fear that one of you out of courtesy might be fain to go to  
the home to my custom to inhabit in order to meet me, and if he found this impossible, I might find myself afflicted with two bad things—bad manners and entailment. And indeed 'many people incur blame through no fault of their  
(14) own,' and the proverb says 'leave a man to his choice.' And my soul did not consent to my returning till I had promised it three things—secretion as complete as that of Al-Fahsh, in the constellation of the Bull; separation from the world like that of the egg-shell from the chick; and to remain in the city even though the inhabitants fled through fear of the Greeks. And this, even though those who are attached to me, or profess attachment, flee like grey antelopes or white