LETTERS OF ABU 'ILĀ AL-MĀHARRI.

camels. And I swear that I did not travel to increase my means, nor to gain by interviewing my fellows.

(30) What I wanted was to stay in a place of learning: and I found out the most precious of spots, only fate did not allow me to stay there, and only a fool will quarrel with destiny. So I abandoned all thought of the privilege which fate thought too dear to grant.

God grant that you may be able to abide in your homes and not have to be always on your horses and stirrups; and God shed upon you his favour as the full moonlight 1 is shed upon the hare-brained nesting. And may he give good recompense to the people of Baghdad, for they praised me more than I deserved, and testified to my merits before they knew them, and quite seriously offered me their goods. Albeit they found me not fed of praise, neither eager for other people's charity. And when I went away, it was against their will, and God is enough for me, and on Him let whoso will rely.

LETTER IX.

To one of the family of 'Abu.'

The affection of my friend the Shiaf is no new thing, but an heirloom. For (16) the fondness of the dry-nurse 2 is only sham. I am told that you generously exquired after me, and found only the remains of a dwelling. And indeed I informed you when in Iraq of my intended retirement, which would prevent my seeing you as you desired. Arriving here, I found my mother had been carried off by death, and should gladly have died myself; so I wrapped myself up in despair and isolation, having come exhausted myself to a state of affairs by no means liked, such as a general dearth continuing from year to year with other mischief (19) which only God can remove. For this reason I have only sent a little money, the smallness of which grieves me exceedingly. However, a journey is like an old camel in a level place, it plays with every plant. 3 Part of a man's clothes resemble him; 4 and the dry well will not quench your thirst; the exhausted camel will

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1 Reference to a proverb 'more easily derived than a gnat on a moonlit night,' which is explained by the supposition that the animal is blinded by the moonlight, and so is easily caught.
2 There are several proverbs more or less resembling the words here used; see Mayqillā. I. 315. II. 197. The word rendered dry-nurse in these proverbs is explained as meaning 'to find the camel that refuses its milk.'
3 Frayling. I. 61. III. 244 quoted in Mayqillā's gloss on the proverb 'a bad speech and a bad answer.' I. 275.

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LETTER X.

only give you part of your night draught of milk. Take thy sparrow, hawk, and be thankful: 'take from Jill' what he gives you.' And I beg you to accept my excuses, and to favour me by accepting what I have sent.

LETTER X.

To Abū Tāhir, Al-Mahāri, son of Sadiq, written from Baghdad, and containing an account of the commentary of Shabāt and the trouble taken by him over it. [400 A.H.]

In the name of God, etc. Praise be to God so long as acts intentional and unintentional are enumerated, and his favour be upon Mohammed so long as tribes assemble, and knot rise above knot in the span-wood. My longing after you, dear sir, is like that of thirsty hands for the downpour of the cloud, and the benefit which I derive from your neighbourhood is similar to that which accrues to the fertile land from fresh streams. And I strain my senses after tidings of you as the herdsman who has suffered from continuous years of drought strains his after some thundercloud from the south for which he anxiously waits. And my regret over your absence as are those of the wild cow, which having gone in pursuit of pasture some evening is betrayed by some lion who comes and seizes its calf which has strayed and lost its way. The cow wanders all round the sand-hill, and shows no 'comely patience.' 5 And I think of the times when I was with you as the weaned child drinks of its mother's breast, and as he who swears by the milk thought of the children of Khalīlād. And I wait for your arrival as the Meccan trader waits for the foreign pilgrims, or the owner of cattle for the first appearance of vegetation. (10) And I fly to you for help as the drowning man turns to the nearest shore, or the timid man to a sword that is not blunt. And I am as reluctant to trouble you as is the dove to be inseminated, or as was Abu Jahl to appear at Badr. And my confidence in your generosity is as great as a mariner's in his boat, or that of Al-Hādhā in Nūsāmah his horse. And my gratitude for your benefits is like a horse dedicated to pious objects which cannot be held in. It is renewed with every breath.

On this day the —— of —— your letter reached me, and I rejoiced thereof

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1 Mayqillā. I. 291. 'Jill' is 'Aun Al-Ashādī, when Shabāt, the collector for the king of Salon, came to demand the tax, produced a sword, and giving the collector a death-blows, said, Take from Jill what he gives you.'
2 Korn. XII. 15.
3 The reference is to a line quoted in the Kāmil (Fig. 1. 256. In. xvi. 'May God, by the milk, not keep for the children of Khalīlād.'
4 One of the above Al-Hādhā bin Ulūd, of which the story is told in Ijānāshā, p. 258.
LETTER XI

Fortune for his neighbour, as the Pointers are coupled, that fear no parting so long as dawn is followed by day! My longing for you would weary a mountain were it held thereon, and terror a valley did it traverse it. God grant that we may meet in some place of rest, secure from all ill-will! Your letter reached me, and made me as exultant as a caged bird that is released, or a fettered prisoner who is unoosed. And the news of your good health gave me the joys of the two Darâs, the one in his devotion, and the other in his perfume. God preserve them both for you till Canopus become the moon, and until the juice of the thorn-bush turn into fruit. I have expressed my gratitude and recognition; and have started importing my friends, and assailing them from every point; but I have found their resolution impeded by distractions which are to the student at Baghdad like the "ara" trees whose leaf never falls, or stale water of which one is likely to choke; especially if one gather the flowers of learning from every hill and sandy plain—sooner than trouble him with this I would throw the book into a pond till the cheek of Shurâh's blossom;—be, according to tradition, being smooth-faced, and never having had any hair. God, the giver of all good gifts, grant that the ak become not a k the "expedition" an "affliction" to my friends. Should we connect this word with the verse of the Koran, 'Have we not expanded thy breast? or the verse, 'And whatsoever God would guide, he expands his breast unto Islam.'

As a matter of fact, it is but a compilation of facts learned by tradition and by analogy. It will not give eternal life to one that can recite it, and men have got on well without it. By your precious life I have been afraid my friends would set me on its account among those whose 'breasts had been expanded' to unbelief! Not indeed that I am afraid of any ill-treatment on their part; I have polished no swords, and climbed no heights; and the surpassingly great man is like the high

stepping borne who is made to contend for one prize after another, and returns from all with 'flying colours,' with never a stumble, indicating his good luck with his bright 'blame' and the conspicuous ring of hair on his neck. I shall not say, 'If any one absent himself, may his arrow be fitted with crooked feathers;' nor

1 Tamim ibn Aus, one of the followers of the Prophet. His deviation is described in the notice of him in Usl Al-Ghahab.
2 Elif signifies a perfume-dealer.
3 A description of the month of Kadas in the early days of Islam, who was beauteous. The tradition referred to by Abu Yûsuf is given in the notice of him in Usl Al-Ghahab. In the account of him in Aghadsh XVI. 24 it is not mentioned.
4 XII. 39. 81
5 III. 180.
6 XIV. 29. The person in question would seem to be the same as the individual to whom the following letter is addressed; perhaps his name was Táhir.  

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(A) as a thirsty man rejoices when he reaches fresh water, or a wakeful one when he finds some one to talk to. And the news of your good health which it contained delighted the mind with the pleasure of him who cries (small blame to him) 'Good news! a son is born!' God grant us a meeting after which there shall be no more parting! I understand what you tell me about the copy to be procured, and you herein have shown yourself kind and generous, whereas I am vacatious and impertinant. You have been as liberal as usual, and I as troublesome as before. As for the commentary, if fate favour, you shall have it; but if not, it is poor stuff. I remember having written in one of my letters to you, 'though the texts differ, and the sections overlap, no matter; a patchwork garment will do as well as one of

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P-32 silk.' I must, however, except the text of All Ibn Tal, for he was a man who relied on what was in his breast, and did not trouble himself about the rules of writing. And I had hoped that by your good fortune people might agree, and as the Koran says, 'sell it for a small price, a fixed number of dinars, and think little of it.' I will not add 'since perhaps it may help us or we may take it for a child.'

What you tell me about the corrupt state of the people is, as surely as leather rest, an inguinal disease. One pancher breedes another, and the am is the sister of the branch. But you, God help you, are well protected from all blame. Is the book you want 'the hidden volume, which none save the pure shall touch'? Let not disappointment lead you to be impertinant. Surely it is all frivolous trash, medicine for the time of health. 'And this life is but a delusive way.' And as for Abu 'Amr my master, his name corresponds with a verse which constitutes a most excellent one—'it is like a tree whose roots are firm, and whose branches are on high.' I and my companions offer you and all your friends greetings such as make the paper that bears them fragrant, and whose, whose makes a garden of the desert.

p. 38

LETTER XI.

To Abû 'Amr of Astrakhal about the commentary of Shâzû. [400 a.h.]

May emulation as fragrant as Indian saffron, or a garden in Nîzîj, be brought by a rain-cloud to the eminent shaykh Abu 'Amr, whom God preserve so long as an Elif quinces, or an oath requires an 'apocope,' and couple him with good
LETTER XII.

To Abu 'Abd Allah bin Sahl, who on his journey from Baghdad had been hit in the finger with a spear and badly hurt.

God has blessed us with your safety as he has blessed birds with wings, or as he blesses those who are at death's door with recovery and health. Nor was this one favour, but a series, and I know of no good tidings which I could compare with them. I need not speak of the tidings brought to a king of victory over the enemy, or to the poor man of the acquisition of wealth,—but not even the announcement made to those who have drunk the water of life and been raised from the dry dust to eternal joys in Paradise could compare with this.

Our souls crouch before our Maker, and our fingers are raised in imprecation against the man who stretched out his hand to wound you; may he never follow a travelling beauty, and never while he lives find any alluring rest! May his right hand never help his left! God give him misery, and neither comfort nor long life!

God never fill his cup with milk! Should be approach any friend, may that friend repulse him! Should he ride a beast, may it throw him! God turn him into a leprous one in a rocky place, where he shall not be safe from the stabs of the knife! May he fill his life be scratching the ground, whereby his hands and fingers may bleed! May he be left so far as is possible like a falcon with clipped wings, that can neither rise from the ground, nor chase other birds! May he never so long as he lives be satisfied with drink, and may the Arab lads be set upon him! May he

1 Abu Sahl al-Qushayr, usually known as Al-Sirah, a famous grammarian and critic, author of the most important commentary on the Kitab of Sibawi; ob. 366. A brief notice of him in Ibn Khallikan, i. 420a.
2 Maydihi I. 324.
3 Maydihi I. 139.
4 Tabari's observations.
5 Humeideh, p. 131.
6 i.e. that mentioned by Imam al-Kain. See his Miscellany.
LETTER XIII.

To Abu Tahir Al-Musharrib son of 'Ali, on one of the occasions on which he returned from 'Iraq.

In the name of God, &c. Neither the desire of 'Abd al-Muttalib 1 for the woman of Naim, nor that of Kothaysir for the daughter of the Banu Damrah 2 would win the day if compared with my continuous longing for you, dear master, whom God preserve so long as a house is built in the plains or a birch springs on the eternal hills. It is natural that the flame of longing should burn fiercely when produced by ties of blood, nursed by affection, and fostered by a series of benefactions. May God shield my thrall by enabling me to meet you, and may He bless the community by keeping you all. You are the star of those that travel by night, the protector of those that stay at home, their arrow that hits the mark. I pray God He may grant us a meeting after which no separation need be feared, and which will be invaluable. So rejoiced am I at your safety (long may it be continued, and often and again do I think of it) that I have been mixing complaint with gratitude.

