STUDIES IN ISLAMIC POETRY
TO

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WHOSE TEACHING AND EXAMPLE FIRST INSPIRED ME TO PURSUE THE STUDY OF ORIENTAL LITERATURE
PREFACE

WRITTEN during the war, these Studies grew out of the wish to impart some things I have enjoyed in Arabic and Persian not only to fellow-students, who can correct me if I misinterpret, but also to others who without being specialists are interested in the literature, philosophy and religion of the East. Since the five essays fall into two distinct groups, it has been decided to publish them in two volumes bearing different titles, namely, Studies in Islamic Poetry and Studies in Islamic Mysticism. The latter comprise (1) an account of the famous Persian Šúfi, Abú Sa‘íd ibn Abi 'l-Khayr—dervish, abbot, saint, and reputed poet—drawn from documents singularly rich in detail which shed a rather disillusioning light upon his character; (2) a study of 'Abdu 'l-Karím al-Jíf's treatise entitled al-Insán al-Kámíl or "The Perfect Man," a very curious exposition of the Mohammedan Logos doctrine by a Muhyawf, i.e. one whose modes of thought are derived from Muḥyi’ddin Ibdnu 'l-'Arabi; (3) an essay on the Odes of Ibnu 'l-Fárid, which unite mysticism with poetry of the rarest kind, but are so veiled in allegory that a glimpse of the meaning underneath is sometimes as much as we can obtain.

The present volume is devoted to belles-lettres. Professor Browne's edition of the Lubdhu 'l-Albáb, the anthology compiled by Muhammad 'Awff, gave me an opportunity of trying what could be done with Persian court-poetry. In this field all the flowers are not roses, and the roses are artificial; yet with no disparagement to their beauty, so exquisite is the art. Abu 'l-'Álá al-Ma'arrí was an old friend, whose pessimism made hours of gloom seem cheerful by contrast; and I believed that many would appreciate a version of selected
passages from his *Luzûmiyyd̂t*. English readers have not yet had this work put before them in a recognisable form: they will see that it is not in the least like the "quatrans" which it has inspired. My essay should be read as a supplement to the monograph by Alfred von Kremer in the Proceedings of the Vienna Academy (1889). That, indeed, is worthy of its theme, and one can scarcely imagine that it will ever become obsolete. But with all its brilliancy and charm I doubt whether it does justice to Ma'arrî's genius. Von Kremer seems to have forgotten that poetry is not philosophy and that the *Luzûm* is pre-eminently the work of a literary man. His attention was fixed upon the ideas, consequently he did not examine the language and style with sufficient closeness to detect the subtle manner in which the poet at once disguises and proclaims his unbelief in the Mohammedan or any other revealed religion. I have broken new ground and endeavoured to widen the perspective. However my conclusions may be regarded, they are based on the best evidence, that of the author's writings, though it is avowedly disingenuous. Of the examples in English, including four which Mr Fisher Unwin has given me leave to reprint from my *Literary History of the Arabs* (1907), comparatively few coincide with the pieces chosen by Von Kremer. The appendix containing their text will serve, I hope, as an introduction to Arabic poetry for students who may find the pre-Islamic odes too difficult at first or fail to acquire a taste for them. Concerning the principles and methods which I have followed in translating, the choice of metres, the value of rhyme, etc., a good deal might be said; but as argument about such questions is apt to end in the sort of agreement recommended by Evenus—

\[
\text{σοὶ μὲν τὰῦτα δοκοῦν τ' ἔστω, ἐμοὶ δὲ τάδε—}
\]

it will be enough to say that the verse-translations are not unduly free and should be of use to readers of the original Arabic and Persian. While the mystical poems often need a
commentary, in other cases the aim has been to select typical extracts which for the most part explain themselves.

I cannot send forth this book without some reference to what has helped me to write it. Thirty years have now passed since I began to read Persian with Professor E. G. Browne. Looking back over that period, I recall his constant sympathy, his ever ready encouragement and support, with feelings which are beyond my power to express. By dedicating these Studies to him I would pay tribute to a great Orientalist and more especially acknowledge, in a way that will not displease him, my personal debt of gratitude and affection.

REYNOLD A. NICHOLSON.

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P. 10. I have retained the usual spelling of the name Rūdāqī, but Rūdākī seems to be the correct form, as it rhymes with kūdākī in a verse by Nizāmī 'Arūḍī (Lūdā, vol. II, p. 7, l. 17) and with andākī in a verse by Khāqānī (Jāmī, Bahārīstān, ed. by Schlechta-Wschréd, p. 95, l. 8 foll.).

P. 13. The flower which the Persians call īdla (rendered here and elsewhere by "tulip") is really the red anemone.


P. 56, l. 8 from foot. It ought perhaps to have been mentioned that here the Latin imitation is not quite exact. In the catalectic variety of the ṯawīl metre the third foot of the second hemistich is regularly ~ ~ ~ , and ~ ~ occurs only as a rare exception to the rule. For this reason the "free" (muṭlaq) rhyme should be restored in the poem by Farazdaq printed in Nöldeke's Delectus, pp. 84-6. Perfect metrical correspondence might be obtained by writing in the second line of the Latin version

habet testinomium hoc: grauis uia leti est,
and in the fourth line

priusquam uaces spe gloriamque potitus.

P. 67, No. 24. A comma should be substituted for the full stop at the end of the sixth line.

P. 82, No. 62, first line. Read

"The Imām, he knows—his tenets are not mine—"

P. 85, No. 72, first line. Read "to his sway."

P. 89, note 1. For ḍḍḍ read ḍḍḍ.

P. 104, note 4. For al-Farq bayna 'l-firaq read "Abū Manṣūr 'Abdu 'l-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, al-Farq bayna 'l-firaq."

P. 115, No. 140, II, l. 1-4. These lines evidently allude to an apocryphal Ḥadīth, but I do not remember to have met with it in any work on Ṣūfī asceticism.

Corrections and Additions

attention to a passage in Ibn Jubayr (E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, vol. v. p. 303, 13–20) from which it appears that after mosques had been converted into churches, Moslems might continue to use a part of them. But these are doubtful examples of a practice which, in any case, was exceptional. Probably Ma'arrí is thinking of separate but adjacent buildings.

P. 157, penult. Ḥamdullāh Mustawfī, Ta'rīkh-i Guzida (E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, vol. xiv. p. 10, l. 7 foll.), refers to the doctrine which he says is held by the learned men of India, China, Cathay and Europe, that the creation of Adam took place a million years ago, and that there were several Adams, each speaking a different language, who succeeded one another in turn as the posterity of each died out. Cf. Birūnī, al-Āthāru 'l-bdqiya tr. by Sachau under the title of The Chronology of Ancient Nations (London, 1879), pp. 115–6.

P. 164, No. 238, first line. Read
"No books polemical had been composed."

P. 204, No. 327, third verse. For "Girls are arrows" read
"They are poisons."

P. 214, No. 24, v. 9. Though all the texts, I think, have خبرتلها, the true reading must be خبرتلها, equivalent to خبرتلا.

P. 219, No. 39, v. 4. For سحب read سحب.

P. 263, No. 219, v. 7. For والبخ اشخ(read. بذبل.

P. 264, No. 224, v. 4. For وذبل(read. مذبر.

P. 272, No. 253, v. 1. For مدبر(read. مذبر.
CHAPTER I

AN EARLY PERSIAN ANTHOLOGY

The book entitled *Lubābu 'l-Albāb* has been known to students of Persian literature since 1848, when an account of the Elliot Codex was communicated to the Royal Asiatic Society by Nathaniel Bland. Its importance and rarity—only two, or at most three, manuscripts have survived—marked it out for publication as soon as the long-delayed task of providing critical editions of historical and biographical Persian texts was taken in hand by Professor Browne with the energy and ardour to which Oriental scholarship owes so much; and it is now accessible in two volumes, admirably edited and artistically printed (Leyden, 1903–1906). Concerning the author, Muḥammad 'Awfī, we have little information. His family claimed descent from 'Abdu 'l-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, an illustrious Companion of the Prophet. Born and bred at Bukhārā in the latter half of the twelfth century, 'Awfī became one of those wandering scholars who, obeying the Prophet’s injunction to seek knowledge even in China, travelled from town to town and from court to court, and with nothing but their talents to recommend them played an influential part in Moslem politics and society. When Transoxania and Khurāsān were threatened by the Mongols, he made his way to India, where he served in succession under Sultan Nāṣiru’ddin Qubācha of Sind and his conqueror, Sultan Iltatmish. To the vizier of Iltatmish he dedicated his most famous work, the *Jawāmi’u ’l-Ḥikāyāt*, an immense collection of historical and literary anecdotes.

The *Lubāb* professes to be the first Biography of Persian Poets, but although its form and arrangement justify this

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1 See his article “On the earliest Persian Biography of Poets, by Muhammad 'Awfī, and on some other Works of the class called Tazkīrat-ul-Shuara,” in the ninth volume of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, pp. 111–176.

N.S.
description, the so-called biographies chiefly consist of high-
flown complimentary phrases strung together indiscriminate-
ly, with as little regard for fitness as for truth. Dates are
very rare. In many cases the poet's name is the single fact
that his "Life" yields, and we have reason to be thankful
that the Moslem system of nomenclature often indicates the
town or district to which a man belongs either by birth or
residence. The Lubāb might safely be ignored if its value
depended on the biographical notices written by 'Awfi him-
self. These, however, occupy an inconsiderable amount of
space in relation to the whole text, which is almost entirely
composed of excerpts from the work of about 300 poets.
Essentially, then, the Lubāb is an anthology. It possesses
unique historical importance as the oldest compilation of the
kind in Persian, preserving the names of many ancient poets
who are otherwise unknown, together with a great deal of
verse that is nowhere else to be found. Of its literary merit
lovers of poetry can form some notion from the specimens
which I have translated, though this test is, of course, in-
adequate and must be corrected by reading the original
passages as well as by reference to other portions of the book.
Oriental standards of taste are so deeply at variance with
those which prevail in Europe that we are too ready to con-
demn outright what displeases us instead of trying, not to
reconcile the points of view, but to lay our own aside and
approach the other in a spirit of sympathetic curiosity. This
is the more necessary here because, with few exceptions, the
poets cited in the Lubāb are distinctly minor and unable to
rise above the elaborate conventions of the Persian ars
poetica, which only the breath of genius can inspire with life.
Moreover, in the opinion of an accomplished critic, Mirzā
Muḥammad of Qazwīn—whose introduction and notes to
Professor Browne's edition are a model of patient and fruitful
research—'Awfi has not selected the materials of his antho-
logy to the best advantage.

Formally considered, Persian poetry falls into five main

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1 A more ancient work by Abū Ṭāhir al-Khāṭānī is mentioned by Ḥājjī
Khalīfa, but no copy has yet been discovered.
types, and four of these occur in the *Lubáb*, namely, the *qaşída* or "purpose-poem," which is most often a panegyric but may be satirical, didactic, philosophical, or religious; the *ghazal*, of which the subject is usually love, human or divine; the *qiţ'a* or fragment, which is either a piece of verse detached from a *qaşída* or a poem complete in itself; and the *rubā'ī* or quatrain. The fifth type, which is known by the name of *mathnawi*, includes poems longer than the *qaşída*, such as epics, romances, and expositions of moral or mystical philosophy. Both in form and motive it stands apart from the rest and offers no temptation to the ordinary anthologist.

Before discussing further these various kinds of poetry and showing some of their peculiar characteristics by means of translation, I think it may be well to say a few words on certain matters of historical interest about which the reader will naturally wish to be informed. Let me begin by setting forth 'Awfi's description of the contents of the *Lubáb*. He divides it into twelve chapters, arranged as follows:

I. On the excellence of poetry and the poetic art.
II. On the etymological meaning of *shi'r* (poetry).
III. On the question who was the first poet.
IV. On the question who was the author of the first Persian poem.
V. On the choice poems of Sultans, Kings, and Amírs.
VI. On the choice poems of viziers and eminent statesmen.
VII. On the choice poems of religious leaders, divines, and men of learning.
VIII. On the choice poems of the poets of the House of Šáhir, the House of Layth, and the House of Sámán.
IX. On the poets of the House of Nášir.
X. On the poets of the House of Seljúq, to the end of the reign of Sanjar.
XI. On the poets who flourished in the period extending from the death of Sanjar to the author's time.
XII. On the choice poems of eminent statesmen, poets, and scholars attached to the court of Sultan Náširu’ddín Qubácha.
The introductory chapters need not detain us. As regards the questions propounded in chapters III and IV, 'Awfī is inclined to accept the tradition that the first poet in the world was Adam, who composed an Arabic elegy (two verses of which are quoted) on his son Abel; and he ascribes the first Persian verse to "that great Hunter," King Bahram Gūr. Remembering that 'Awfī was a courtier, we can excuse him for giving royalties and grandees the place of honour in his Anthology, but it tries our patience to read those noble amateurs whom he flatters so cheaply. Of the verse in this section of the book a page or two would hold all that is worth preserving for its own sake or on account of its association with great personages and events. The eighth and following chapters, which are printed in the second volume of Professor Browne's edition, constitute the kernel of the Lubdb. Here we find real bards, men devoted to the art and business of poetry, drawn up, rank on rank, in the chronological order of the dynasties under which they lived: the Tāhirids (A.D. 820–872); the Šaffārīds, descended from Ya‘qūb ibn Layth, the Coppersmith (A.D. 867–903); the Sāmānīds (A.D. 874–999); the Ghaznevids—called "the House of Nāsir" after Nāširu’d din Sabuktīgīn, who founded the dynasty—from the accession of Sultan Maḥmūd to the death of Mas‘ūd, the third sovereign of the line (A.D. 998–1040); and finally the Seljūqs, from Tughril to Sanjar (A.D. 1037–1157), and from Sanjar to the author’s day (about A.D. 1220). Thus the whole period covered by the Lubdb is approximately four hundred years. Opening with the spring-time of Persian poetry which accompanied the movement towards national independence in eastern Īrān, it runs a long and brilliant course ere it closes amidst the gathering darkness of the Mongol invasion.

Since my object is not so much to trace the historical development of this poetry as to illustrate its literary form and substance, the work of individuals will receive less attention than the four principal types which have been enumerated above. I will treat each type separately, taking the simpler first and leaving the qaṣīda, the most artificial and complex, to the end.
The oldest Persian verse-form is probably the *rubā‘i*. It contains four lines, of which the first, second, and fourth must rhyme with one another, while the third may or may not rhyme with the rest. Such an arrangement of rhymes, however, does not exhaust the definition: there must also be a certain metrical scheme. ‘Awfi quotes two couplets by the Táhirid poet, Ḥanzala of Bádghís, which only fail to be a *rubā‘i* because they are not written in one of the metres peculiar to this form:

My sweetheart rue-seed on the fire threw
For fear of harm the evil eye might do.
Rue-seed and fire she needs not, with a face
As bright as fire, a mole as dark as rue.

The *rubā‘i* resembles a short epigram, in the Greek sense of the word, and the best specimens have something of the quality which belongs to the Greek as contrasted with the Latin epigram: simplicity and directness of style, weight rather than wit, terseness without “epigrammatic” point. It was FitzGerald, not Omar Khayyam, who wrote,

For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken’d—Man’s forgiveness give—and take!—

one of many instances in which the English version gives a new turn to the original. The *rubā‘i*, again, is always a complete unit, unrelated to any larger whole. Persian literature furnishes no example of a poem like FitzGerald’s, made up of a number of quatrains. In Persian *Diwâns* we often meet with collections of *rubā‘is*, but each one is absolutely independent, and its place in the series is determined by an external and fortuitous feature, namely, the alphabetical position of the letter that concludes the rhyme. There are no restrictions as to subject-matter. ‘Awfi shows a marked preference for amatory *rubā‘is*, and we may presume that he knew what his readers liked. Among the chosen quatrains many are concerned with criticism of life in general or with topics suggested by a particular incident; others are

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1 *Lubdb*, ii. 2, II.
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descriptive, encomiastic, elegiac, satirical, moral, or religious. Noteworthy, as revealing the limitations of the *Lubāb* and its author, is the fact that the mystical *rubā'i*—and, I may add, mystical poetry of any kind—is scarcely represented at all. One must go elsewhere to learn how beautiful is the literature in which the deepest aspirations of Persian thought have expressed themselves.

I will now give some examples. The first two are by Abu 'l-Hasan Talha, of whose poetry the greater part belonged to this *genre*. Skill in composing quatrains might make a poet celebrated, even if his more ambitious performances fell flat.¹

My heart that rested calm and free from care
Rose up when love of thee alighted there;
The hand that loosed the bonds of Fate and Time
Thy curl hath bound it with a single hair.²

O well of honey! Yestereve thy sight
Gladdened this heart that cries for thee to-night.
'Tis a thing unimaginable, the tale
Of to-night's anguish, yestereve's delight.³

For thy love's sake I bled, and still implored in vain;
To patience then I fled, and still endured in vain.
There's no device on earth a desperate man can use
But I have used against thee, O Adored, in vain.⁴

(Táju’ddin Ismá’īl al-Bákharzí.)

Why do I hope, with empty words cajoled,
Since I nor head nor tail in it behold?
Guess by the Past what this New Year shall bring:
The New Year—and ten thousand sorrows old!⁵

(Táju’ddin Ismá’īl al-Bákharzí.)

Her beauty fills mine eye, and well must I agree
With mine own eye which holds my Sweetheart lovingly.
'Twixt eye and Sweetheart no right difference can be:
Either She takes eye's place, or eye is very She.⁶

(Rashídí of Samarcand.)

¹ *Lubāb*, II. 336, 7 foll.
⁶ *Ibid.*, II. 180, 16. This quatrain may be understood in a mystical sense.
Ah, my much love of thee hath laid me low,
Grief for thine absence bows me like a bow.
I have washed my hands of all thy tricks and wiles;
Lives there another who would treat me so?\(^1\)

(Abú Shukúr.)

The following rubá‘t is evidently mystical.

Soul of the World, to Thee I turn again
With bleeding heart, and bring Thee all my pain.
Myself behind, before me need and woe,
And love still waxing—never may it wane!\(^2\)

(Raff’ of Merv.)

When from her house the soul sets forth to climb
And hastens back to her eternal prime,
The four strings Nature fitted on Life’s lute
Disorder’d break at the rude touch of Time\(^3\).

(Badí’u’ddín Turkú al-Sanjari.)

Long have I known the world and read its rede
In both extremes of fortune. ’Tis my creed,
Than wealth there’s nothing better, next to faith,
As, next to unfaith, nothing worse than need\(^4\).

(Abú Zurá’á of Jurján.)

Here are two quatrains which have a topical character.
The first was composed by Rashídí of Samarcand, a pane-
gyrst of Sultan Maliksháh.

Heav’n, which delight’st with contumely to brand
The wisest, how long will thy doomful hand
Plunge me in sadness? Oh, where shall I seek
The wind that blows me to sweet Samarcand?\(^5\)

‘Awfi relates that once he was in the company of a certain
noble named Táju’ddín. A melon was brought in. Whilst
Táju’ddín was helping himself to a slice, the knife slipped and

\(^1\) *Lubdub*, ii. 21, 21.
\(^3\) *Ibid.* ii. 351, 17. “The four strings” are the four elements from which all compound bodies—mineral, vegetable, and animal—are produced.
cut his finger. The poet Sa’du’ddin Mas’úd Dawlatyar improvised this rubd’i:

Thy might o’ertops high Saturn’s majesty,
Thy bounty’s wine makes avarice drunk with glee.
Heav’n, plotting so that thou shouldst lavish less,
Closed one full channel of thy fivefold sea.