(10) Since the Bedouins have not been raiding, and the thieves in Baghdad have not been nibbling, and since God has granted earnings such as could not have reasonably been expected, it would have been right for you to restrict your public charity to that trustenishment business of provisions which they asked you, and which gave you so much annoyance, annoyance of a kind to which you were not accustomed. But as it is while the need has been lessened the gift has come doubled and trebled; as the Koran says 'you have done a strange action', and as the Arabs say 'both and the dates'. Praise be to God who has made us like the people of Bahrani 3 and you like the generous palm-tree whose fruit can be eaten dry or moist, and whose leaves can be taken for garments. And were we not anxious to obey you, and afraid to displease you, we should have liked to take the dates and disobey you in the matter of the clothes, being like the people to whom the Al-Zahair said, 'You have eaten my dates and disobeyed my orders.' God make you to be of those who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but a mean 4 between the two. Your conduct would be no prodigality, even though you were to give as it were buckets full from the sea; and whether much or little, acceptance of it would be equally excusable. But as for this sum which would be a treasure to a refugee, and capital to a trader, to take it would be improper depreciation, whereas the tongue cannot utter a refusal of it. Now every fool knows that the Tilama is full of acacia, and that your generosity exceeds your means, as well as your readiness to undertake journeys and imperil your life; and we only put on airs before strangers, not before relations, and before new friends, not before those of old standing. And a letter was sent from all of us, wherein we swore solemn oaths admitting of no exception that on this journey we should not waste your substance, even though famine should urge its camels. And we sent it early, so that it might reach you at Halah, being afraid of what you might do, and it was neither too short nor too long; and the letter was sent by a traveller named (plugue on him) Muyar, who started that he gave it to the worthy Mukhil; so I do not know whether the letter reached you, and you refused to listen to it, or the carrier made off with his trust. Whichever be the case, we must make atonement for a broken oath, and offer you your excellent father greetings such as fill their abiding-place with light, and whose breath is fragrant with musk.

LETTER XIV.

To Abu Tahir, the author having heard that he intended travelling to Al-Farab without passing by Mazarat Al-Yamin. [After 400 a. u.]

My anxiety to see you (God preserve you!) is fostered by each passing hour, just as a young child is fostered by its nurse, or the kindled spark by tinder—or shall I say like the fire of combs thrown among dry bramble-bushes? For such 5

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1 The mother of his children Al-Abdah and Dhiir (Arak, p. 387).
2 Anaka, to whom the poems of Kothaysir were addressed, was of the Banu Damrah. Kothaysir's death-date was 128.
3 Koran XVIII. 70.
4 Maylann 6. 16.
5 Maylann I. 66.
6 Koran XXV. 67.
LETTERS OF ABU 'L-ALÀ AL-MÀGRÌS

produce a blame to which no amount of language can do justice. God will one day quench that burning flame, and remove that mass of care, by bringing us together and making us neighbours too close to need visits. The times by God's grace may become friendly again, albeit for a long time they have been troublesome, and the days as you know gloomy. Still, so long as you remain alive, there is no real disaster, and we may hope to see you.

Your letter held out hopes of a happy meeting, but then the times became contrary and vexations again. God couple you with luck and good fortune hereafter as before! You hinted in your note that you would not be passing by Ma'arrat; and this woke up a burning sense, and spoiled the pleasure which your letter had aroused. Now since continuous fasting has been forbidden, fasting on consecutive days only being permitted, how much less can continuous absence resulting in continual disappointment be tolerated? Surely your better plan would be to touch at Ma'arrat without fail, and pay a visit to both the living and the dead. God knows that my dwelling is kept moist with your rain, and that you are my benefactor. There are fresh kinship ties of yours that have not been covered up; and old acts which are not likely to be forgotten. And did I profess generosity, I should say I had learned it from the family of Satikah, whom God make numerous! But such a profession would require evidence, and since the evidence is not forthcoming, it is best to be silent about so doubtful a matter.

Your generosity in time of need is like a mountain of gold, or a pillar of emerald, but you are in the middle of a journey, and one drop after another exhausts the battle, and one shell added to another makes a coil for the mount. Now be who has been offered a pearl and has accepted it is not to be excused for failing to return a string of false pearls when he has borrowed it.

I offer you and your father greetings, which, if they could be seen, would sparkle, and if they could be heard, would be fragrant; worthy to come first like the sabba'1, though put at the end.

LETTER XV.

Written from Ma`arrat to Abu Bakr Muhammad son of Ahmad Al-Sudairi of Baghdad. [After 460 A.H.]

Praise be to God of heaven from the first breath of life to the last! And God's favour be on the star that rose after the interval,2 and the family that outshines all other families. God keep you as secure as is a word of three letters.

1 The ejaculation allaha `alai in the Mohammedan prayer.
2 The interval during which there were no prophets, between Christ and Mohammed.
LETTER XVII.

of whom had ever dealt unkindly with her; and feeling her throat oppressed with regrets she begins to cry and grieve, alleviating by the emission of these sounds the grief which she feels for the dead; thinking that there is no escape from the confinement of the cage, she wishes that God would change her into a newling day-chat, or mourning night-wolf; that she might escape by such deliverance from some of her troubles.

My advice is Mutharr of Nef'min, and Mtelif of Rfī on the side among us; there are (14) speck-thrushes and bowy-shores, and by the time summer comes swords will have been drawn as well. Had I been able, I should have used no wood but marrb for fowlers, and inhabited no city but the capital. However, my camel's legs are tied; and God bless Lahib for saying—

'When Lahib saw the rest of the vulcans fly away, he raised his feathers like a poor man who has no action.'

I offer you, my friends, and your children submission such as would enliven the (9) wards of wilderness, and stretch from Syria to Yemen. If it pass by men who are burning a fire of tamarisk, they will think the tamarisk must be aloes, so fragrant will it leave the air.

LETTER XVII.

To his uncle Abu 'l-Khāṣr 'All son of Muhammad son of Sābikhan, in reply to a letter concerning Abu 'l-Husain Muhammad son of Sād son of Sābikhan.

In the name of God, etc. Should I try to describe my longing for your society, I should have to compress and abbreviate, and hurt my desire by compression, and it would have no void of defending itself. This being so, it is (4) but meet and right for me to be satisfied with the inner thoughts, since they convey information with the most becoming expression. I pray God to grant us a meeting for mutual kindness which may relieve that pain of separation which wastes our bodies, and save our minds from the anxious expectation of news. On this day, the 7th of Rejeh the tolourless—God make a disturbed time help on your happiness, and render all the mondas susioest so far as evil remours about you are concerned!—your letter reached me, bearing date of the (9)

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1 A spring in the desert (Yathir).
2 The highest peak of Aya. The verses are by Jazr.
3 Maydith H. 229. The words are supposed to have been said by the wife of Lajmaat about her first husband 'Amr son of Tila.
4 Famous singer, whose real name was Abī Yūnīs Ābd al-Malik. He is frequently mentioned in the Aglaia, and there is a special account of him in III, 129 sqq.
5 Another famous singer.
6 An Arabic Adonis.

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8 Apparently the same solution is described in Najj al-Zand II, 111.
9 The last of Lajmaat's vulcans. The verse does not occur in the poems of Lahib edited by Khallil and Hefsi, but is quoted by Ibn Kasimah, p. 209.
No 6. Jumilda II, written with generous fingers that are earnest in pursuit of good. And when I had grasped its meaning, I thanked God for the safety of your noble person, so assured in all your duties. And as for our friend ——-, say knowing that you do not doubt about his attachment renders it unnecessary for him to write me a letter.

Now I am a man who has been well treated by my countrymen, and have been assigned a place which I do not deserve. Very likely then our friend listened to what they said about me, and 'he who hears, opines.' And albeit I am no sage, still I am afraid he may be like the diver who puts a leather belt round his waist, and plunging into the waves of the sea, draws out a shell, the acquisition of which leaves him but a spark of life. And when he puts that shell into a merchant's hands, he finds therein an unpleasant thing, neither pearl nor glass. I hope, however, that he will find in me one who will be his benefactor and not abuse him; and give him what will do him good. And if he be contented, good; but if he seek anything more, then 'to seek is sure to find.' For myself, I will acquaint him with what I know, nor shall he have any annoyance in the search; but shall be like one who finds a shell on the seashore, in which if he can find anything of value, he can take it, whereas, if he find nothing, he can throw it away. And, taking into consideration his rank and your desire to assist him, if the last dove were to return to the ring-doves, they would not rejoice as much in the lost dove's return as I at your arrival. And the present which I send to you and the rest of our friends is a greeting whose bright light may burn, and whose rich perfume may spread like musk, so long as the sky reveals a sun, or day follows day.

P. 35.

LETTER XVIII.

Letter to his uncle about an old done who had been in his service and whom he summoned to Fadak to look after his house. Her brother having fallen ill, she wished to go to him; and Abû l-`Alâ having fallen ill likewise, she explained that she was going to him, and that she was in need of her assistance.

In the name of God, &c. My desire to be with you yields in no way to that of a grown camel, which grew up in a valley full of rats, &c., with green tufts of salam, rendering the cattle that feed upon it safe against worms, and after passing a year or more, regarded separation as a vain terror; when some morning the horsemen make a raid, and take the grown beasts, leaving the young; and bring our camel from Najd to âdik, where she looks longingly for some cloud with lightning, and which pleasantly among the beasts every morning and evening.

This letter, however, is not for the purpose of describing my personal feelings, but rather to tell you of a divine facility. Sukainah, the culprit, was in service (30) with Mu`addarî (31) in Makarim, from whom she got some poor wage, and when the fruit-season came, she used to pick the grape-clusters from the natural; Mu`tashir, however, got free of her, that the cautious one being assailed where he deems himself secure, &c., and she wanted to get back, little caring who was sick. And I shall not, please God, treat her unkindly;—God knows the truth of everything; and some one who is in the habit of speaking to her shall advise her to give up all other things and stick to the loom, as that is healthier and more profitable. And I assure you that had I the fever of Zaid Al-Khalij, or the scab of Anas son of Al-Ya`tâh,1 I should not have applied for assistance to the young women, let alone an old woman of a past generation. And what should I want from that old dame? God has mercy upon her! I should have wanted to get a substitute for p. 53 to 55

1 Not otherwise known.

1 As Abû Sharfî, who came to pay homage to the Prophet, but caught fever at Makarim, and died almost immediately. Aghâzî XVI, 67.

2 Chief of the Banna` at the time of the Prophet; he came on a visit to the Prophet, but refused to accept salam, and being cursed by the Prophet, died of a scab similar to that which attacks camels. Ibn `Abâ`î, 35, 490, 496.

3 Cyperus, and a sort of lotus, used for soaps.

4 His story is told by Ibn Hîshâm, p. 55. He was one of the sons of Muhammad, an ancestor of the Prophet; who being driven out of his house by his brother Zain, whose eye he had knocked out, died an unglad death through the bite of a serpent. Some verses ascribed to him are quoted L.c. The meaning of the allusion would seem to be that any relatively claimed could only be in a sort that had been interrupted. See also Christian Arabic Poets, i. 362.

5 A ribbiting-cry of the early days of the Umayyads. There is an account of him in the Aghâzî XIX, 185. Seel ibn Ummâmah, when appointed Governor of Kamaran by Mu`awiyah offered him 300 dinars a month on condition of his giving up brigandage; which offer he accepted; the tribe whom he deserted may now be considered. Ibn `Abâ`î, 35, 490, 496.

6 [II. 10.]
LETTERS OF ABU 'L-ALÀ AL-MÀÀÌIRÌ.

deserted. And I beg you, say I conjure you not to let her see this letter lest she feel what ordinary mortals feel when they hear this sort of thing said about themselves. Had I been able I should have sent to your house the mother of king 'Amr with her two threads of pearls; or Mâriyâh with her two earrings, to be servants in your house; and they would have been an honour to it. By God's grace I am not ill, so your informants must have obtained some mysterious information.' In order to learn about some illness that is to befall me—God keep me from that and other misfortunes hereafter as heretofore! Now I have indeed been ill many times, and never did attendance help me much except this time when I have been attended in such a way that if the sparrows were to perform such service to the kite, the latter would never venture to hunt a small bird again; or if the gazelle were to deal in such a way with the wolf, the wolf would never alarm a goat again. However, this slight indisposition is over; I might, if I liked, eat cock's flesh, only I shall abstain from it as any one should who prefers an honest health, not to speak of a year's, to the gratification of his appetite. I cannot, however, bring myself to call that indisposition an illness, nor can I reckon my getting over it a recovery. It was merely a trifle to be cured by the letting of some two drachms of blood; only my quick doctor forbade any bleeding on the fourth day; whereas the right course would have been to let the bad blood even after the seventh.