The qīṭ’a (fragment) is properly a subdivision of the qaṣīda, i.e. it consists of a number of verses removed from their context in the qaṣīda of which they formed a part. Such excerpts have no claim to be treated as an independent poetical type. But the name is also given to any poem, complete in itself, that follows the qaṣīda pattern in respect of the monorhyme (which characterises all types of Persian verse except the mathnawi), and cannot be classified either as a rubd’i or a ghazal, or included among the verse-forms of less importance. To the qīṭ’a, thus defined, all that has been said above concerning the varied subject-matter of the rubd’i is applicable, but the former, not being so narrowly restricted in length, affords larger opportunities both in the choice of a theme and in the way of handling it. More unconventional and spontaneous than the qaṣīda and ghazal, this type comes nearer to our ideal of poetry. The difference appears most conspicuously in the oldest Persian verse produced under the Tāhirids and their immediate successors. Of this only fragments survive, but they are enough to show that the first poets had not learned to use the style overloaded with ingenious rhetorical artifices, which makes the Lubāb such a tiresome book to read. Their language is generally plain and unaffected; in some pieces its simplicity is almost artless—

The cloud is weeping lover-like,
The garden smiling as a bride;
The thunder moaning, even as I
Make bitter moan at morningtide. (Shahid of Balkh.)

1 Lubāb, II. 388, 15.
2 This is not strictly accurate, if “fragment” is taken in its technical sense. The eighth chapter of the Lubāb contains one complete qaṣīda as well as a few ghazals and rubd’is. All the remaining poems are qīṭ’as.
3 Lubāb, II. 4. 13.
The conceits in which the earliest poetry abounds are often so delicate and charming that it would be ungracious to accuse them of triviality. Besides, the criticism would not be just. Is anything really trivial that possesses artistic beauty? Ought we to despise Herrick's

Some ask'd me where the rubies grew,  
And nothing did I say,  
But with my finger pointed to  
The lips of Julia,

because it is only a pretty fancy? Those who are superior to such things will take no more interest in 'Awff's anthology than in the Lyra Elegantiarum. In order that my readers may obtain a fair view of the first sprightly runnings of Persian lyric verse, I will depart for the moment from the plan adopted in this essay and try to render into English some representative examples which were composed during the ninth and tenth centuries (A.D. 826-999).

First, a few fragments on the subject of wine.

Choice wine, whose bitter strength can sweeten best  
The embittered mind, and flood  
The air with colour, as when goshawk's breast  
Is dyed with pheasant's blood.  
(Daqíqí.)

A composite whose body is of light,  
But all its soul and spirit of fiery strain;  
A star that hath its setting in the mouth,  
But ever rises on the cheeks again.  
(Daqíqí.)

Pour, boy, the vintage out  
That oft my grief consoled,  
That gushes from the flask  
In new moon's crescent mould,  
But in the cup appears  
The moon a fortnight old.  
(Ábú Shukúr.)

1 *Lubdób*, II. 13, 7.  
Fetch me what first was like the eye, then came
The vine-grower and seized its soul aflame.
Let one drop trickle down to earth and roll,
'Twould seem the blind man's eye, the dead man's soul.

(Abú Shukúr.)

Fire and water blent in one,
'Twere a sight thou wouldst admire!
Lo, the miracle is done:
Yonder crystal cup, where gleams
Wine of purest ruby, seems
Water interfused with fire.

('Umára of Merv.)

The next piece is by the blind minstrel Rúdagí, the most famous poet of the Sámánid epoch.

Rúdagí the harp will play,
'Gin ye the wine, as he the lay.
Molten ruby or ruby wine,
None who sees it may divine,
Since Nature of one stuff did shape
The solid gem, the liquid grape.
Untouched, it stains the fingers red;
Untasted, flies into the head.

The following lines are less ancient, but were composed before A.D. 1050.

They drank of wine so pure and old,
Its body seemed to be ensouled;
And through them flowed that essence fine,
As fire bright through coal doth shine.

(Halíla.)

My last specimen of the wine-song is longer and more elaborate than any of these, and also differs from them all in having originally been the prelude of a qasída, as is shown by the double rhyme of the opening verse. The author, Kisá'í of Merv, was a well-known and singularly graceful poet who

1 Lubdb, ii. 21, 10.
2 Ibid. ii. 25, 4.
3 Ibid. ii. 8, 17.
4 Ibid. ii. 65, 19.
flourished in the latter half of the tenth century. I have attempted to imitate the muḍārī' metre in which the fragment is written.

Unclose thine eyes and deeply gaze on the saffron-flower
Shining amidst the grass-blades, a very pearl in sheen,
Even as a shamefaced lover, to hide his blushing cheeks,
Draws to his face the mantle in folds of satin green.

The wine thro' darting sunbeams how sweet and fair to see!
But oh, when falls reflected therein the radiant shower,
The blue glass and red vintage and golden-yellow rays
Are violet, you'd fancy, and poppy and saffron-flower.

So bright 'tis, when it trickles down from the goblet's mouth,
You'd say from pearls is trickling cornelian red and fine;
So clear 'tis, when you pour it in the hollow of your palm,
Nor palm from cup you ever would know, nor cup from wine.

The same freshness and easy grace of style appears in the poems descriptive of love and beauty which have come down to us from that early time. Some of those translated below are properly ghazals, not qit'as.

O would that in the world there were no night,
That I might ne'er be parted from her lips!
No scorpion-sting would sink deep in my heart
But for her scorpion coils of darkest hair.
If 'neath her lip no starry dimple shone,
I would not linger with the stars till day;
And if she were not cast in beauty's mould,
My soul would not be moulded of her love.
If I must live without my Well-belov'd,
O God! I would there were no life for me.

(Daqiqi.)

Abú Shu'ayb of Herát wrote the following verses on a Christian boy.

1 The shanbalid is identified with fenugreek—a species of clover—or with meadow saffron (Colchicum autumnale). According to Ibnu 'l-Baytár, it is one of the first spring flowers.
2 Lubdd, II. 34, 20.
3 Ibid. II. 12, 11.
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Faith-doomed to Hell, his form and face of Paradise,
With fawn's eyes, curly tresses, tulip cheeks.
A lip as when from Chinese painter's brush
O'er vermeil oozes the long silver line.
Should he bestow his beauty on the Ethiop,
The Ethiop would be envied by the Turk.  

The tulips of thy cheek, when thou unveil'st,
Abash the Sun: behind the veil he hies.
If the apple hath a mole of musky grain,
That chin of thine's an apple every wise.

(Rúdagí.)

Here are three couplets from a ghazal composed by Júybáří, a poet of Bukhárá, who was a goldsmith and expert in his craft. The original metre is imitated.

That idol fair, whose kisses
Alas, she still denies me
Now I, for love's sake weeping,
'Tis well: the cloud of April
At dawn above the garden
Emparadised with roses

Those jet curls clustered on her silver brow—
A swarm of negroes Baghdádí plundering!
That cheek on which falls rippling one black tress,
You'd say 'tis fire fanned by raven's wing.

(Muḥammad ibn Śáliḥ al-Wálwálájí.)

Those curls the wind is tossing to and fro
Are like a restless lover; nay, the hand
Of warring Emperor's chamberlain that waves
From the far tent, "To-day no audience here!"

(Khábábí of Níshápúr.)

Beauty's queen by lovers guarded,
You whose cheeks the moon doth glass,
Where you glance, narcissus blooming;
The moon rising, where you pass!

1 Lubdá, ii. 5, 19.  2 Ibid. ii. 8, 9.  3 Ibid. ii. ii, 10.
4 Ibid. ii. 22, 15.  5 Ibid. ii. 27, 19.
Oh, your face and hair—the fairest
Book of white and black is this!
Cheek and tress are sin and penance,
Lip and eye are bale and bliss.  (Kisá’í.)

The objective and pictorial character which the reader will doubtless have remarked in the poems inspired by love and wine is still more conspicuous in the pieces describing Nature. Seldom in either case do we find any intimacy of passion, any depth of moral or spiritual emotion. These lyrics express the keen sensuous feeling of the poet, his joy in visible and material things and his grief at their loss, but they express it objectively so far as the feeling itself becomes subordinate to the fanciful imagery in which it is clothed. Many of the poems on spring and the beauty of spring flowers are little idylls, exquisite of their kind. I will first quote two descriptions of stormy weather about the time of the Persian New Year.

The world with snow was silvered for a season,
But emerald came instead of the heaps of silver.
The rich pagoda of Cashmere at springtide
Surrendered to the garden all its pictures.
See how the lake’s whole surface by the March wind
Is raised, like sturgeon’s back, in scaly ridges!  

(‘Umára of Merv.)

Lashed by gusts the leafy willows
Are as drunkards reeling headlong.
Watch the crimson tulips waving
Bloodied sword-points in the dawn!

(‘Umára of Merv.)

Of all the innumerable tributes which Persian poets have offered to the rose, I know of none so charming as these lines by Kisá’í:

Roses are a gift of price
Sent to us from Paradise;
More divine our nature grows
In the Eden of the rose.

1 Lubdb, ii. 37, 19.  2 Ibid. ii. 24, 21.  3 Ibid. ii. 25, 17.
Roses why for silver sell?
O rose-merchant, fairly tell
What you buy instead of those
That is costlier than the rose¹.

Here are two fragments:

See the rose, its pearly whiteness
Overblushed with pure cornelian,
Like the wedding-day of lovers
Sleeping, cheek on cheek laid softly².

(Manjik.)

Behold the red rose, not yet fully blown—
A dainty fondling worshipping her idol,
Or like the loved one's lips, red, small, and close
When she looks up to meet her lover's kiss³.

(Kawkabi of Merv.)

Even in their laudatory verses the diction of these poets is plain and direct. Being Persians and courtiers, they do not measure their compliments by the merit of their patrons, but if they are not sincere, they at least seem so—an illusion which is no longer possible when the art of exaggeration has hardened into an obviously rhetorical exercise. The following lines by Fadıl ibn 'Abbás al-Rabinjání lament the death of the Sámání prince, Naṣr ibn Aḥmad, and celebrate the accession of Nūḥ ibn Maṇşūr.

A prince hath passed of noble race,
A prince high-born hath ta'en his place.
Time mourns for him that passed away,
For him that's crowned the world is gay.
Look now with reason's eye and tell
How just is God in what befell!
For if one Light from us He reft,
Another in its place He left;
If Saturn rose with baleful power,
Yet soon returned Jove's gracious hour⁴.

¹ Lubdb, II. 35, 24. ² Ibid. II. 14, 24. ³ Ibid. II. 65, 13. ⁴ Ibid. II. 9, 22.
The next examples take a more personal tone and are marked by greater finish of style.

To ward the kingdom, Fortune took thy sword,
And Bounty chose thy hand, herself to ward.
In Heav'n for thy decree Fate listening stands,
The dínár\(^1\) from its ore sets out to win thy hands\(^2\).

(Daqíqí.)

Tho' such thine art to paint and skill to sing,
That none but thee should dare lift up his head,
Thy proper qualities thou canst not sing,
The portrait of thyself thou canst not paint\(^3\).

(Kisá'í.)

Firdawsí extols the munificence and bravery of Sultan Maḥmúd in four lines which are worth many bombastic qasídas:

I see thou holdest cheap two things
That are held dear by other kings:
Gold, when thy head doth wear the crown;
Life, when thou putt'st the helmet on\(^4\).

The following qiṭ'as belong to different periods and illustrate the wide range of subject permitted to poems of this type.

Besides the few lines which I have just quoted, the only specimen preserved by 'Awfí of Firdawsí's lyrical verse is a fragment in which the aged poet looks back upon long years of ill-rewarded toil when he was engaged in gathering materials for his Sháhñáma.

Much have I laboured, much read o'er
Of Arabic and Persian lore,
Collecting tales unknown and known;
Now two and sixty years are flown.
Regret, and deeper woe of sin,
'Tis all that youth has ended in,
And I with mournful thoughts rehearse
Bú Ṭáhir Khusrawání's verse:
"I mind me of my youth and sigh,
Alas for youth, for youth gone by!"\(^5\)

\(^1\) The Arabicised form of denarius.
\(^2\) Ibid. ii. 11, 22.
\(^3\) Ibid. ii. 33, 15.
\(^4\) Ibid. ii. 33, 12.
\(^5\) Ibid. ii. 37, 16.
Many qit'as are what the French call *vers d'occasion* in the sense that their subject or motive is supplied by some circumstance of passing interest. The poet Farrukhī, a contemporary of Firdawṣī at the court of Ghazna, having amassed a large fortune, set out on a pleasure-trip to Samarcand. He had nearly reached his journey's end when he was attacked by brigands, who carried off the whole of his wealth. Being penniless and without resources, he did not venture to show himself in Samarcand, and after a few days returned home, leaving as a memorial of his visit the following lines:

Before me lay the riches  
Of lordly Samarcand,  
I looked o'er grove and garden,  
O'er vale and meadow-land.

But since my purse was empty,  
My pocket bare as thread,  
The rug of joy I folded,  
From the hall of hope I fled.

I had heard in every city  
Famed scholars oft declare,  
"Eight are the Paradises,  
And but one Kawthar there."¹

Here bloom a thousand Edens,  
A thousand Kawthars foam,  
But ah me! what avail they,  
Since I go thirsty home?

When hand a dirhem lacketh  
Whilst eye sees all its wish,  
'Tis like a head dissevered  
Within a golden dish².

Although in his earlier poems Farrukhī cultivated a subtle and artificial style, he finally sought and attained the ease that "comes by art, not chance"; and this manner of writing (*sahli mumtani*) distinguishes the pieces by which he is

¹ Kawthar is the name of a river in Paradise, "whiter than milk and sweeter than honey."
² *Lusdb*, II. 48, 1.
represented in the *Lubāb*. Here is the prelude of a qaṣīda addressed to Sultan Maḥmūd:

I said, "O Sun of beauty, kiss me thrice!"
Said she, "The sun in this world no lips touch."
I said, "A new world for a kiss! Too much."
Said she, "Thou canst not cheapen Paradise."
Said I, "Thy stature tall hath bended me."
"The arrow companies the bow," said she.
"Dew of mine eyes hath freshed thy face," I said.
Said she, "Water keeps gardens fresh and fine."
I said, "On thy bright cheek shall I lay mine?"
Said she, "No, no: thy yellow will dull my red."
Said I, "Thine absence, Dear, hath agèd me."
"Grow young in service of the King," said she.

The author of the next two pieces is Anwari, the most renowned of the Seljūq court-poets, who died *circa* A.D. 1190.

O mighty Prince, whose majesty sublime
Scarce deigns to mount the piebald steed of Time;
Whose judgment hits the mark of empire high,
As 'twere an arrow quivered in the Sky—
To-day hath Heav'n arrayed his cloudy throne,
The wind shoots keener shafts than Árish's own;
On every mountain-angle snowflakes star
The landscape, like a jewelled scimitar.

And I have graced my song, as well I may,
With the sweet prelude of another's lay.
For whose' er of such a day hath sight,
(Now chiefly when the tangled locks of Night
Fall thickest) to his mind will come the line,
"To-day's the day for tent and fire and wine." 4
The Nine Spheres' influence keep thee safe and fast,
While the Four Elements and Six Directions last! 5

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1 The hue of "pale passion" in the East.
2 *Lubāb*, II. 49, 13. Three verses are omitted in the translation.
3 Árish was a Persian knight renowned for his skill with the bow.
4 I have not been able to discover the author of this line.
5 *Lubāb*, II. 137, 10.
Anwari does not disguise his contempt for the art of poetry as practised by the professional *qasida*-writers amongst whom he had reluctantly enrolled himself. It was a choice of evils, and he resolved to be a rich poet rather than a poor scholar. Towards the end of his life, however, as the following lines testify, he shook off the galling and debasing fetters to which long years of court-patronage had not inured him, and found happiness where his own tastes pointed it out—in solitude, and quiet study,

*secretum iter et fallentis semita vitae.*

Yesterday a dear one asked me, "Will you sing of love again?" Nay, I have done with poetising, fallen from my hand the pen. Long in error's way I chanted lofty praise and satire stern, Now those days are gone behind me—vanished never to return. Love-lay, panegyric, satire, I was making all the three—Why? Because lust, greed, and anger dwelt unitedly in me: Lust the livelong night tormenting evermore my sleepless brain To describe a ringlet's crescent and a lip like sugar-cane; Greed all day in tribulation pondering o'er a scrap of verse Where, from whom, and how five dirhems might be coaxed into my purse; Anger, like a wounded mongrel, solace for his smart would fetch, Tooth and claw in sullen fury turning on some weaker wretch. Since the grace of God Almighty shown unto His helpless thrall Hath unchained me from those harpies—so may He release you all!—

Love-lay, panegyric, satire shall I make now? Heav'n forfend! I have wronged enough already soul and mind: 'tis time to mend. Anwari, beware of boasting!—Honour lays on that a ban— But when once thy word is plighted, see thou keep it like a man. From the busy world retired dwell and seek the way that saves! Very soon the last goes o'er thee of thy life-tide's ebbing waves\(^1\).

When Anwari condemns "boasting" as ungentlemanly, he means, of course, loud and vain words promising deeds that are never performed. Amongst Moslems, boasting of another sort is a traditional prerogative of the poet, handed

\(^{1}\) *Lubbd*, II. 136, 14.
down from pre-Islamic days when the Bedouin bards in glorifying themselves did honour to the tribe of which they were the foremost champions and spokesmen. Persian fakhr has no such narrow but intense background of patriotism to relieve its extravagance: it is frankly personal, as in the shorter of the two specimens translated below, which was composed by a minstrel of the Sámanid age, while in the minor poets of the succeeding periods it is often distinguished from vulgar self-advertisement only by its literary flavour and the fantastic heights of hyperbole to which it soars.

When silver they ask of me, gold I fling;
The power of my song, when they bid me sing,
Makes wax of stubborn steel.
When the wind's abroad, with the wind I roam:
Now with cup and lute I leave my home,
Now armed from head to heel.

(Abú Zurá'a of Jurján.)

The following version retains the monorhyme:

I am he who bore the flag of knowledge through the universe,
From the Pleiads' angle down to Earth's deep centre, everywhere.
With my strength of understanding Mars himself in vain would cope;
Matched with my keen flame of wit the Sun's own rays are dull and rare.
Monarchs boast that I have sung for them and praised them in my song,
Schoolmen vow my lore and learning is a model past compare.
Robed in loveliness at all times is my genius, like the sky;
Pure and undefiled my poesy at all times, like the air.
Of my genius evidence enow my style and diction bring,
To my poesy an ample witness my ideas bear.

('Abdu 'l-Wási' of Jabal.)

This qit'a by Rúhí shows that a reputation for satirical pleasantry might be embarrassing to its owner.

1 Lubdb, ii. 10, 13.
2 Ibid. ii. 108, 13.
To-day, when like a donkey from his meal
Driv’n off, I know what Fortune’s outcasts feel,
Some evil-minded and suspicious men
Call satire every eulogy I pen.
If I but breathe a prayer to God on high,
“This fellow is reviling us,” they cry.