(20) We have good news of Abu Tâhir, and hope there will be more to follow; and I send to you and your friends and retainers greetings more fragrant than flowers in spring, and more durable than the flaxens.

p. 12

LETTER XIX.

To Abû Mas'ûd, Custodian of the Academy of Baghdad.

In the name of God, &c. Of a truth I am flattering more with anxiety than pleasure, so that those who would blame me say, 'Is thy passion for the "House of Learning" from folly or sound sense?'

1 Hind, mother of 'Amr king of Úbah. For her history see Agabi, II, 170.
2 Maylida I, 150 has a proverb, take it even at the pilot of the two carriages of Mâriyâh. 'The daughter of Zâliân son of Wâbi; she gives her two earrings to the Kâbah, such having on it a poet of a pigeon's egg, such as had not been seen before, and were quite precious.'
3 A cock was apparently not ordinarily regarded as a delicacy; in Agabi, XVII, 39, a story is told of a cock flying into a house and being killed and eaten, for which see the people in the house were afterwards reproached.
4 The poem in Sûût at-Zâid II, 121, to which allusion is made in this letter, is addressed to this person. The "Academy" was Abu Nâfis Shibli's house, Ibn Khallîl, I, 250.

'By heaven! I know not, when I think of her, whether my morning prayer was two or eight inclinations.'

God prolong your existence so long as camel-drivers are let loose in the (5) morning; or night-journey be made in the dark. My desire for you and the rest of my friends is like that of a ring-dove, full of yearning with nothing to excite it, since she had a lofty home in Mecbah, whither the hands of the wanton could not reach. And when Zaf's inevitable decree comes upon her, it brings her out of the sacred territory, and she is waylaid by a pestilent bed, who cares not to avoid forbidden things, who breaks her wing with a stone, driving offspring and alliance from her mind. And he confines her in a secure dove-cote, whose inmates cannot escape; she is consigned by the light of dawn, but her pal (10) increases at midnight; for when she sees the birds of the air at large, her heart almost bursts with grief; for separation never came into her mind, until misfortune drove her from her nest.

'And she has two chicks left to starve, and their nest is torn by the winds.

When they hear the wind blowing, they raise their heads; but their mother is already foredoomed by the appointed doom.'

Each time the ravens says caw! I fancy it is a mounted messenger from Baghdad. (15) And I have wearied out both couriers and ravens, and the raven will not answer any questions, and I find the couriers know nothing of what I ask. And I am like Dâshâbun son of Uthâ, who, whenever an 'Amr or Zâ'id appeared, asked about Sa'd and Sa'âd; and when the figure came within sight, it was found to be neither Sa'âd nor Sa'd. And if any person came bringing any information, I would say with the sister of 'Amr, 'a fragrant breeze clad in a garment of blue.'

I ask of God's mercy that we may be brought together again like the Pintars, p. 53 never to part—such a reunion as he who enjoys lacks nothing afterwards. And had not fate bid a bond upon us, a tedious journey would not have kept me from you; but as it is I am captive in the set, and might seem to be the person referred to by the 'camel-driver'—

'Like a bird, whose wings the archers have broken, which, lying on the kerb, calls its mate.'

Now my letters to Baghdad in past times were like the birds of a nest which (25)

1 Veneer of Dha't Sarmash. 9 Umarah, p. 377. Verses of Naâ'îb.
2 Maâlida I, 277. The story is told Ibid, I, 173.
3 The proverb 'to meet and the smell of 'Amr' (Junahor, ma'arifah, p. 145). It is in Balûnî.
4 I. e. the poet called Al-Râfî, see, p. 17, n. 1. The verse is quoted in L. A. IV, 449.
LETTERS OF ABU 'L-`ALÁ AL-MÁ`ARRI.

went off early in the morning, one after another, seeking the bounty of the Lord in the land; but they get no answer, so that they might seem to have strayed, to have been trapped like gazelles in the plain, and to have come to grief while seeking the right path. However, it is quite right that I should be put to trouble, and I find no fault if I have to put up with privation. Now I should mention that I composed a poem in your honour in the Ta`wí meter, no. 5, rhyming in the hard palatal (P) with two constant letters and one vowel; ending in an open syllable with a āwād after the rhyming letter; and I know not whether this poem has been made away with, or whether it is in prison and cannot get forth. 1 We ask God's help against their conceits.

I chose 2 out from `Ná`in`a a piece of arak wood for Hind; but who is to bring it to her? 3

And were not too much complimenting tedious, and repetition a sort of reproach, I should have sent another copy by the bearer of this letter, who seems to be a worthy wight. And I present such greetings as were they to pass by a heap of dust would make it resemble a heap of muck; were they to approach one of foul breath, you would think he had been perfumed; were they to go near a thorny garden, they would be a substitute for rain. And if you change me with anything you desire, I shall be mighty proud of your commands.

P. 14

LETTER XX.

To Abu 'l-`Alá`in 'Ali son of 'Abd al-Mu'in son of Síyáh in reply to a letter of his about Abu `l-`Alá Mu'ákkhád son of Sa`íd son of Síyáh.

My anxiety to see you is as permanent as time, which is not exhausted by months and years, and as often as one period elapses, another comes to take its place. I pray God that we may meet in a way that will leave no room for parting; such as will resemble the union of the Pleiades in constancy, and in fragrance a garden that has enjoyed the spring rain, I received your letter, which was a joyous document to me, albeit the people of Márarah will not relish what it contains, I inhaled from it a perfume like that of Indian ambergris, and

1 Kornn XII. 18.
2 A verse quoted in Al-Táhir al-`Ahrí III. 156 among verses of which caused a boys to fall down dead. It was recited by a sleeping girl at the court of Yádús son of Masa`úd. The author was Al-Mu`ákkhád Al-Má`arrí, Aghízí X. 129, where it is stated that very few could name the writer of the poems which it occurred.
3 The person to whom Letter XX is directed.

LETTER XX.

Ngilian flowers after the rain. Its fragrance filled our nostrils, and put earrings on our ears. And I answered it on Sunday the 20th of Shaba`n as it is called in the new style, or `Adil as it was called in the old. May God make every new (16) moon bring you some great good luck! (1) For your cousin Abu 'l-Hassan, I have no control over him, my sword having become quite blunt. What can I do with a man who has been trained and practiced in fighting with rebellions unbelievers, and gone through a course of law to enable him to beat down Satan under his feet?—a man who has fought with men and spirits, and to whom God has given the victory over both these races? (2) Nor can I have any prior obligation upon him which should compel him to obey when I order; I have indeed offered him counsel, and enjoined him, reminded him of the value of the recompense, (18) and have urged him not to abandon us, and in the end had to repeat the words of the Koran, 'exhorting' 3 the unbelievers is only unto error.' I might as well have been whispering to an ostrich, or floating an inflated skin up a mountain. The Kají Abu Jàfar indeed exhorts, but does not constrain; and it is only in the presence of our Amir Abu Ná`ir 4 that our success is prolonged and not contracted. And if my letter have reached him, I have hopes that it may have influenced him. Now this city has been given the same relation to Abu 'l-Hassan that Madínah bore to the Prophet, or the desert bears to the Bedouin; nor can we wonder at any such occurrence: God by His own wise decree placed His Prophet 'in a valley without vegetation.' And we often see a man of mark, who has in his house women of high degree, setting above them a slave-girl in a striped gown, whom he purchased for a few dinars. And so we may see a man whose grandfather on the father's side is a fair-haired descendant of 'Aul, while his maternal grandfather is a black idolater. (3) And for some reason Anzár 4 was born black as a raven, and Noahih produced Khudaf 5. Were it not for the Kají Abu Jàfar, his visit to this city would be like the vulture, who is a king and a chieftain among birds, and from whose Emíls there issues a mask-like colour, (30) falling on a foul carcass. This is such an epithet as may be applied to Márarah, which is the opposite of the Paradise described by the Koran, 'the Garden' which is promised to those that fear, wherein are rivers of water (30) that does not corrupt, (48) and by name 'miscidhi' is ominous; God save us from it! The water-

1 Kornn XIII. 15.
2 The person to whom Letter XXIV is addressed; he held some post at the court of Abu al-Mu`ákkhád.
3 Kornn XIV. 49.
4 Aghízí VII. 48; his father was an Amir, and his mother an Abyssinian.
5 As early post, equal one of the 'ravens' of the Arabs. His mother Noahih was a black.
6 Kornn XLI. 18.
courses are blocked up; and the surface of its mould in summer is dry. It has no flowing water, and no rare trees can be planted there. When a slaughtered (12) goat is offered to the inhabitants by which they might hope to profit, you would fancy it had been dyed with indigo, yet still they gazed at it as longingly as at the new moon that marks the end of the fasting-month. And there comes a time when a goat there is as precious as Capricorn, and a ram of inferior breed as rare as the Rams of the heavens; when the poor get up earlier to look for alms than a crow with two chicks; when a man standing by a mill-seller famines himself standing in Paradise asking for the water of life. And if he come not before dawn he must return empty, and his arrow be idly spent. And what think you of a place which gives not as much milk as a camel with dry address provokes? (13)

If the Hinathah were to stop there, he could not find a pasture. As for the sweet jujube plants, and birds with 'painted plumage,' while the former would elsewhere be thrown away on the river-banks, they are here valued like molten gold; and as for the latter, if one is wanted here for a sick man, it is as hard to find as a friend. And the broken eggshells of birds that swoop are accounted among us as valuable as precious pearls exhibited in the windows. Nay more, praise be to God, we have in the winter fruits in rich places, which like white belles, being ashamed to be seen (14) naked, remain all day covered with earth, and though growing in the wet, are more splendidly white than the daughters of Caesar, being like maidens' breasts to look p. 81, with locks that are green for black. They appear when Spica rises, until sell'd (15) yellow appears, and they remain after till the rising of the prior Urgel. Whoa east them (16) is sure to respect. I shall not eat them, nor advise any one else to do so.

I have given my advice quite freely, and if Abu 'I-Majun will accept my friendly counsel, it will not be long before he visits Hurbah. But only those who are obeyed can advise (17). And I and — — — offer your excellence and your excellence's father greetings similar to those sent by Dhu 'I-Rummah to Mayyish, and Al-Hidrath to Sumayy. And we beg you to favour us with a communication containing a notification of whatever you may desire.

* A wealthy Viceroy of Kufa, also a great agriculturist, Ibn Khalid, L. 130, F. W. L. 134.
* Three stars left of Aquarius, which rise the last night but one of January. Spica rises October 9.
* March 9.
* The 'flesh' to which the author refers would seem to be the mushroom. According to Arabic authors the spring is the best time for them.
* Maglith II. 204. The saying is ascribed to 'Ali.
* Ash'ash III. 81-84. (Uthman was a pre-Muslim poet, of little note.)

LETTER XXI.

Answer to a ghulī from Abu 'I-Majun al-Asma'ī (10).

Whenever I feel on my last legs, I receive a fresh lease of life by receiving a salutation from you, which makes me feel like a garden on a hilly-side, or a cool fall of lightning and rain. Were I satisfied with myself, I should do myself the honour of a visit to you, but I do not feel satisfied, and seem close to my last end. My nest is dispersed, and my will vacillating; I am reckoned among those of whom the Koran says, 'They (18) are a people whose time is gone by, (19) they have what they earned, and ye have what ye earned; and ye are not responsible for what they did.' But whether I be happy or unhappy, I shall always pray for you.