Abū Ṭāhir al-Khusrawání, one of whose verses had the luck to be quoted in a poem of Firdawsí, said in the course of a qaṣīda composed when he was suffering from a mortal disease:

I baffled four professions; in despair
They left me, and I see no symptom yet
Of cure by doctor’s drug, ascetic’s prayer,
Stargazer’s fortune, sorcerer’s amulet.

During the middle Seljúq period the people of Tirmidh groaned under the oppression inflicted on them by a tyrannous governor, named Akhti; and as ‘Awfī puts it, “so many pregnant sighs ascended to Heaven that at last the angels charged themselves with the task of fulfilling the prayers of his victims.” One day, while carousing, he swallowed a deep draught of wine, some of which “stuck in his throat” and choked him to death. The poet Adīb-i Ṣābir wrote this qiṭ'a by way of epitaph:

Straight from the feast, Akhti, you went to Hell—
A hundred thousand blessings light upon that day of revel!
Since you departed, all the world is well.
May God have mercy on your death, tho’ you are with the Devil!

Most of the elegiac pieces in ‘Awfī’s collection seem to us superficial in feeling and undignified in expression. We find it hard to imagine that true affection and tender sorrow can indulge in pretty (and even witty) conceits, but there have been epochs in English literature when this combination did not appear so incongruous as it does now. If we remember that contemporary taste allowed Donne to conclude his “Elegy on the Lord C.” with the couplet:

1 Lubāb, II. 166, 2. 2 Ibid. II. 20, 15. 3 Ibid. II. 123, 20.
Here needs no marble tomb, since he is gone;  
He, and about him his, are turn’d to stone—  
we shall be less disposed to ridicule Kisá’í for writing on the  
death of a certain notable of Merv:  

I know not what strange hap thy funeral was,  
That bathed bright eyes in dew, torn cheeks in blood.  
All Merv became a Flood of tears for thee,  
Thy coffin was the Ark upon the Flood.

Adíb-i Šábir, who has been mentioned above, wrote the  
following elegy on his mistress. The English rendering  
imitates the Persian monorhyme.  
My sweetheart went to yonder world, to see amongst the houris  
there  
If she might find for loveliness her parallel in yonder world.  
Rižwán unbarr’d the gate for her, because her hair’s dark violet  
And bosom’s jessamine adorned no damozel in yonder world.  
How all the pains and agonies of earth and heaven do load my  
heart,  
Since I am lingering here, but she is gone to dwell in yonder  
world!

Beside this piece may be set the lines attributed to Sultan  
Mahmúd of Ghazna on the death of a slave-girl to whom he  
was fondly attached.  

O Moon! since thou in earth entombed dost lie,  
I love earth more than sky.  
“Patience!” to my despairing heart I said,  
“God’s fate is justly sped.  
Of earth was Adam; and his children all  
Return, like him, to their original.”

Rúdagi’s lament for the poet Abu ’l-Hasan Murádí of  
Bukhárá, which is among the first elegies written in Persian,  
has an austere dignity of its own.

1 Lubdb, ii. 34, 15.  
2 Ibid. ii. 124, 9.  
3 Ibid. i. 24, 23.
Murádí dead!—meseems, he hath not died;  
The death of such a Master is no light thing. 
His dear soul to the Father he gave back, 
To the Mother his dark body he resigned¹.

Unlike the qiṭ'a, which lends itself to every conceivable topic and occasion, the ghazal is pre-eminently, though not exclusively, consecrated to Love. Shorter than the qaṣida, but otherwise resembling it in form, it differs from it—and from the qiṭ'a also—in having less continuity and a looser connexion of ideas. The treatment of the subject is extremely conventional, and there are other features which not only make the ghazal unpleasing to modern taste but force the translator either to select with caution or run the risk of shocking his readers. We meet with the same difficulty in Greek literature: it will be enough to recall the names of Plato and Strato. As regards Persian poetry, this aspect of love is prominent in the lyrics, while in epic and romantic verse the normal relations of men and women are depicted. Many ghazals contain nothing to indicate the sex of the person addressed, an ambiguity which is favoured by the fact that Persian has no grammatical gender; and even when it is certain that the charms of a youth are celebrated, as in the first of the following specimens, one can scarcely feel the subject to be offensive, so fanciful and remote from actuality is the style.

¹ Lubd, n. 8, 3. These lines are imitated by Jalálud-dín Rúmí in his ode on the death of Sáná'í, beginning:

Quoth some one, “Master Sáná'í is dead.”

The death of such a Master is no little thing.

See text and translation in my Selected Poems from the Diwdn-i Shams-i Tabrīz, No. xxii. p. 86. Jalálud-dín’s version of Rúdagi’s second couplet is,

The earthly frame he flung to earth, 
Soul and intellect he bore to heaven.

According to the theory of Moslem natural philosophers, it is the influence of the Planets (the Seven Fathers) acting upon the Elements (the Four Mothers) that produces the ever changing forms of life in the sublunary world. By the metaphysicians, however, this function is assigned to the Active Intelligence (intellectus agens, the φῶς πνευμικὸς of Aristotle), which is probably “the Father” in Rúdagi’s verse.
O thou whose cheeks are the Pleiades and whose lips are coral,
Thy Pleiades are the torment of the heart, thy coral is the food of
the soul.
In chase of those Pleiades my back hath become like the sky¹;
For love of that coral my eyes have become like the sea.

Methinks, thy down is a smoke thro’ which are seen rose-leaves,
Methinks, thy tresses are a cloud in which is hidden the sun—
A smoke that hath set my stack on fire,
A cloud that hath loosed from mine eyes the rain.

Thine eye, by wounding my heart, hath made me helpless;
Thy tress, by ravishing my soul, hath made me distraught.
If thine eye pierces my heart, ’tis right, for thou art my sweet-
heart;
And if thy tress ravishes my soul, ’tis fair, for thou art my soul’s
desire.

In peace, the banquet-hall without thy countenance is not
lighted;
In war, the battle-field without thy stature is not arrayed.
The banquet-hall without thy countenance is the sky without the
moon;
The battle-field without thy stature is the garden without the
cypress.

My body is in pain from thine eye full of enchantments,
My heart is in sorrow from thy tresses full of guile—
A pain that thy sight turns in a moment to pleasure,
A sorrow that thy speech turns in an instant to joy.

Thy face is a tulip for delicacy and pinkness,
Thy teeth are pearls for brightness and purity.
I never heard of pearls in honey-laden coral,
I never heard of tulips amidst musk-shedding hyacinths².

(Mu’izzî.)

Since Mu’izzî, who died about 1150, was an original
writer and seems entitled to the distinction of having first
developed the characteristic Persici apparatus of court-

¹ I.e. curved.
² Lubdb, II. 70, 14. “Musk-shedding hyacinths,” i.e. dark fragrant locks.
poetry, I will translate another ghazal by him, reproducing
the metre as far as is possible in English.

If my Belov'd—fair picture!—
My passion's grief and sorrow
And if her glance tale-telling
From all the world my secret
'Twould seem as though I dwelt in
If now and then my Sweetheart
O that my food were made of
That o'er her in requital
And O that she would never
That with her cheeks my banquet
deigned but to look upon me,
were not so sore a burden;
 had not revealed her secret,
would have been hidden always.
a Paradise of gladness,
along the road were passing.
her lips' twin rubies only,
mine eye might shed its rubies!
my banquet leave behind her,
might glow like beds of tulips!¹

These poems, with their naive parallelisms and decorative
metaphors, have an elegance and ease of expression that
deserve to be admired. But though Persian amatory verse
is seldom deficient in beauty of form, those who are most
familiar with it will confess that, as a whole, it suggests "the
little emptiness of love" rather than la grande passion. There
are important exceptions, e.g., the semi-mystical odes in
which Love has become a religion and the worship of human
beauty is subtly mingled with raptures of divine enthusiasm.
In the Lubāb, however, this high note is only heard at long
intervals, and then imperfectly. The fashionable love-lyric
runs in a narrow mould which very few Moslem poets have
dared to break. Like medieval Minnesong, it is artificial and
monotonous in phrase, and its sentiment (which may be quite
genuine) leaves us unmoved. I do not think it is chance that
the following lines—an almost unique outburst of passionate
feeling—were written by a woman, Rābi'ā, the daughter of
Ka'b.

This is my curse on thee. God send thou love
One like thyself, unkind and obdurate,
That knowing Love's deep cautery thou mayst writhe
In loneliness, and know my worth too late!²

Rābi'ā was nicknamed "the Brazen Fly"—a phrase
which occurs in one of her poems. An accomplished hetaera,

¹ Lubāb, II. 74, 6.
² Ibid. II. 62, 14.
docta sermones utriusque linguae, she wrote verse in Arabic as well as in Persian.

I will now translate a few short ghazals by different hands. They have been chosen for their simplicity and comparative lack of rhetorical ornaments.

All busy selfishness from mind I banished
When first I played with thee in love's sweet strife;
Ready was I and ripe for death the instant
I clasped thee to my bosom close as life.
Oh, many a night I threatened thee with parting,
But when day came I fell in love once more.
In vain I pleaded, for thou wouldst not listen;
I found thee deaf and ran towards the door.
The tree of bliss I planted in love's garden,
The fruit it bore was absence and regret.
Have I forgotten thee, as thou pretendest?
Nay, 'tis most false. God knows if I forget!

(Samá'í of Merv.)

My sweetheart keeps not any touch of kindness,
The only craft she knows is—to be cruel.
Her beauteous face, you dare not look upon it;
Scornful she moves away, a stately cypress.
When I speak words of love, she makes no answer:
All her delight is holy vows and prayers.
Oh, what a smiling aspect wears the lover
Who courts a mistress, not a sainted vestal!
Buy with my soul a kiss from her I will not,
And well I know she is not fond of giving.
Her kisses must be bought with very life-blood,
She hath no kisses that are purchased cheaply.

(Samá'í of Merv.)

Until I know my Fair is mine,
My budded hopes will never bloom,
For I must languish and repine
Till she into my arms is come.

1 Reading گمشته for گمشته and بَرُ گرفتنم for بر گرفتنم.
2 Lubdb, ii. 145, 14.
3 Ibid. ii. 145, 21.
Until I catch her restless curl,
My fevered heart will never rest,
And life is but a dead leaf’s twirl
Till close I hold her to my breast.

For thy sake life and youth were dear;
Now, without thee, I wish them gone.
The day I dreamed should send thee here,
Alas! that day will never dawn1.

(Táju’ddin Ismá’il al-Bákhari.)

Thou who didst leave thy lover most innocent forsaken,
From thee despite I suffer, friends eye me with suspicion.
If 'tis a crime to love thee, that crime have I committed;
Yet for this cause no lover, I trow, was e'er forsaken.
The crime that was thy doing I took upon my shoulders,
In vain I strove and struggled—what helps a thing down-trodden?
Thou keep'st me late and early in mourning for thine absence2,
Mine eyes with blood bedabbled, my raiment torn to pieces.
To hear against thy lover the words of those who hate him,
Oh, 'tis a crime notorious in gentlefolk's opinion3.

(Sayfí of Nishápúr.)

O thou by whose fair face my life is led,
One day with thee is joy that never dies.
Without thy favour no desire is fed,
Without thy beauty no delight can rise.
Thy face forgetting, if one breath I take,
That breath I count not of my life a part.
Thine absence wrings my inmost heart with ache,
O joy and health and ache of my inmost heart!
Say once, "My lover is my slave," that Fame
May know me when thou call'st me by this name!4

(Raff' of Merv.)

The roses of thy cheeks at last will fade and languish,
At last this lovelorn heart will throb no more in anguish.
Why buildest thou so much on fortune's passing favour?
Ere long thy sun will set and disappear for ever.

1 Lubdb, ii. 156, 20.  
2 Reading دارايم for دارايم.  
3 Lubdb, ii. 160, 1.  
4 Ibid. ii. 162, 15.
An Early Persian Anthology

Thy beauty and my love—the love thou art still disdaining—
In the glinting of an eye they leave no trace remaining.
Deal not in wounds nor drive a busy trade of sorrow!
Thy mart is thronged to-day, but few will come to-morrow.

(Raffi' of Merv.)

The following ghazal is purely mystical. Its author, Fakhru'ddin Mas'údí of Merv, was not a professional poet, but a famous scholar and theologian. His biography, therefore, belongs to the first volume of the Lubáš, but 'Awwá having inadvertently omitted it in its proper place has inserted it in the second part of his work.

Deep in the desert of Thy love uncrossed
Wander like me a thousand wretches lost.
Love to their anguish myriad guises lends,
Anguish their souls in myriad pieces rends.
Thy beauty is the medicine of their care,
Union with Thee their hope that kills despair.
Unless with loving hand Thou lead them on,
Their souls will go the way their hearts have gone.
Where Thou art throned above our human fate,
Fraud and religion bear an equal rate;
Milk of Thy grace the wise old man, world-soiled,
Tastes and becomes again a new-born child.

The qašída is the consummate type of Persian court-poetry, and in accordance with that definition its primary motive is praise, which might more accurately be termed flattery, of the great. Since no bard who knew his business could afford to economise in compliments, the qašída is generally a long poem, ranging from twenty or thirty to well over a hundred couplets.

Whatever metre be chosen, the rhyme-system is invariable. The opening couplet always has two rhymes, one in each hemistich, and the same rhyme is repeated at the end of every succeeding couplet until the poem is finished. To write a full-length qašída under such conditions, without

1 Lubáš, II. 162, 21.
2 Reading بیهار for بیهار.
3 Lubáš, II. 164, 4.

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injuring the artistic effect, demands great skill; in English, where rhymes are much scarcer, it could not be done except as a *tour de force*. For the sake of those who do not read Persian I translate a few couplets in order to show how the exordium of a *qasīda* is rhymed.

O heart, bring the good news! She I love best is coming.  
O eye, prepare the lodging, for thy guest is coming.  
O body, though love hath brought thee to thy latest breath,  
Yet forward send thy soul! She of thy quest is coming.  
Now once again make merry with new glee: the end  
Of absence long that burns the aching breast is coming.

The days of grief and woe and anguish—all are past;  
The hour of peace and joy and balmful rest is coming¹.

Here each couplet (there are fifteen in the original) ends with the words *hamī rasad*, "is coming," which constitute what is called the *radīf*, while the rhyme proper is formed by the syllable immediately preceding it.

I have said that the *qasīda* is properly a panegyric; and this statement, though by no means of universal application, holds good in regard to most of the *qasidas* quoted in the *Lubāb*. If they had contained nothing else than flattery of kings and nobles, they would have been insufferably tedious to us, and perhaps even to those eminent persons whose munificence they were designed to stimulate. Sa'di, in the *Galistán*², tells a story about some dervishes with whom he consorted. They enjoyed a regular allowance from a certain grandee, but in consequence of an act committed by one of them he withdrew his patronage. Sa'di resolved to intercede on his friends' behalf. He paid a visit to the great man, who received him with marks of honour and esteem. "*I sat down,*" he says, "*and conversed on every topic until the subject of my friends' offence came up*"; and he goes on to relate how he gained his end. The structure of the *qasīda* exemplifies this rule of courtly etiquette. Instead of coming straight to the point (which is, in plain terms, to give praise in hope of getting a reward), the poet begins his ode with an elaborate descrip-

¹ *Lubāb*, II. 329, 12.  
² Book I, Story 18.
tion of a handsome youth or a beautiful garden or some equally irrelevant topic; and having thus won the ear of his prospective patron, he glides as dexterously as he can from the exordium (nasib) into the encomium (madih). Although the two have no real connexion with each other, so that the qaṣīda lacks organic unity, the whole poem is endowed with unity of purpose, inasmuch as the prelude contributes to the success of the panegyric and aims indirectly at bringing about the same result.

"Some excellent authorities have said that the nasib is a ghazal with which the poet, according to convention, introduces his principal theme, in order that, by reason of the fondness that most men have for hearing the various emotions of the lover and the beloved and their mutual dalliance described, the person to whom the poem is addressed may listen attentively and divert his thoughts from other cares; and in order that he may be led by this means to apprehend the main purpose of the qaṣīda with a collected mind and a calm soul, and bestow on it a greater measure of approbation. Anwārī says:

She came to me at day-rise, the Sun amongst the fair,
Her figure a tall cypress, her cheek a bright full-moon.
Her ruby lip was setting on fire a thousand souls,
Her ringlet's tip was leading in chains a thousand hearts.
Against the souls in ambush her locks had loosed their might;
Her amorous glance an arrow, poised on the eyebrow's bow."

Whereas in the encomium the poet is a slave to his profession, the nasib gives him an opportunity of displaying his powers on a subject that does not constrain him to use fine rhetoric or fulsome adulation. In this part of the qaṣīda we sometimes chance on passages of fresh and opulent beauty or tinged with a maturer charm of melancholy, which bid us pause when we are tempted to cry out that these Oriental Pindars are unreadable. The few versions given here show that love, though it is a favourite subject of the nasib, is not the only one, as the words quoted from Shams-i Qays suggest.

When from the night's dark rising
That beauty springlike-joyous
Her loveliness so tender,
Before her jewelled splendour
The treasurer of Glory
From the fair maids of Khoten
And whispering softly, softly,
"Why art thou fain to leave me?
Ah, stay, for here beside me
My cheeks are damask roses,
And rest thine eye on the wine-cup,
The tulip's rain-washed petals,
a little space had past,
into the garden came—
peris would worship it;
idols would kiss the earth.
she robbed of his guarded grace,
she bore the palm away—
spoke to me: "Why," said she,
What is this purpose fell?
spring reigns in autumn's stead;
my chin a white lily.
then wilt thou praise no more
the dew-bright jessamine."¹
(Masrúr ibn Muḥammad of Ṭāliqán.)

The poet, of course, remains deaf to her appeal and pursues
his journey to the vizier whose patronage he was seeking.
In the following exordium 'Unṣūrî describes the battle-field of Sultan Maḥmûd.

A scene like Paradise! 'Tis not Farkhâr²,
Yet all the splendour of Farkhâr is there.
Kisses of loyal kings imprint the earth,
Faces of fair youths fill with light the air.
Then look how gold and silver Pleiades
Bestud the rolling sky of scimitars,
And how, like dagger's pearl-encrusted haft,
Each baldrick shows its blazonry of stars!
Mark yonder troop belted with golden swords,
Whereon pomegranate-red you may behold
Rubies like tears of blood distilled in pain
From lover's eyes o'er cheeks as pale as gold.
On the ranked elephants their golden harness
Glitters like saffron flowers on some hillside;
Serpents their trunks might seem: in such a coat
Of golden scales the serpent's self doth glide.
Darkful as thunderclouds, with dagger-tusks,
Their mountain-forms move wind-like o'er the plain.
What place is this? The battle-field, in sooth,
Of the world's Emperor and Suzerain!³

¹ Lubāb, II. 43, 9.
² A city in Turkestan famous for the beauty of its inhabitants.
³ Lubāb, II. 29, 12.
Anwarí, as we have seen, was far from happy in his profession. These opening lines of one of his most celebrated qaṣīdas were, no doubt, inspired by the conflict of the better which he saw and approved with the worse which he followed.

Unless Fate rules the course of life entire,
Why fall things not according to desire?
To good or evil, as Fate pulls the rein,
So runs the world; and all is planned in vain.