LETTER XXII.

Answer to Abu Mas'ūd, Muhammad son of Shari'ah (19).

No apathy has diverted my mind from thinking of you; on the contrary, my heart is full of memories of you, and where there is union of hearts, distance of habitation does little harm. My desire to meet you is still as ever mature in vigour, infantile in power of growth and development. I pray the merciful God to grant us such fellowship as is followed by no further parting; and such as time can neither overload nor put an end to. I read what you told me about the camel-driver, and 'may God take vengeance on every treacherous camel-driver,' (20) even through this imprecation include the malādi of Ja'far, I mean in his line 'which imitates the malādi of Ja'far,' meaning the camel's shadow, which seems to plunge into the ground.

I am grieved to hear of your risking yourself on the sea; surely you must have read in Ibn Al-Adhār's Anecdotes the verses of Yahya (21) Ibn Khalaf Al-Ḫafṣ, —

1 See Introduction to Letter 1.
2 Qur'an 12. 5.
3 The person to whom this letter is addressed would seem to be the same as the hero of Letter V; nothing seems to be known of him.
4 The rest of the verse is given in T. A. X. 231.

The line was of doubtful reading and interpretation; the reading recorded would mean 'a camel's shadow.' The other reading was 'Almah,' which would be a tribal name.}

Foot of the time of Al-Ḫafṣ, see Aglian XX. 136.
LETTERS OF ABU 'L-ALĀ AL-MA'ARRI.

(10) When a caravan makes for Yemeniah, passion calls you, and memories are crowded in your heart. Surely it is better to drink among the sand-heaps foul water mixed with pure than to venture on the sea.

And Damascus is the dearly loved bride of Syria, and the chief jewel of her necklets; and I may hope that the Mosque of Damascus has made you forget the Mosque of Al-Madinah, and that its water has consolm you for the water of the Tigris. I have indeed told you ere this that he who leaves Baghdad finds no place that will do instead, however well-watered it be; for there the old learning is still fresh, whereas sound knowledge is sickly elsewhere. Syria is more friendly and less expensive.

(11) You will find in every city, if you only settle there, friends and neighbours instead of those you have left.

You tell me you have been trying to amuse yourself with copying, which is like what Al-A'isha says—

'Sell my clogs for pleasure; and with another I tried to cure myself of the first.'

(12) Were your pen a Ḥīṣām for generosity, it would stop; or an 'Amr for bravery, it would grow weary of its strokes. And I had hoped that you would find companions like those of Ǧāhānīn about whom Ḥusayn ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh wrote—

'How good a company were they who entertained me one day at Ḥillāk in the older time!'

Now whose deals kindly with you, does so in the first place to himself, and pays the debt he owes himself. And I offer you greetings with smiling countenance and pervading perfume.

LETTER XXIII.
To some Poet or other.

God preserve your good example to the poets and your poetry to the kings! You have long skewed the breast of learning, and led your canons in pursuit of rhymes; had poetry any child, you would have been he; and if any one could

1 ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh, p. 137. Verse of an unknown author.

2 See his Ṭimāṣ, ed. Tutun, p. 72. The verse is incorrectly cited, the word جازر, which Abu 'L-Ālā substitutes for ʿAmīr, meaning of the original, giving no meaning here, though it occurs a line lower down in the poem. The word ʿAjīl, according to ʿAṭār, is a name for Damascus or its immediate vicinity.

LETTER XXIV.

Inhabit a 'house' of verse, you would. And I am as desirous to see you as is a Bedouin woman to see her thatch 1, or a ring-dove to find her missing mate. I have received your verses; the relations between us are not so strained as to require any nursing, nor is there any danger of their being broken off and requiring strings of verse to stitch them together again. And methinks, if you are able, you will have ready against the day of judgement some fine verses to win the good graces of the Guardians of Paradise. Now I have been informed by a good authority that you have taken to devolution, and become a strict adherent of religious discipline; having become an 'Āṣa'ī of ʿAbū Jahl says,

'Know that your brother, whose nights with us at Jīzāf you know all about, has after a gay youth become a sage, and covered his white hairs with a head of wisdom.'

And my friend — would gladly, if he had been able, have put the enclosed dirhams with the rest of your receipts from him, and still more gladly have substituted dirhams for them. And I offer you special greetings, etc.

(10) LETTER XXIV.

To Abū Nāṣr ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh, on his endeavours to obtain promotion for him at the Court of the Amir ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh. [p. 410 a. i. c.]

Were I to offer your excellence the spring decked in its most precious treasures, I should think I had done less than was your due; what then can I say, when I am unable to offer a flower or to fish up an osprey, let alone (2) a pearl? However, 'the poet' tells no lies to his employer, and if a slave speak false to his master, he gets no good therefore, but rather loses. He is stupid who does not remember yesterday, and ignorant who does not know himself. And so I say to my decent self, 'you did not please me when your teeth were white, how much less when they are gone! ' It is useless to teach the old, as useless as to squeeze water out of a burning coal. If I lie, then may I forfeit all good!

1 I.e. her hut. Verses by such women are quoted by Ibn ʿAbād al-Muḥājirīn II. 32.

2 Quoted by ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh ʿAbdAllāh, which he locates in postage.

3 This person, whose name occurs several times in these letters, is called ʿĀṣaʾī aṣimālī by Ibn ʿAbād al-Muḥājirīn; from the history of Aleppo, of which Froissart gives an account in the preface to his Histoire d'Alép, we learn that he was Al-ʿAdīm's governor then 407-411. In 411 he threw up his allegiance to Al-ʿAdīm, and in 412 was murdered. For Ṣafarīn see Index of Ṣafarīn, Vittorino da Foppa, p. 342.

4 ʿAbdAllāh II. 196.

5 ʿAbdAllāh II. 3.

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[II. 103.]
I did not retire from the world till I had both worked and played, and finding myself unfit for either, I had to be satisfied with amuse.

(10) No ring-dove whose suspense is proverbial, which had been in a secure nest amid trees and branches, with a companion of her own species, with whom she used to communi cates in song, dwelling in N a'lim rich in arik, where she was secure from the fowler's toils,—which, betrayed by destiny, against which no.caution can avail, has left the sacred territory, in a love-fest, and been trapped by a scrupulous lad, who puts her in a bird-cage, and keeps all food from her,—which, when out of the lattice of her nest, she sees the other doves on their morning flight, paces the time in pangs like those of death, asking her brother with her eyes what her chicks are doing, and receiving for answer that they are perishing, being hidden by the leaves from all eyes—

"Two chicks that spread their wings at morning-time, whenever they hear the wind blow or the raven creak;"

p. 60—no such dove, I say, desire a life of comfort more than I desire the Amiz's presence; however fate has followed its ordinary course, and an obstacle has come between me and good; the choking in our throats prevents our speaking, and the rattle keeps us from reciting poems. The fountain is of clear blue water, but none the less the sick man is choked by the draught.

"When I Lohud saw that the vultures had all fed, he raised his feathers like a poor man, who has no arms."

(5) 'Arise Lohud! Nay, may, eternity prevents it! The day I received your letter containing so many undeserved compliments, the ravens all came to wish me good luck with treble and double voices; if any of them made a friend of me, I would present him, if he wanted, with ankles for his legs and a collar for his neck; and would smear his wings with musk and ambergris, and clothe him with embroidery and Yemeni work, albeit he struts already in the fairest of the garments of youths.

(10) Ah, raven! Misfortune hereafter be for others, not for thee! If God please, I shall give thee such food as shall please thee most, a tax to be paid by me not every year, but every day.

Your dear letter might have been a box of ointment, diffusing fresh perfume; methought I had been visited by a Nejdian garden, wafted by the moon's station in Leo, till its soil grew fat, and fragrance spread from it—and its

1 Verse of Sahib Al-Gazy is Kingtan's Elwis of Tannul, p. 3.
2 Maydali I. 159.
3 Supra, p. 16.
4 Supposed to have been said by Lujmik to Lohud when the latter was dying. Maydali I. 165.

bupthalhalmus showed to the eye like little daisies fresh from the mint, and it put on ornaments of agate-like amulets, and with the water playing in it, it (13) although earth, looked like heaven, with flowers for stars, and dew dissolving from the trees like tears. And I besought the messenger to favour me by leaving it with me, that I might enjoy therefrom something like your protecting cloud in a hot month; and be like one seated near a garden, who, even though he cannot see the beautiful view, still can inhale the fragrant odour.

Now the populace, seeing me during the early days of my youth enjoy the companionship of ancient lore, called me a scholar, very wrongly; and others, seeing me forced to practise resignation, called me an ascetic, albeit I am keen in the pursuit of worldly things. And people talked more and more about me, till I grew afraid I might become one of those ignorant folk among whom the tradition says, God will not take away knowledge by removing it from men's breasts, but rather by slaying the learned, so that, no learned man being left, the people will take ignorant ones for their chiefs, who will give judgement, when asked, without knowledge, going astray, and leading others astray after them. So I decided to stick to my house like a man who has been dead three or four days; and (9) I became the victim of an unmentionable complaint, such as prevented my attending mosque on Friday, albeit the Koran says, "O ye that believe, when ye are summoned to prayer on Friday, hasten to the mention of God!" Now I have only mentioned this in order that my lord Aziz al-da'dihah may know that p. 61 I am kept away from his service by a disease which prevents my performing even my religious duties; and that one man may be very famous, while it is another who is really eminent. Many a thorny bush is there with but scanty shade and bitter fruit, called zamarah, and surrounded 'mother of demons,' that is famed in the remotest regions, while other fruitful trees are not known, when called to mind. Numa do not prove any real superiority in their subjects; many a hideous ill-smelling black is called Camphor or Amber; many an ugly creature has the name 'New Moon,' or 'Full Moon.' How is it possible for me to be learned when I am blind,—a misfortune 'which it is sufficient to name'? Then I was brought up in a city which contains no scholars, and the vine cannot grow without trellis-work to cling to. Nor am I rich—and how can 'camel-driving be done without a camel'; or 'the bow be twanged unless it first be strung'? And if you have ever heard of a night-traveller laying hands on Camphor, or of the earth bringing forth embroidery and silk, or a cloud raining wine and spices, you are (10)
to sunset, and continues the attack with the rise of Hesperus till the time when the garments of night are rent; a greeting which, passing by the dusty plain, renders it fragrant as Indian perfume.

LETTER XXV.

To the King Abū 'l-Tayrīn, the son of Ḥāsīn, resident in Baghdis. (10)

The letter was never finished as we set out to reach its destination.

In the name of God, peace. God prolong the life of the King, the rescuer of the helpless, and the successor of Al-Shī‘ī as long as the option of the sitting is permissible, and the restraint of bankrupts requisite; and preserve your power so long as the grammarians chatter about 'Amm and Za‘id, and ransower remains a diminutive. This letter is from the inhabitant of the city called after Na‘īm, written on the 9th of Ramāżīn—God make all your months proceed with prosperity, and the earth bright and pure by the continuance of your days! Now my news at the commencement are the name of the foot which is free from contraction, and my tongue moves as consciously in gratitude to you as if it were the perfect metre. Praise be to God so long as the act of purchase requires a contract, or whose is born to him; and God be gracious to Muhammad and his family till the order of pilgrimage can dispense with the circuit, or a poem can do. p. 63 without a rhyme. And my desire for your noble presence is like that of a dove caged in Yemāmah, caught on a rainy day, and thrown into prison, after its Nefūdian home; a dove that is neither ransom nor set free, which has left its comrades never to return, and whenever more arises, sounds its rhyme. I pray God to facilitate my journey to your happy bail on some unrooted beast with but one foot, with eyes like caves, with broad sides rare as the desert eagle, or another creature, painted with pitch, albeit for no disease, that has never set foot on desert; that is not affected by want of pasture, and knows nothing of four days without water or fire; and why should it fear thirst, when it only gallops on the water?