Day after day a thousand pictures pass,
But never Truth appears in Fancy’s glass.
"How? Why?" The Painter of these changing scenes,
He works without a cause, without a means.

Our hands are impotent to loose or bind,
Life’s joy and sorrow let us meet resigned.
Beneath yon sky-blue dome our earthly state
Hangs on the order of celestial Fate.

O Time, great lord of Nature! since by thee
My body natural is held in fee,
Why with such eager spite dost thou devise,
Most ancient humpback! torments for the wise?

No mind can reach thy revolution’s cause,
No eye discover thy mysterious laws.
From thy dark wheels what anguish o’er me fell,
Ah! ’tis a plaint would take long years to tell.

Very often the nāṣīb is a description of the coming of Spring, a season which the poets associate with wine-drinking amidst flowers and with all sorts of festivity.

O paradisal beauty! come, fetch the cup of wine.
Sweet April hath apparelled the world like Paradise.
The field flings down a carpet of pictured tapestry,
And pridefully the garden puts on a crown of pearls.
A picture of Khawarnaq
A satin-woven carpet
This like a Chinese temple,
That like the house of Mání,

Lo, there the rich tiara
See how the queenly roses
Roses like cheeks of houris,
Jasmines like lawns of Eden,

As 'twere a bride, the rosebush
Tirewoman-like is laving
Now round her neck arranging
Now drawing o'er her blushes

Those tulips, where the cloud's eye
Well might'st thou call them flagons
Or flashes of keen fire
Of Badakhshání ruby

parterre and garden seem,
mountain and meadow-land:
splendid with China's art,
with lovely paintings hung.
of gems on the jasmine-bough!
unfold their broiderries!
laden with spicy curls;
fragrant and beautiful.
arrays herself; the cloud
the dust and grime away,
a string of pearly tears,
a veil of gauzy mist.

hath hid its weeping showers,
of onyx filled with wine,
in water, or bright waves
tossing in seas of Spring.

('Am'aq of Bukhárá.)

Such passages—and there are many of equal or superior merit—redeem the courtly qaṣīda from utter barrenness. Artificial as they are, they are not consciously insincere, and one can admire the workmanship without feeling that all beneath is tainted. This saving clause does not extend to the panegyric. Here the moral character and motive of the poet inevitably come into view; nor is there any pretence of disguising them. The Amír of Khurásán asked the minstrel Abú Zurá'a, "Can you make poetry like Rúdagí?" "My poetry is better than his," he replied, "but it needs thy bounty, for a poet becomes popular only when his patron regards him with favour"; then he said in verse:

Give me a thousandth part of the meed he gained,
And I will him outsing a thousandfold!

1 A superb castle on the Euphrates, said to have been built by the Lakhmíte prince, Nu'mán I (about A.D. 400).
2 The Manichaeans attached great importance to calligraphy, and Máñí (Manes) himself is believed by the Persians to have been an exquisite artist.
3 Lubdí, ii. 186, 1.
4 Ibid. ii. 10, 5.
One of the shortest articles in the Lubāb is that on Bihrūz-i Ṭabarī, which runs as follows:

"He says, complaining of the injustice of Fortune and the obscurity of the noble and the advancement of the base:

One word I'll say to thee; 'tis worth
Thy hearing, therefore 'hear it said!
None skilled in song remains on earth,
Because munificence is dead."

A slight alteration in the well-known lines which Catullus addressed to Cicero makes them exactly fit the theory of poetry as expounded by Persian bards:

Tanto optimus omnium poeta
Quanto tu optimus omnium patronus.

Lest any one should suspect me of exaggerating, I will translate literally a passage which occurs in a qasīda by Azraqī of Herāt. He is addressing Sultan Ṭughānshāh ibn Muḥammad, the Seljūq.

If the power of Maḥmūd inspired the genius of 'Uṣūrī
To produce those enchanting poems,
So must thy splendour inspire me; for in the scales of poesy
The ideas of the poets weigh less than a single mite.
'Tis praise of thee that causes me to think of beautiful expressions—not that their genius was gold and mine is clay.
If the cloud sucks up a drop of my mind (and then sends it down in the shape of rain),
Parrot-heads will blossom from the bough instead of roses.

The patron, then, is the Muse of Persian court-poetry, and his inspiration is paid for in advance by the encomium which invokes it. Did he fail to respond, he was liable to be satirised as grossly as he was flattered before, so that he had every

1 Lubāb, ii. 67, 15.
2 I.e. "I admit that the excellence of my poetry is wholly derived from my patron, but this was equally true of former poets and does not imply that I am inferior in genius to them."
3 Lubāb, ii. 103, 2. "Parrot-head" signifies fluent verse devoid of sense and wit. Azraqī means to say that his poetry would be worthless if it were merely the product of his own mind and were not inspired by his patron.
encouragement to behave with liberality. It may be urged that moral considerations should not enter into literary criticism, but this argument loses its force when the artistic form is influenced by a moral or immoral purpose. We take pleasure in well-turned compliments, without inquiring whether they are sincere or no, and the Persian panegyrists supply admirable examples of the kind. But in the encomium the claims of art are secondary: the poet cannot write to please himself; he must sing to his patron's tune. The more extravagant his laudation, the more turgid his rhetoric, and the more ingenious his flattery, the better chance he has of competing successfully with his rivals and securing a rich reward. Therefore extravagance, turgidity, and ingenuity are qualities belonging to the typical qaṣīda since the Ghaznevid period, when it first became fully developed. Their combination with the stock-in-trade of conventional figures, phrases, epithets, assonances, and allusions—the raw material of all this poetry—produces a result which only Persian scholars can appreciate: to dress the qaṣīda in another language is to leave it a shadow of its gorgeous self. With this advertisement, which is at once a warning to my readers and an apology to the poets in question, I will now render into prose or verse some of the less difficult panegyrics that 'Awfī has selected.

The following encomium by Mu'izzī is addressed to Niẓāmu 'l-Mulk, the celebrated vizier of Sultan Malikshāh.

O thou who art praised like piety in the season of eld,
And O thou who art desired like pleasure in the season of youth!
Thou hast glorious ancestors to the time of Adam,
Thou wilt have blessed descendants to the Day of Resurrection.
The two hands of avarice have been tied by thy liberality,
The two eyes of tyranny have been put to sleep by thy justice.
Under thy protection the fawn drinks with the lion,
Through thy majesty the quail consorts with the eagle.
None ever descried the summit of the mountain of thy clemency,
None ever saw the bottom of the ocean of thy largesse.
The steed of thy purpose is always in battle,
The arrow of thy resolution is always speeding from the bow. 
That man who in all his speech is most truthful, 
If he utter one word to refute thee, becomes the greatest of liars. 
Surely love of thee is Faith and hate of thee is Infidelity, 
Since thy love and hate are mercy and torment to mankind². 
Upon the waters of thine eye the heads of thy foes are turning; 
Yea, when thine eye is a river, their heads are the water-wheel³. 
'Tis thy policy that keeps the world safe and sound: 
Without thy policy, how would there be safety and soundness? 
All people ask of thee, and thou answerest them— 
May this asking and answering never come to an end! 
The cords of the tent-pavilion of the Monarch's sway 
Thy ambition hath drawn tight over East and West. 
Last year, towards the West it lightened the rein; 
This year, towards the East it is weighing down the stirrup. 
This year it will cross the Oxus victoriously, 
Even as last year it crossed the Euphrates and the Tigris. 
When one looks deeply, 'tis from thy mind and thought have resulted 
His marvellous and astonishing conquests throughout the world. 
In sooth, the world is the sky, the King's conquests are the stars, 
And thy mind and thought are the sun and the astrolabe⁴.

**PANEGYRIC ON ZAHÍRU’DDAWLA ABÚ BAKR,** 
**THE SON OF NÍZÁMU ’L-MULK.**

If the sphere of Heaven should dare dispute his sovereign will, 
Beyond dispute the celestial ring would be snapped in twain. 
His name strikes awe in the sky; the moon twice seven days old, 
She rises to preach his praise, her pulpit the Milky Way; 
And if he desire to set on his head a diadem, 
The diadem for his rank and worth is the star 'Ayyúq! 
His dagger brings to his foes their doom: well mightst thou say, 
'Tis the foremost guard and the farthest post of the Angel Death.

---

¹ Reading بقای for نفاذ.
² "Heaven and Hell to mankind" would convey the poet's meaning more clearly.
³ I.e. "If thy foes give thee cause to weep, thy tears are followed by swift vengeance which rolls their heads away (in the flood of tears), as the water-wheel is rolled (turned) by the river."
⁴ Lubdb, II. 84, 17.
Oh, what a dagger! whose flame can turn the foemen's tide,  
When strife is kindled and blazes high on the field of fray—  
A flame so bitter, the choking fume of the fire thereof  
From eye and mind of the ill-wisher parts nevermore.  
When forth he flashes from out the heart of the host of love,  
Strong beats the heart of his host to follow with hate the foe.  
The world admires when his war-horse fleet, in panoply  
Of iron mail, appears in the midst of the battle-plain.  
What art shall serve me to picture him—that war-horse fleet?  
He is like a ship, his bit the anchor, his hooves the sail;  
And when he wheels at the gallop, he seems a glorious bride  
With pearls and jewels and gold of his bridle-ornaments.  
He lifts his head and o'er the arena charges on  
With circling motion, like the majestic orb of Heaven.  
He plants his foot on the earth and roars; as a cloud is he,  
His bit the lightning thereof, his snort its thunder-clap.  
Thou giv'st him rein, he is wind; thou hold'st him in, he is rock:  
Methinks, his very marrow is made of these two things.  
Yet who saw ever a rock that moves like a rushing wind,  
Or who saw ever a wind whose form resembles a rock?  
In onset he is the peer of Rakhsh and black Shabdiz;  
Zahiru'ddawla, his rider, of Rustam and Chosroes—  
A prince revered: at his palace-gate the noblest men  
Kneel, ere they knock, as 'twere the ring of the Ka'ba's door.  
Even as the Sun in heaven lends to the moon his light,  
So giveth light to the Sun his radiant piety.  
Tho' Beauty's show in face and limb be a wondrous sight,  
His virtue hid is fairer than all that Beauty shows;  
Tho' Virtue ruling the inward man be a thing sublime,  
His beauty's show is fairer than all that Virtue rules.  
Tho' the sea be lavish of treasure and bountiful in its ways,  
Yet his rich soul surpasses in bounteousness the sea.  

(Mu'izzi.)

1 This word-play, though not in the original, is quite in keeping with it.  
2 Rakhsh and Shabdiz were the favourite horses of Rustam and Khusraw Parwiz respectively.  
3 Lubdb, ii. 77, 5.
Panegyric on the Vizier Naṣīru'ddīn.

O'er the garden of his judgment never blew the wind of error,
On the page of his decision never lay the dust of weakness.
The geometers of wisdom must confess a thousand failures,
When they would survey the utmost length and breadth of his perfection.
Awe of him is deep-implanted in the heart and eye of monarchs,
Even as wine's assaulting fury in the nature of the drunken.
Oh, thy fine and subtle statecraft like the star Suhá is hidden,
Yet throughout the world 'tis famous, shining as the sun at noonday.
When the shrill sound of thy reed-pen charms away perplexed embroilments,
It might seem the voice of David tunefully the Psalms intoning.
'Neath the canopy of Heaven thy good nature is the censer
That doth fill the horizon's bosom full of fragrancy and perfume.
Round about the pale of Islam thy protection is the rampart
That defies the might of flaming Sirius to pass across it1.

(Zahir of Fáryáb.)

Although the faults of this style are evident, while its compensating beauties disappear in translation, I should like to add one or two shorter specimens of the hyperbolical flattery on which the court-poets squander all the fancy and wit they command.

Praise of Sultan Maḥmūd.

There's Fate in steel and silver, for thou hast
A silver signet and a sword of steel.
They say King Jamshíd ruled the world and saw
Before him man, beast, devil and peri kneel.
If so 'twas, either Jamshíd had thy power,
Or thy name stood on Jamshíd's magic seal2.

('Unṣurī.)

1 Lubdūb, II. 300, 17. Sirius is said to be the only star that crosses the sky breadthwise (Lisdn, VI. 84, 18).
2 Lubdūb, II. 32, 1.
PRAISE OF ABU 'L-ḤASAN ‘ALÍ.

O thou whose courteous greeting is like the long year’s spring!
O thou whose gracious accents are like a long life’s youth!
The treasures of thy science are that which hath no end,
The ocean of thy bounty is that which hath no plumb.
If pearls of brilliant water refresh the jaded spirit,
If ambergris pure-scented makes the worn limbs seem young,
Then like to thy fine nature are purest ambergris,
Like to thy peerless favour are brilliant-water’d pearls.

(ʻAbu ʻl-Ma‘ālī of Rayy.)

PRAISE OF KING ABÚ NĀṢR.

To his foes’ night Heav’n brings no radiant day,
To his friends’ rose Fate gives no wounding thorn.
His friends are high—but high upon a throne;
His foes are high—but high upon a gallows!

(Qatrán of Tabrīz.)

I leave thy gate! And how should I depart,
When every breath I send into the air
Is charged with praise of thee? None may compare
With thee for skill to assay the poet’s art:
Thou know’st as well as I, my coin rings fair.

I from thy bounty claim the bloodwit, since
My genius in this song gave up its soul.
Thou wilt not grudge to pay the appointed toll,
For ’twas desire to laud thee, O my Prince,
Bade o’er my tongue these golden verses roll!

(‘Imádí of Ghazna.)

That same desire was “the only begetter” of almost every qaṣīda in the Lubdāb. Their general features do not vary to any great extent and have been sufficiently illustrated by the extracts given above. Intellectual wit has free play in the panegyric, but a sense of humour is seldom allowed to inter-

1 Lubdāb, II. 231, 19. 2 Ibid. II. 220, 7. 3 Ibid. II. 261, 17.
fere with the solemn pose and ceremonious address which the
patron's dignity demands. One of these rare exceptions is an
ode by Jawhari of Herát, beginning:

Yesterday the imperial
A horse by old age stricken

* * *

His back grown bare entirely
Cramfull and stuffed his stomach
The skin of his nose all puckered
His rump the cauldron, trembling

* * *

When briskly I approached him
He said, "Old ignoramus,
I am thy senior, pay me
'Tis want of reverence always
Ah, seest thou not how broken
My back a sore, my body
Art not ashamed to mount me?
On me into the mellay
I carried King Táhmúrath
When forth he marched to conquer
And I was in the Ark too
What time the world-wide Deluge

* * *

Then came I to the Sultan,
For three and sixty years he
On thee he did bestow me:
Beg from the Sultan's stable

head-groom to me presented
and crying out for mercy.

* * *

of flesh, as 'twere a coffin;
with straw, as 'twere a straw-barn.
like to a blacksmith's bellows;
from one leg to the other1.

* * *

with saddle, bit, and bridle,
injurious, disrespectful!
the reverence I merit:
hath wrecked thy hopes of fortune.
am I by age and weakness?
a shadow, my head dizzy!
Or wilt thou ride unblushing
and wheel again for onset?
(quoth he) in the beginning,
and founded Marv-i Shahján;
in company with Noah,
was spreading waste and ruin2.

* * *

who showed me all due honour:
hath kept me in his stable.
if I take not thy fancy,
instead of me another!"3

The ode ends with a few lines equivalent to the English
formula, "'and thy petitioner will ever pray.'"

On the whole, we must allow that the difficulties and
fatigues encountered in this field of Persian poetry are con-
siderably greater than any pleasure that can be gained from

1 Lubdh, ii. 114, 16.
2 Ibid. ii. 115, 7.
3 Ibid. ii. 117, 1.
it. Its lack of truth and sincerity, the poverty of its ideas, and the shallowness of its sentiment leave at times an impression of disgust which the beautiful diction and brilliant imagery only serve to emphasise. Moreover, the style, pleasingly exotic at the best, in many passages becomes grotesque and ludicrous. Since I have tried to show that the work of the court-poets is not altogether unattractive, I may be pardoned for having selected such pieces as seemed to answer the purpose. Let me now justify my discretion by revealing the obstacles that would lie in the way of a more valorous translator. The chief of these is the fact that Persian poetry is largely composed of elements which are the very antithesis of what we in the West usually mean by the term "poetical"—elements which have long been regarded by us as destructive to poetry, though suitable enough for parody and other forms of light or humorous verse. This view, indeed, has not always prevailed. It was an English poet of the seventeenth century who wrote,

No sires but these will poetry admit:  
Madness or wit;

and the definition is applicable to the lyrical poetry of Persia. As for madness, in the sense of divine enthusiasm, the odes written by Šûfis have plenty of it. The court-poets are not in the least mad, but they are immoderately witty. While we may agree that wit sometimes enters into alliance with poetical beauty and is even capable of adding an unexpected touch that contributes to its perfection, none of us would presuppose a natural and intimate connexion between the two. Persian criticism, however, does connect them; and in Persian poetry mere intellectual or verbal ingenuity, far from being a vice, is an admired ornament of style, albeit at some periods and by some poets it is used more sparingly than by the encomiasts who fill the pages of the Lubâb with clever fancies and quaint comparisons. The following specimens, which I have rendered literally, are easily understood and give but a slight notion of the feats accomplished by these Oriental euphuists.
I

The garden is full of strings of fresh pearls,
The hill-slopes are full of heaps of pure ambergris.
'Tis wind and cloud that gave to garden and hill-slope
Pure ambergris in heaps and fresh pearls in strings.
The raven is gone, the pheasant is come, and lo, a marvel!—
The earth like a pheasant's wing, the air like a raven's plume.
The grove hath become an altar, and the nightingale,
David-like, is singing psalms on the altar.
When the air donned mail and corslet of cloud,
The radiant sun made of his reflexion a bow.
Of rose-bud and willow-bough the zephyr
Made an emerald spear and a coral arrow.
See the poppies amongst the grass,
And amongst the poppies the tears of the cloud:
The grass like verdigris dashed with vermilion,
The poppies like vermilion dashed with quicksilver.
The tears of the cloud are rose-water, the blossoms camphor,
The water in the stream and rivulet is like sandal-wood.
Since the temperature of the world is not yet very hot,
Why are camphor, sandal-wood, and rose-water used as remedies
for it?  

(Mu'izzî.)

Here are the opening lines of a qaṣīda by 'Am‘aq of Bukhárá. “All the poets,” says 'Awfi, “are unanimously of opinion that no one before him ever composed verses like these and that no one after him has been able to equal them.”

If an ant utter speech and if a hair have life,
I am that speaking ant, I am that living hair.
My body is like the shadow of a hair, and my soul is like the eye
of an ant,
Because of the absence of her whose hair is fragrant with ghāliya
and who hath an ant-like waist.

1 Reading بفرغز instead of بفرغر.
2 Lubdb. ii. 82, 22.
3 I.e. contracted with pain. “A narrow heart” means in Persian “an oppressed and sorrowful heart.”
4 Lubdb. ii. 181, 11.
A little of this goes a long way. My last quotation is a lover's complaint, which occurs in the exordium of an ode by Abu 'l-Ma'ālī.

I am not seeking diversion and I am not desiring pleasure, I am not keeping patience and I am not getting sleep. My tears, which have a resemblance to quicksilver, Turn to pure gold when they trickle down my yellow cheeks. By the tears of mine eye and the hue of my cheek Natural philosophers are assured that quicksilver is the basis of gold.

1 Lubāb, ii. 229, 5.