And I would have you know that I love you as truly as if I had been commanded to, with love that has no time limit like a lean, in which I am as firm as is the believer in his faith, and of which I am as proud as is a string of its pearls.

1. As an adept of this genre is given by Ibn Khaldūn in I. 302-304.
2. The right of ascending a mountain as long as the pasture have not left the room in which it was made. See Mīrzā Shā‘lūl, ed. Bagh. I. 306.
3. I.e. 'a ship.'
And on this day, the —th of ——, I received a visit from your friend Aḥe Saʿād of Khwārizm, on his way to God's sacred house; God help him to obtain his desires, and deliver him from calamity and disaster! And he gave me such news of your health as will give pleasure to every Muslim, learned or unlearned; and he seemed to be so weighted with his benefits that he had neither thought nor fancy for ought but you. And he informed me that he had a letter with him grooved and adorned by your fingers, but that the Bedouins had seized it, and carried it off with the rest of his papers. Fine fellows! Did they think it lines neckless, or its rhetorical jewels actual ones? Or did some sweet perfume of ambrosia or musk get wafted to them from it, so that they supposed it an image of perfumes made out of fresh Indian herbs? Had they known what it was, they would have paid it reverence and respect; and if eloquence remain among them, they would have covered it with a shield!

**LETTER XXVI.**

Part of the answer to a set of questions recorded by 'Ukṣaʾ.

Praise to God, ʿAṣ. Bravo, owner of the seventh of the arrows, the most advantageous of the lot to the miser, and the arrow which can best dispense with the liberal. Auspicious parallels be drawn to thee, not the likeness of Ṭabar and Bujair! You, who bring me a branch of the tree of which bow and arrows are known that my time for archery is gone by! Have you not heard (God prolong your power) that I have cast my learning ('after Kulat), and tied it to a bard's ear! It has taken the road of 'Untalatin,' and been divided between two swords. I have parted from it as the nobling prosthesis from the blest-tree, or the poet of 'Abd, with the sister of Khāza. Who, O face of love, has brought thee to youths and maidens with loose

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1 Name of a place in Rusūm, where there was a well (Yūṣūf, l. 46). Kurman was a place in Buzurja.
2 The 'issm of a place. The reading of the Kyrgyz edition would mean state mills.
3 Maydūl II, 146. The names are given in the T.A. as belonging to famous animals.
4 Maydūl II, 175. There is a proverb 'sometimes silence is so answer!' (lid. I, 349).
5 Why the Salamis are particularized is not plain. They were a Hūsān tribe; perhaps, therefore, it would be natural to ask one of them for the passage in Hūsān prose. The Bujair, as he is rightly written in the Kyrgyz edition, was a wine-dealer mentioned in a poem by Aḥa Rīsān, Aḡlīn VI, 66; the word used in the text for wine-pitcher occurs in that poem also. The Kyrgyz editor states that Ḥabīb 'Amr was, Aḥa Rīsān, a wine-merchant. More probably he is the person whose story is told in the second part of the Divan of Ḥabīb (Wilkinson, Odes, p. 56). Stories about the Salamis are told by Aḥa Rīsān, p. 365, and in Aḡlīn XVI, 49.
6 Maydūl II, 146.
LETTER XXVII.

Part of the answer to a letter from a man named Abu 'l-Husain 1 Abu b. Abad son of 'Umar bin Al-Makhari.

Joy is abiding, albeit the vision is transient; and love controls the breast,
(al) albeit the dwelling is in ruins.

"How couldst thou find thy way to give greeting to the ruins in Al-Gharîn 2, altered by the passing ages!"

Welcome to your letters, so long as consonant combiner is' voice, and times and places vary! Although as God says, 'And 3 be betrothed him after a space—
I will tell you the interpretation thereof, so send me.' 'Truly you have shone both in prose and verse; praise be to God most High, 'who adds to His creation what
(15) He pleases, verily God is all-powerful!" Are you Jars, most erotic of poets? or Farazkhâ? Good luck to you, if you be he! 4 Your words excite in me the feelings which the dove roused in Hammâdi 5, or the lion roused in Abu Zuhair 6.
Would I knew who it is within you who speaks in verse, a rebellious Jin 7, or an
p. 60 angel of special devotion? I cannot make it out; your mind construes the Koran so that no 'Iblî 8 can enter therewith; and the angels have never produced such verses
as yours. Indeed, I know of no one who has recorded any verses composed by
an angel, whereas some well-known lines are stated to have been composed by
the Jin. For example, many historians assert that the Jin bewailed Omar son of
Al-Khaṭîb, and composed this verse,
(20) "Thou hast accomplished some things, and left behind mischief that have not
yet burst their buds."

They state that these lines were heard before the murder of Omar, although in the

1 Not apparently elsewhere known.
2 Verses of 'Umar bin Al-Makhari. 3 Verses of 'Umar bin Al-Makhari. 4 Verses of 'Umar bin Al-Makhari.
5 Aba b. Abad was the penname (arabic name) of Farazkhâ; there was a later Abu b. Abad, who belonged to the circle of Hishâb bin-islâb, but the context renders it improbable that the reference is to him.
6 Hammâdi bin Thâmr, contemporary of Omar I. See his verses, Kamal (p. 8). 7 Jin 8 Iblî 9 Al-Khaṭîb, and composed this verse.

The mention of the verses of the Jin was handled at length in the introduction to the Jami'atu of Abu Zi'dân. For a more critical account of the doctrine, see J. Golditz's Abhandlungen zur Arabischen Philologie, first essay.

5 Ibn Shihab, p. 481; Abu Sh. VII, 104.
6 A poet who lived at the commencement of Islam.
7 Abu b. Abad is quoted by Ibn Shihab, Kâhâ bin Al-Makhari, p. 87; also in the notice of 'Abd al-Îslâm Al-Qushairi.
8 Quoted in the Kamal of Al-Mahmud (Wu), p. 79, p. 79, p. 314. 9 Abu Shihab, Kâhâ bin Al-Makhari.
10 This is mentioned as a writer of the T. A. in the notice of Abu Shihab, Kâhâ bin Al-Makhari, and is occasionally cited in the anthologies.
11 The T. A. mentions him as a writer of the T. A.
12 A verse of Al-Shihab closely resembling this is quoted in Abu Sh. VII, 82:
13 Ibn Shihab, p. 481; Abu Sh. VII, 104.
14 Ibn Shihab, p. 481; Abu Sh. VII, 104.
15 Quoted by Abu Shihab, Kâhâ bin Al-Makhari, p. 314.
Indeed, so emphatically do they hold this, that they have given these demons names to know them by: Al-Asba says,

(25) ‘I called my friend Mishal, and they called Jihinnam against him, saying, Away with the accursed spirit!’

And they suppose Mishal to have been the ‘demon’ of Al-Asba, and tell many traditions about him, which you have doubtless read.

I was also told by your friend Abu ’l-Basit Al-Mubarak Ibn Abi Al-Aziz after Abu Abdallah Ibn Khudhayr that Ibn Duraid is a tradition in the following effect. Ibn Bakr Ibn Duraid informed his friend that he had seen in a dream some one who said to him, ‘Why do you write nothing in praise of wine?’ He answered, ‘What I have seen leaves me anything to say!’ The apparition answered, ‘Your verses are better than his in this passage.’

(26) ‘Oh the red before mixture, yellow after it, who comest in clothes of narcissus and amnesia! Pure thou dost counterfeit the face of beauty, and when subjected to the mixing thou pretendst to love’s colour!’

Abu Bakr asked the apparition who he was: he replied, ‘Your demon.’ He gave his name when asked as Abi Zaydah, and mentioned further that he resided in Masjid. The Jinn are further said to have very long lives, the same individual having encountered both Noah and the Prophet. And if these poetic Jinn transmigrate from man to man, it is possible that Nibrash’s demon or Imru ‘al-Qais’s demon may have taken up his abode with you. Such a thing would be neither new nor strange. But, as you have passed by Masjid in your travels, it seems most probable to me that Abi Zaydah himself has attached himself to you, out of a desire for your society; for you will have reminded him of his Arabic friend. Doubtless this demon will have turned Moslem, since otherwise he would not care.

1 In the Ash-Shi‘ah VIII, 73, Jihinnam is given as the name of a poet who assailed Al-Asba. The verse itself is quoted in T. A. VIII, 355, where it is stated that Jihinnam was a contemporary of Abu the Kassan; but Ibn VIII, 355, where it is also quoted, the same explanation is given as is given here. A Mishal son of Shabita is mentioned in the Hashshash. See also Ash-Shi‘ah VIII, 101.

2 His name was Abu Abdallah ‘Imam Ibn Ahmad, 657.

3 This story is told with some variations by Ibn Khallikan L, 611; Abu ‘Abd Allah (as it is there written) according to one account was the name of a Jiyaz poet. He recited these verses to the critic Ibn Duraid, who made certain criticisms on them; according to another they were verses which he said Satan had revealed to him during the night. Ibn Duraid was a famous poet and grammarian, the author of a great number of works; he lived 213-214. He was greatly attached to Jiyaz.

4 Ob. 192.

5 Name of two famous poets. Al-Je‘li and Al-Dhahabi respectively.

6 Ibn Duraid.

for the society of a Commentator on the Koran, an authority on the language of the Prophet, and a man who has professed charity and orthodoxy from the cradle (13) till he has begun to think of the ‘third leg’. Moreover, the Prophet said that no man was free from a guardian demon. ‘Not even thou, O Prophet of God!’ they asked him. ‘Not even I,’ he answered, ‘only I have been helped, and he has turned Moslem.’ Indeed your demon could scarcely fail to be convicted when you write on the Suni Ikhlas only a whole book, of which our good friend Abu Bakr Al-Mu‘addib possesses a copy.

I will describe the nature of your compositions in accordance with a logical division. Do you deliberately assign particular metres to particular subjects, or do you write without premeditation? If you compose as did the early Arabs by the light of nature, knowing nothing of the doctrine of the sam‘ and the kad‘, how can you have managed to escape error, so as nowhere to shorten the last syllable of the second foot? And yet the greatest of the poets are guilty of this licence,—for instance, most of the rhaptoods give verses of Imru ‘al-Qais the following form,

‘Many a fair day have they given thee, best of all the day in Daraz Juljul.’

And the following,

‘Time is truly nights and days; it continues in no fixed state.’

And the verse of Jihinnam Al-Tayy,

‘When they travel they find not tent to house in; and wear no clothing but a striped garment and a fur.’

Ibn Al-Aahl quotes the following,

‘ Truly Harun Asr Ashab has claws which rise to the sky while he stands still.’

But say you kept clear of the licence kad‘, and that your idiosyncrasy did not lead you to it, as was the case with many of the ancient writers in whose poems it is not found,—yet how did you escape the contraction of the penultimate of the second foot (kad‘), which is a licence closely allied to kad‘? To do this by nature would indeed show delicate perception! For very few pre-Mohammedan poems in the Ta‘wili metre are free from it. Imru ‘al-Qais commits it very often.
and Nahshah, Zohair, and A'asha of Kais still more frequently than the "king-
errant." Nahshah says,
"Fairer of face, with chaste waist-bands, greeted with odorous herbs on
Palm-Sundays!"
And in the same poem,
"You may see them behind the people looking out of the backs of their eyes,
like old men seated in hare-kins."
Al-A'asha says,
(39) "Didst thou not hear the teaching of Mohammed, God's prophet, when he
taught and testified?"
Zohair says,
"Men ran after them to overtake them, yet did they not overtake them, albeit
they neither slackened nor incurred blame."
Many besides of the later poets employ this licence, e.g. Ibn Ans.
"Flowers have covered thee, deep red, pure white, and bright blue."
(40) And Al-Walid,
"I beheld 'Arak thwart me, so I run will force me to go to Syria."
How, too, can you have avoided procatastasis (akhrons) which poets ancient
and modern have agreed to countenance? You know how careful Mzunabbi was
about every verse he produced: he would alter verses after they had been published,
and avoid licences even when the metre suggested them. Nevertheless, he admits
(41) that in two places, one in the Tawil metre,
"God bring me no grief to our prince! Still I will bear a portion of his
troubles."
p. 69. The other in Wafir,
"Even thoughTs'be base ..."
And how it is that none of those irregularities occur in the first halves of your
Tawil verses which occur in those of other poets? There is a verse ascribed to
Nahshah,

1. "Name for base of Kais.
2. "Ibn Ans., ed. Akhward, p. 31: the first two words are, by a slip of the author's memory, taken
from a similar line in the Divan of Hafiz (p. 80) and substituted for the original.
3. "This verse was also incontestably cited...

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'God reward thee, 'Abd,'Abd of the family of Rashid, with the recompense of the
barking dogs—and indeed he has done so!'
And Abu Zakir quotes from 'Abd of Kais son of Kha'if Al-Burjami,
"When I came up with them I said, Hw, Tamn; but where is Tamn with 're
testation to Al-Walid?'"
And 'Amir son of Juswa wrote,
"Are those camels that are marching Emir's escort? Truly my heart is so
grrieved by its Forreign plight. See that not how many a herd of camels
from Makhtir and from Safid is in the hamlet?"
And when you behold yourself of composing verses in the Wafir or Kurnat
metre, your innate instinct keeps you from defacing the former of them by the faults
called saxi and 'saq', and the latter by the faults called khans and maqfi. And
indeed the fault called 'saq' is not found in genuine poems of the Arabs. Safid's
son of Makhtir declared that he had never heard a case, but a verse of Zohair,
assigned by some to his son Kuf, is quoted,
"And my restraining myself from harming my neighbours, and preserving my
affection towards my near brother,
where there is a case of 'saq' if the ik of 'uqadd' be single. However, Ibn Al-Kalbi
asserted that there were Arabs who said 'uqadd, and if the author of the verse wrote
in this dialect, as is possible, this will not be a case of 'saq'. The fault called saxi
is almost as rare, though two verses are quoted as illustrations of it, which, how-
soever, admit of another explanation. One of them is ascribed to Surkhah Al-
Burjami, but by others to 'Uthayb Allah son of Saleh Al-Ruhayyil. Al-Mukhtar son (40)
of Abu 'Uthayb had taken the poet prisoner; the poet, though well aware that
Mukhtar was an impostor, nevertheless circulated a story in the army that he had
seen men on white horses fighting on Mukhtar's side, that they had taken him
prisoner, and that he had not seen them afterwards. This story Mukhtar was
very ready to accept, and for the sake of it he ordered the poet to be set free.
When the poet had got out of Mukhtar's range, he said,

1. "See Kbaani al-al in 139. Baghdad was the name of a division of Kais.
2. "Nasifir of Abu Zakir, 6. 11.
3. "Yahzi IV, 626 with important differences of reading. The irregularity in the second
verse was making the last half end with Ma'koradi, which is avoided in Yahzi's
writing of Ma'koradi.
4. "Celebrated grammarian, better known as Al-Akhward, oh. 211.
5. "This story with the following verses is told by the historian Yahzi II, 2, 699."
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breast, as is the custom of the vulgar in praising verse-writers; the Prophet said, ‘Frivolity and I have nothing in common;’ and Ibn 'Ahsan says,'3

'Say not: "what you tell us is vain;" grey hairs and baldness have left me too vanity.'

'Vanity' in this place means falsehood. No; but you are to be praised for avoiding (13) those two forms of procatinatus into which poets ordinarily fall, and which they employ both in fact that are sound and that are syncopated, such, for example, as p. 71 a verse written by one of the idolaters after the Prophet's mission had been delivered.

'No most I while I remain alive; neither is my creed that of the Moslems.'

Or of Hali's,1

'I am of Kufi's; I betray whoso betrays them, but they may be sure of me.' (5)

As for your avoiding procatinatus in verses that have suffered 'a'dj, that need not be admired, as the combination of the two has regularly been avoided by both ancient and modern poets alike; and your conduct in avoiding 'ahar and 'ama in the first and second forms of Kmil is on a par with your avoiding 'old and 'old. Albeit the combination of the former in Kmil is more common than that of the latter in Wâfr: Al-Râzi says,

'Neither may I come to Abu Khubâb desiring instruction in the truth, and (10) be plunged yet deeper in error.'

And Ta'labâsah Sharrâk says,

'When Fa'kum and Bakr met entire, and the blood flowed between them like a torrent.'

This is a verse of his famous poem in the Kmil metre, of which the first line is,

'Fire that dinted blaze, and whose blaze renewed my spirits, in some habitation at Mykô or Murût.'

I only notice this that it may not be supposed that the verse containing the alif d' is of the Rejex metre, no. 1; for Kmil 1 and 2, when all the feet are syncopated, are not distinguishable from Rejex 1 and 2, a fact with which you are well acquainted. The licence, however, called 'ahar and 'ama occur more often in the short forms of Kmil than in the long ones—so in the verse of 'Abdallah,

1 Jasîr, p. 166. 2 Khânî, p. 245. 3 Jasîr, p. 174. The verse is so inaccurately cited as to be unintelligible.
4 Not apparently in the original collections of his verses. 5 Khânî, al-âlî, III. 357.

LETTERS OF ABU 'L-ALâ AL-MAARRl.

(14) 'Tell Abu 'Isha'kh that the white horses I saw were pure black; in fact I made my eye see what it saw not. We both of us have some idea of imposture.'

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Abu 'Isha'kh was Muhînn's paternal name; 'Ali son of Muhammad received the verse with the ordinary form tarqûsûs, giving a sense of maya. But he did not deny that the poet might have restored the original form of the word, tarqûsûs, which occurs in another verse1:

'And whose lives long will see and hear.'

(15) The other verse in which maya occurs is by Al-Maghîthân son of Yâ'âbû2:

'Tis as if the pieces of egg-yolk therein were covered tinted with powdered saffron.'

Now the ordinary form is ghirîbh'un, as in the verse of 'Anas son of Hâjar3:

'Who would give thee that inner envelope which is beneath her shell, like the ghirîbh of the egg covered by the shell above?'

If the verse be scanned in this way, Mughîthân will have employed the licence called maya; it is, however, possible that he may have added a y by a poetical licence which gives such forms as samâbîl for samâbîl, and amsâlîd for amsâlîd. As the poet of Taghlibî says,4

'And wings that spread in all directions like arrows flying.'

However, to tell the truth, you are not to be greatly praised for avoiding these two forms of maya, just as 'Anas son of Khuâyîm did not win much praise for avoiding them in his verse,5

'Come, stir up thy cup and give me a drink,'

(15) nor Nâshîghân for the verse,

'Does Kûshân think of giving up her dallying?6
nor Abu Dhu'âlab for the line,

'By thy beauty, O wounded heart!'7
nor Abu L-Rumâlah for the line,

'Does the house of Mayrûh cause thy tears to flow, and do the rains wake up thy love?'8
nor any other of the poets, ancient or modern. I have only said this in order to show that I am not addressing you any compliments proceeding from an insincere

1 Quoted by Abu Zaid, Rawdâh, p. 161; our test is inaccurate.
2 A well-known poet.
3 Probable 'Anas son of Khuâyîm.
4 In his Mughîthân, v. 1.
5 Durrât, ed. Ahsânî, p. 47.
6 A Jânshîb poet.
7 In his Mughîthân, v. 1.
8 Shurrâh, p. 116.
LETTERS OF ABU 'L-ALĀ AL-MAUDIRI.

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'O house of Māwiyyah in the plain, built for some grand destiny, built under Su‘d al-Sulṭān, not under Al-Debarūn and the Scorpion.'

Or the verse of Ima‘r al-Kā‘b:

'Li‘lās refuses to meet me any more; she is gone away, and the cords that tied us are rotten.'

Nevertheless, it is not so very creditable to avoid these licences, for both in ancient and modern poetry these forms of contraction are rare. And you are venturing on this measure to be guided to many forms of excellence missed by Kā‘b, son of Zuhail when he wrote his trembling (or, according to Al-‘Uṣayma, son of Sa‘d, crippl’d) verse,

p. 79

'After the death of Mu‘āk son of Zuhail can women hope for the results of their pure days?'

Similar verses have been composed by other great poets: Abu ‘Uṣayma quotes:

'Na‘wās' pined, but got no good, &c.'

As for the rhyming letters which you have chosen, they are very correct. The d which Thalataa selected for his Mu‘alākan, and Ni‘ābbiḥ to describe Al-Muṣṭarraj, the s which is free from all weakness and softness, and is a strong and clearly pronounced letter, of which the hoovee must be made, since it repeats itself so often. The s which is easily articulated, and which is prefixed to the active and passive participles, to the former when they come from roots of four letters or more, to the latter in all cases; the s which is the musician among the letters, near of kin to the sound which gives us the case-signs. Further, you have not fettered the hoovee of the words, since such fettering is not helpful, but have given release, rīfi‘, sī‘i‘, thereby bringing the rhyme into prominence.

I cannot indeed praise you for avoiding false rhymes of vowel or consonant, nor do I regard this as an excellence; for any poet, native or foreign, who knows the alphabet ought to be able to avoid them, but how did you manage to avoid repeating the same rhyme, which both modern and ancient writers have done, writers both copious and scanty? How too did you escape faults in the rhyme itself of which Ima‘r al-Kā‘b and Zi‘ād are guilty? The following, for example, are ascribed to Ima‘r al-Kā‘b:

'If I say this is a friend with whom I am pleased and in whom I find consolation, I take another in exchange. Such is my fortune; I never associate with a man but he changes and deceives me.'

If you may many editors do not give this verse, and Al-Kūthlī allowed this (20) licence; my answer is that others disapproved of it, and that even according to Kūthlī it is better to avoid it. And did I not purposely abstain from comparing your open rhymes with any but open rhymes in other writers’ poems, Ima‘r al-Kā‘b might on Kūthlī’s principle be said to have committed sūnūd in his poem rhyming in rī‘?

'No, by thy father, daughter of ‘Amir, the people shall not say I ran away.'

For he regards a difference in the sūnūd as a case of sūnūd. Ibn Durdī in his ‘Ishā‘ī‘, says it is called nīšād.

In Ni‘ābbiḥ’s poems the tradition fluctuates; in some of the texts there is sūnūd a poem rhyming in sī‘ ascribed to him, which is not found in most of them, commencing—

'The two homes of Su‘d in Dāmāb and Dhu ‘l-Ha‘as have been raked same day by the morning and evening rains.'

Followed by—

'May your hands are knives, and they have slain each other.'

Now to make sī‘nādānī rhyme with rī‘īnā is in Al-Kūthlī’s opinion a case of sūnūd; and that it is a blemish is proved by the rarity of its occurrence.

Having then avoided these serious faults, how could you escape those minor irregularities which the grammarians do not regard as blemishes, and which the old poets did not avoid? I may mention your persistently adhering to the rī‘ for

2. Thalath, ed. Akhbarī, p. 46.
3. Also known as Abu ‘Uṣayma, a famous scholar and traditionalist, ch. 255.
4. In Al-Kūthlī XIX. 28 and ‘Uṣīr, p. 427, this verse is ascribed to ‘Uṣīr. son of Zi‘ād.
5. The first part of this line is an allusion to a proverb given by Maylānā L. 199, but read and explicated in different ways, though the sense is pretty clearly ‘pining after what does not come.’ The second line refers to a great famine, but is too obscure to translate. Both are discussed in Kānī in ‘Alā‘ī, ii. 127-129, ch. I, 418-416.
6. This would seem to mean that the person addressed did not use close syllables for rhyming syllables. The rest of the terms used in the sentence one only be understood by those who have some acquaintance with Arabic poetry.
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the vowel to come between the 'alā and the rāśi, never substituting for it the ẹ, which all allow to be lawful; for it is only the combination of a with the other vowels about which there is any difference of opinion. Nihāghah in the poem rhyming in 'Aṣr says,

'They go to Aṣr at a trot;'

and in that which rhymes in ī,

'The Turks and the Persian tribe and Khul;'

and Abu Dhu'lab says,

'Hast thou asked the ruined dwelling or hast thou not asked it of its inhabitants or whether it remembers old times?'

And in the same poem,

'If she tighten the rope of affection, be steadfast with her; and if she cut it, then feign ignorance and retreat.'

There is another reading, 'be courteous and retire.'

Bakr Al-Ghāyyī says,

'By the life of Abū 'Amīr, fate has driven him to a grave to be dug for him on the mountains; the chicks never saw her after the evening, neither did they cease chattering in their nest.'

This irregularity is of frequent occurrence in the best poets; and a much more objectionable one is to be found in a poem of Dhu 'S-Rumāmah:

'Truthy what has drawn the milk of shining eye is some spot in Jamshīd Hurwa or Jārī Mālick.

The jealous husband left them, and the sun burst forth for us on that short but blessed day.'

(13) Some excuse may indeed be found for these authors, but what can be said for Al-Balḫūrī's poem beginning—

'God, how bright a time was at Suwālīkah!'

which contains the following verses:

1 Ḫāwūn, ed. Abūwālī, p. 39. Aṣr, according to Yahūs, is a mountain east identical with or in the neighborhood of Ṣamā'il.
2 Ḫāwūn, ed. Abūwālī, p. 39.
3 Ḫāqānī VI. 56. Abu Dhu'lab died partly during the days of paganism, partly in those of Islam to which he was a convert. He was the chief poet of the tribe of Ḥudahla.
4 Abu Dhubail poet, whose poems are printed in Kroeger's Edwin of Huddaill, see p. 61 also Ḫāqālī xii. 61.
5 Ḫāwūn, ed. Constantinople, L 242.
LETTERS OF ABU 'LALA AL-MA'ARRI.

"Sooner would I have the rattle of the bridal on a charger's head than marriage with thee... Said my mistress when she saw it grizzled between white and black, "How like Zedaria soaked with wicker!" "I'll pain the horse hunters when they search my hair!"

But in verses where the long peninsa was elj, the Arabs did not admit alteration, nor did any other writers with poetical genius. In Tawil, however, when there is an elj of elj in two forms of simd may occur, one of the consonants, the other of the vowel. Praise be to God who has kept you from both those disasters! The simd of the consonant is that which Al-Buhtur committee in the verses I have quoted, whereas the vocal simd is that with which Dhu l-Rummah protected himself from mischief the verses of his poem which rhyme in k. As for your poem in Wafir, they have an elj for the peninsa, and in consequence are as clear of x and y as are verses with those letters for peninsa from elj. Of the Kamil metre you have used forms i and z; and as for form 2, you have used that without ruf or elj, so that the verses admit only of one form of simd; and that a form employed by Buhtur. Your verses are therefore as free from simd in all its forms as the "arrow" of Ibn Maqill, which brought boll to him that sought it. As for Kamil 2, you know of course that ruf is necessary, except in rare verses anointed to laza Al-Nafis. Is your innocence of simd is therefore greater than other people's, since other people in such verses sometimes use the ruf and sometimes omit it, whereas you have used the ruf regularly.

If, however, you write poetry according to metrical rule, how is it that you have only ventured on those metres that are perfect and erect, so no accident happening to you as befell Rafa" the musician when he enlized Al-Hassan bin Sahl in his poem rhyming in k, of which the first verse was

"Thy nearest friends have made their camels ready to depart now more?"

And we have observed that many of those who write verse according to rule have tried the metre of Al-Murakshib, supposing that people's tastes are not averse to such experiments in these days. But you, dear friend, would seem to have combined genius as profound as the ocean with copious acquired learning.

1 The author is probably not speaking of different languages, but of the different nationalities of the writers of Arabic.
2 Ibn Maqill was Surely times in the arrow-group, never once being (Janibazet Al-Arabi, Bostany ed. p. 199). May it be in mistake in thinking "arrow" as error for "elj".
3 L. A. X. 134 and Agg. XV. 240.
4 Rafa is mentioned in the Agilat VI. 23 as a great innovator in poetry, who followed the ideas of Abdullah Al-Sammil of Basrah, a pupil of Al-Ikasha.
5 The notice in the Agilat does not explain this.

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Your letter implies that I, in your opinion, have slighted your affection and forgotten, in all this long time, our relations. Truly in that case I was one of the wrong-doers. You tell me that you are of Basrah; I am quite sure that you are of "Basrah" (intelligence), which is implanted in your mind, and is a better city than Basrah is. For Basrah means "white stones" such as rock and calci trample on. There is a verse of Dhu l-Rummah;

"When the waterers had poured the water into its conduit for the camels which were thirsting in the desert, they called to each other, shib, shib, in that cragged reservoir of which the sides were of "Basrah" and shale.

The people of Basrah are noted for their want of home-sickness; you may perhaps have met with a story how there was found inscribed on a stone,

"There is no stronger thought he make boast of his fortitude, but remembers his home at times of sickness;"

and underneath it some one had written 'except the people of Basrah'. Now if p. 76 such be their conduct in relation to their own people and fellow-citizens, how much less will they care for mere acquaintances? And a proof of what I say is that you have not written my name correctly. You have written "Mohammed", whereas my name is "Ala"; and if you argue that these names are the same, because God says in one place, "Mohammed" The Prophet of God and those that are with him are strenuous against the Unbelievers, and in another, and in a Prophet whom shall come after me named Almud, it must be observed that this is true of the Prophet only, since he said, "My name in heaven is Almud, and on earth Mohammed." If any one urges that the Arabs often had two or three names or more, quoting the verse of Durrat son of Al-Summa; "They cried to each other, saying, "The horses have destroyed a champion;" I answered "Is Abdallah the champion that has perished?" and from the same poem the verse, "And if with its days cause us to forget, yet ye shall know, ye sons of Khal, that we are wroth with Mahud;"

1 This statement is surprising. Of the poets mentioned in the Agilat many long for Basrah with affection not unlike that of Abu 'l-Allah for Baghdad. So Ibn Al-Furat (XVII. 60), Mohammed Ibn Wais (XVII. 145), Ibn Yunus (XVIII. 27). Another characteristic of Basrah is to be found in the last Makled of Ibn "Alf.
2 The verse is also quoted by Ibn Amin, Majalat P. 9, with another.
3 Kema XLI. 29.
4 Janibazet p. 477; Janibazet, P. 117; Agilat IX. 45; Christan Arabic Poets, II. 238. The verse in which he is called Almud is given in the list of these texts.
such a case as this may be explained in one of two ways. Either a man may have two names, which is not my case; or the poet may have altered the name to suit the verse. And had you altered my name not in prose but in verse, this would be easily excusable, seeing that the best poets alter names; Al-Hasayn says,

(9) 'And I you were not satisfied with them till you had presented them with torrents of a storm-cloud (the family of Bitlm) containing spears, containing bard, long, well-fashioned curasses of Sallam's make.'

meaning by Sallam Solomon; an alteration against analogy, and on a different principle from that according to which Abu Khabis and Abu Khabis are both names of Al-Nu'man Ibn Al-Mundhir, and Zahirah as well as Zubair stands for

(10) Al-Zubair Ibn Al-Awam. These are cases of contracted diminutives, and examples are common; Al-Ka'itari says,

'The heart has become tranquil about 'Umayyah, and the camels are troubled about others than her,' and in the same poem,

'Is it a glance from a lightning flash that my eye has seen, or the face of 'Umayyah, about which the veil is playing?'

So too Al-Maraqibah' says,

(14) 'Fatimah, were all wassail in one city and thou in another, still I should follow thee lovingly. Hungry and feasting alike I am ashamed before Fatimah.'

p. 27: 'Amr Ibn Jasim Al-Shamahil says,

'I beseech thee, mother of 'Amr, blame me not, when the feasters are assembled with their wine. What! do my old woman sleeplessly weep and wail over two camels that are dead?'

(3) And was Abu Khabis kept alive, bless you, by the wealth of the kingdom and his crowds of cattle? He built in Al-Qamar a tall gloomy pile on whose sides the doves coop.'

By Abu Khabis he means Abu Khabis. It is recorded that Safiyah, daughter of 'Abd Al-Muttalib, had two sons, Al-Zubair and Al-Sa'id; Al-Sa'id was undutiful, and she wrote the following verse about him:

By Al-Sa'id he means Al-Sa'id.

1 Aginali XI, 29.
2 Jaushah, p. 151.
3 One of these verses is cited (in a considerably different form) by Vajit Ill. 184.
LETTERS OF ABU ‘L-‘ALĀ AL-MAARRI.

p. 78
There is another point about your verse that I have carefully scrutinized, not with the eye of finding fault, but rather by the aid of the attention which proceeds from high esteem; you have kept your verses free from license in both halves of the line, as also in the middle; you have not, e.g. elided the hamzas as is done in the verse,

‘Abu Firda has saved me from what I feared; and one like Abu Firda is enough and more.’

(4) Neither have you elided any where it should not be elided, as Al-Ashā does in the verse,

‘And the friend of belles, who when he chooses eat him and become enemies just after being friends.’

Or as Khafif says,

‘Like the sides of the feathers of a dove of Najd; and thou hast rubbed on thy gums the kohl-powder.’

Nor have you contracted your words except in the vocative, as in the verse,

‘Abdul son of Julhum has ruined his camels; verily the son of Julhum has become the snake of the valley.’

or in that of Zuhair,

‘Take your due, ye family of Ikrim, yet remember the ties between us; verily blood-connexion is remembered in absence.’

or of another poet,

‘Truly if I desire the sight of the son of Harith, or praise him, the folk know all about it.’

Nor have you made any such alterations in words as render them unrecognizable, as does Latib in the hemistich,

‘The bos[a] are in ruins in Mutall and Abban;’

and ‘Alshahab in the verse,

‘Their pitcher was like an antelope on a hill, girl with stalks of perfumed plants, and reeking with them; a white antelope which its keeper has exposed to the sun, with linen hangings on its neck and a strainer in its mouth.’

and some other poet in a verse quoted by Ibn Al-Ala’ī,

‘Men whose lips are forestalled in tasting the water by animals with long sides and snub noses to their noses.’

Neither have you substituted weak letters for strong, as does a writer in a verse,

‘A watering-place where there are no crowds, and where the frogs in the water are allowed to croak;’

and another in the verse,

‘She has slices of meat from oxen on which she puts dates, and morsels of hare.’

Nor have you substituted shāh instead of a simple shāf for a vowel where it should not be substituted, as in the verse,

‘When they swerved I said, “Friend, keep these camels erect like floating vessels in the desert;”’

or as in a verse cited by al-Shawwali from Imru ‘ul-Kais,

‘I will drink to-day, not storing up for myself any guilt against God, and not entering as an uninvited guest.’

Nor have you given any nouns wrong formations (I mean ordinary nouns; I leave my own name out, about which I have already spoken) as is done in (4) the verse,

‘Her mouth was like cold halberstones or the odour of a garden which a light rain has besprinkled;’

where alshurshu’a is an unknown formation not in Shawwali’s list, the right form being alshurshu’a like fəfərən.

Now a man who has avoided all these licences, as well as others which it would be tedious to enumerate, such as invention of dager and separation of words that are in connexion, as for instance in the line of Farnabak, (10)

‘There is no trouble that does not each evening and each morning come and return;’

or in the line of al-Shafii,

1 Shīwālī I. 8.
2 Shīwālī I. c.
4 Dīwān, ed. Abūwār, p. 85. 5 Verse of the Ilhan, Sīwālī I. 199.
6 Dīwān, ed. Abūwār, p. 173. The verses are very harrassingly cited.

1 Shīwālī I. 8.
2 Shīwālī I. c.; Al-Rā‘íd al-Dalīl III. 123. The Arabic text explains in all these cases what are the licences to which allusion is made.
3 Author unknown. 4 Ed. Abūwār, p. 172. 5 Ed. Dāmā, p. 211. (H. 10.)
LETTERS OF ABU 'UĀLĀ AL-MĀRRI.

'And how', when no dispute ever befell thee when thy name was mentioned to mankind?'

or in the line quoted by Abu 'Ubudiah.

(7) 'And its traces after their beauty are as though a pen had drawn a line.'

How, I say, can so cautious a writer have thought fit to contract his friend's
surnames, to alter his name and contract his surname? 'We are God’s, and to
God do we return.' This must have been a divine decree, no slip on the part
of the writer, no carelessness of his, but the ill-luck of the person he addressed, the
hard hap of the owner of the name and the application. Do not say, 'All the
(8) poets, ancient and modern, poets by nature and poets by endeavour, have
substituted the shortened cph for the lengthened;' for had you admitted any
other licence I should have allowed this argument; but, as I have shown, you
have steadily abstained from them all, and avoided every flaw. And I only
complain of this because I am contracted in spirit, contracted in hand, contracted
in sight (that is, blind), contracted to my dwelling (that is, confined to it) like
a prisoner, and all this together with contraction of frame was not sufficient, but
I must needs have my name contracted too! 'There is no strength nor power
(9) in God the Lofty, the Exalted!' Were I longer than the shadow
of a lance, I should get shorter than a fly’s neck! Indeed I have begun to
disappear like a shadow, as the poet says,

'Ve worked’ till the shadow began to grow after it had shortened till it almost
dwindled away!'

Were I the longest of nouns i.e. the infinitive of a verb of six letters like žreğiṣem
or ždemēṣyw, and were I to lose one letter by each form of contraction, nothing
would be left of me, or at any rate the utmost I could hope for would be to
remain of two letters, one with a vowel and the other silent, which is the shortest
possible vowelless, no shorter one being possibly uttered. And the poets would
(10) take all sorts of liberties with me, and hide me in places where I had
acknowledged rights. As Abu Da‘ūd says,

'Thinkest thou every man a man, every fire that burns at night a fire?'

No! Complete annihilation were better than life after that style! Were I the
seven-lettered word that forms the element of the Kināli metre, and were then
contracted in this way, I should probably get to be the letter which forms the
(11) annex of the second hemistich of the seventh form of Kināli. If I were the

1 Šošaf was a poet who lived partly in the Umayyad, partly in the Akhnādī period.
2 Kināli 2.321.
3 A verse cited in most of the grammars and books of rhetoric.
4 Specimen of this style of contraction are given by Silwawili 28; Kināli 2.255.
5 Aghni 4. 363.
6 Some of these lines are quoted by Silwawili 3.30.
7 Aghni XIX, 378.
8 Quoted in the grammars, e.g. Michaelis, sect. 12, as well as the next last one following, of
which the author was Ibn Māriqūn. The quotations are in both cases inaccurate. For the
next see Ibn 'Atrī 1.456.

LETTER XXVII.

seven-lettered foot of the Ramād, and were treated so, the remainder of me would
turn into the additional syllable of the fourth form; were I the five-lettered word
of the Ġātā metre, and treated so, I should depart altogether, and not enough
remain of me to form the additional syllable of the third form. Suppose, however,
I were a word of five letters and were contracted once and twice according to
analogy, not by authority; and then a third time according to Al-Fārābī and
Al-Abḥāsh, but no other grammarians—after the third contraction the process
would have to stop, according to all systems, unless a quibbling pretext could be
got from the fact recorded by Abu 'Ubudiah that certain of the Arabs say Wust
you m? meaning Wust you move? answered by Yes, I'll m', meaning Yes, I'll
move; a fact which is made to explain the Rejūs verse,

'Unas 'Amr has promised to an—amoint my hair and take out the I, &c.'

Possibly you think that I have for my patronymic the preposition all in such
a sentence as 'there is a debt upon Zaid;' were this so, I should necessarily be
called Abu 'Āth, without the article; for such particles as this, when they are
taken out of their natural functions, become definite, just as proper names are,
like Zaid and 'Amr, unlike the letters of the alphabet, which, having no article in
their ordinary usage, receive one when they leave it, so that we speak of Al-'Ba,
Al-'Th, Al-'Ph, &c.; when the article is wanting they are indefinite. However
(8) salt and the like are different. Nor do I refer to prepositions only, but all
particles that give a sense; there is a verse ascribed to Abu Zabāk,

'Would I knew, yet what use is 'would that'! truly ola and woulds are
only trouble!' And Al-Nāfi‘ī says,

'Ah, would I that and he were dead, but 'would that' is no remedy against
(9) misfortune.'

And Al-Nāmi‘ī,

'She stuck to an 'if', which she kept on repeating; truly that 'if' was too
much for us.'

Perhaps you might argue that the article had been prefixed to all in my supposed
name so it is prefixed to 'Amr in the verse of Abu 'l-Najām,

1 Specimen of this style of contraction are given by Silwawili 28; Kināli 2.255.
2 Aghni 4. 363.
3 Some of these lines are quoted by Silwawili 3.30.
4 Quoted in the grammars, e.g. Michaelis, sect. 12, as well as the next last one following, of
which the author was Ibn Māriqūn. The quotations are in both cases inaccurate. For the
next see Ibn 'Atrī 1.456.
LETTERS OF ABU 'I-LĀLA AL-MĀ'ARRĪ.

(10) He delivered the mother of Al-'Amr from her captive;
or as it was prefixed to an idea (mushroom) in the verse,
'I have plucked thee root and mushroom, and Kūshīkīn thee the
daughters of Al-Ahmar';
or as another writer says,
'We have found Al-Yazīd son of Al-Walīd a blessed man whose shoulder
is fitted for the burden of the Caliphate.'

(15) The true form being in all these cases Mother of 'Amr, Yazīd son of
Al-Walīd, and Ibn Anbar (a form of mushroom). Abu Ḫāsim quotes after
Al-Ama'ī:

'Fruits of earth such as shepherds bring, Ibn Anbar, truffles, and
mushrooms.'

These however are all due to the exigencies of the verse. And it is supposed
in the case of Al-Yazīd, where either form would suit the metre, that the poet
made bold to prefix the article owing to its being prefixed to Walīd, where it is
constant. If however your idea was that I take my name from the third person
singular of the verb 'isāt (to mount), neither has this any more right to the article
than the other. You must have heard the verse of Kūshīkīn:

'I am Kūshīkīn son of Kūshīkīn son of 'Isāt, father of Gūshīkīn, leader of a camel';
and that of Sulḥān son of Walīd Al-Bīyāḥī:

(20) 'I am the son of 'Isāt, and climber of the heights; when I put off
my turban you will know me.'

Nur can any argument be got from the verse of Farandāsh (to show that the article
may be used with the finite verb, p. 83):

'Then art not the arbiter whose fit, the will be acquiesced in; judgement
will be acquiesced in; nor of ancient stock, nor of intellect and
firmness,' any more than from the verse of Tīlok son of Dārāsh.

LETTER XXVII.

(1) And he brings the 'ướtba out of its hole, and out of its house Dhu
'l-Shāhīkh substrenches himself.'

For some persons regard these verses as spurious; while those who think them
genuine regard them as cases of material necessity.

Or perhaps you may suppose that my name follows the principle by which
grammarians explain dū'ā'ī, the 'act.'; for dū'ā'ī is not enumerated by Shībawīs (2)
among trilateral forms of the noun; and as the word is nevertheless familiar,
those who would accept for it say that it is really the third person singular perfect
passive of the verb dū'ā'ī, meaning 'to walk slowly,' 'to dally,' passive participle
madhāwī, used of a place dailed in; they suppose this form dū'ā'ī is turned into
a substantive, and then has the article prefixed, which is the same as the account
given of a feminine ornament called panyāḥī, which they say is the third person
imperfect of the seventh form of yalabī, 'to attract,' meaning that with which
(20) their husbands will be induced to do what they want. An Arab woman (3)
is supposed to have said,

'Caught him with the panyāḥī; he neither budged nor stirred away, nor
did he look at the cords.'

This is indeed a rare usage; but I am quite willing to accept such an explanation
in order to give censure no ladder with which to reach your generosity, and
title-tattle no access to your munificence; especially as you have been excessive
in your praise of me, and assigned me attributes which my station does not merit.

You have doubtless met with the tradition (4) how the Caliph Omar went out (5)
one night walking with his hand on Ibn 'Abbās's shoulder, and bade him recite
a verse by the greatest of the poets; Ibn 'Abbās said to him, 'Who is that?' He
answered, 'The poet who does not make one verse run into another, (6) nor
employ obsolete phrases, nor praise a man for qualities which he does not
possess.' He meant Zaihrī son of Abu Solma. Now you, my friend, have
aspired to two of these qualifications, for you have not let your verses run into
one another, nor have you employed obsolete phrases; but you have praised me
for qualities which I do not possess. In this indeed you have only followed the (20)
ordinary custom of orators and poets, as indeed the author of the 'Masāṭ.' (7) in the

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4 Quoted in the note on Ibdā'ī, p. 92. The author has by error substituted Al-Kūshīkī for Al-Jīdīt on the same of the poet's father.
5 Quoted in the grammarians also in Al-Muftarrī's Khullī f. 234 (Ep.).
6 Quoted in the grammar; e.g., Ibn 'Abbās, p. 460, Khullī al-ḥudūd II. 483: the preceding quotation is also a grammatical crotchet, see Khullī, ad. I. 14. The sound of these quotations was probably got by Abu 'I-'Ālia out of the Nusayrī of Abu Zaid, where it is given (p. 46) in

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8 Variously interpreted; also see Aghānī 1. 3.
second of his four books maintains that mendacity is not objectionable in poetry and oratory, and in consequence of this the Arabs have taken a licence to exaggerate and overstate in their despatches. A poet describing a sword says,

"Its blows seem always to miss the mark till a victim comes in its way."

(eg) And Al-Namir son of Taulib says,

p. 85

"Events have left what they have of Namir—the furniture of an ancient sword whose traces are conspicuous; if you strike with it, it takes you all day to search for it, beyond the arms, the neck, and the sides."

In your letter you complain of shivering; and I know not what cause can have produced it, unless he be overspent; a poet says,

(6) "Constant wine-drinking has made me tremble; so that I have become irremedially, not from old age."

For you are living the most comfortable of lives without jar; no literary plan of yours ever falls; nor does any front tooth fall out. On the contrary, you are like Aba Lanka, the Ni'nhish of the Bana Jadd, who says,

(10) "If any one ask concerning me, tell him that I am in the halcyon time of life, a hundred and twelve years are passed since the year when I was born, and the vicissitudes of time have spared me as they would spare a sword of Yemen make."

I observe too that in your letter you find fault with travelling; or at least do so obliquely. Why so? Ought not a man to be satisfied with following the precedent set by Moses, who, when he turned towards Midian, said, "Maybe my Lord will guide me?" Have you forgotten your entering the mosques at times of prayer, and your reaching the cities after the deserts? Do not you remember the verse quoted in the Majin of Aba 'Ushaidi?"