In taking, leave of Hamdī we may say that though he was not a great poet, he was an industrious and skilful adapter. That one of his works had considerable and abiding merit is proved by the high position which it maintained for centuries. It may perhaps be held that his acceptance of the principle of the interposed lyric established this happy innovation as a canon with the Ottoman romancists. His Joseph and Zelikhā, moreover, marks a stage in the development of Ottoman mesnevi; when we come to it, we have left behind both the baldness of Ahmedī and the cumber-someness of Sheykhi, and have reached a time when the poets, having found themselves, advance with surer step to a more clearly distinguished goal.

Of the three following extracts from the Joseph and Zelikhā, the first, which deals with the incident of the speaking wolf, is taken from that part of the poem in which Hamdī follows Firdawsi; the two other extracts are from the part in which he follows Jāmī. Even in translation the difference in style is apparent.

From the Yūsuf u Zelikhā. [111]

The Hunting of the Stranger Wolf by the Brethren of Joseph, and their slandering of the same.

When all to this pact gave their consent,
Forth to the hunt straightway they went.
To lull their sire to the sleep of the hare
They off to the chase of the wolf did fare.
They thought by this hunt a trick to play:
That the truth would be proved wist not they.
Nor wist they how lust that captures men

1 That is, when all Joseph’s brothers had agreed to try to deceive their father by bringing to him what they would declare to be the very wolf that had eaten his beloved son.

2 ‘Hare’s sleep’ is a term used to express heedlessness, generally feigned, but sometimes, as in this case, real.
Had fast in its snare their own selves ta'en.
O'er Canaan's hills and plains they past,
And journeying on they reached the waste.
And there in truth a wolf they spied
That loudly, with eyes turned skyward, cried.
To hunt him then their plans they cast;
They caught him, and bound him sure and fast.
With bonds they bound that weakling wight,
And all of his teeth they brake forthright.
They dragged him along with mickle pain,
And back to the town they turned again.
They brought him straight to Jacob's house,
And showing him, spake to Jacob thus,
'This ate the gazelle of thy house so dear,
'This ate the tree of thy life's herbere.'
Quoth Jacob, 'Leave ye him for a space;
'Do off his bonds that his soul find peace.'
Then up he rose and began to pray,
To the One who needs not, his need to say: —
'O Thou who life dost give to the stone,
'And who to the dry earth giv'st a tongue, ¹
'The power of speech to this wolf give Thou
'That he tell the tale of Joseph true.'
Thus saying, he looked on the wolf with ruth,
And bade him speak in the name of The Truth.
He stroked his back with pity mild,
By his prophethood tamed his nature wild. ²
(If one the wolf of his lust subdue,
Is it strange if the beasts obey him too?
If one with The Truth communion see,
What though the untamed his familiars be?
What if one who by naming the Living doth make
A soul alive, cause a beast to speak?) ³

¹ Man being formed of clay.
² The idea being that the Prophets, by virtue of the sanctity of their nature, render all wild creatures docile and friendly to them.
³ It being held that a saint by repeating the word el-Hayy 'the Living', one of the Names of God (vol. i, pp. 60 and 66), can awaken a soul to the spiritual life. These three couplets are parenthetical.
He said, 'O brute, obey me now,
'Speak, in thy Maker's name, speak thou!' The wolf arose when he heard this say.
He came, and sat on his tail straightway.
He tuned his voice and disposed his tone,
And fair he spake in the Hebrew tongue.
He looked in the Prophet's face, aloud
He said, 'There is no god but God.'
And then he said, 'O Prophet true,
'What is thy question? ask it now.'
Quoth Jacob, 'Where is my Joseph, say!
'His brethren charge against thee lay.
'How hast thou dared him to eat,
To make that soul for thy body meat?'

When the wolf had these reproaches heard
He answered thus with gentle word,
To Jacob he said, 'O Prophet high,
'Of aught of this story know not I.
'Since the Prophets' flesh is forbidden us,
'We eat it not, we respect the dues.
'I swear that him I did not eat;
'Be not as thy sons, nor calumniate.
'A stranger come to this land was I,
'To dwell in the vale of perplexity.
'While I perplexed wailed bitterly,
'Thy sons did slander and seize on me.
'While I hoped from them some aidance fair,
'They dealt a wound on the wound I bare.
'While I hoped from them some boon to see,
'They brake my teeth without cause from me.
'And here before thee they did me hale.
'Now I to thy Saintship have told my tale.'
When Jacob heard the words he said,
For the plight of the wolf he grieved sad.
So to light their guile and their lying came,
And all of his sons were put to shame.

The next passage describes the feelings of Zelikha on
awakening from the first of the three visions in which Joseph appears to her.

From the Yūsuf u Zelīkhā. [112]

The Bitter Wailing of Zelīkhā in her First Passion.

When the dawn-tide fair showed its sun-love forth,
Desire therefor drave repose from earth. 2
On one hand the breeze stirred the air of desire, 3
On one strains resounded keen as fire. 4
E'en as the bulbul sang their lay
Did the roses rend their garments gay. 5
In her slumber sweet was that Fairy-face 6
Plunged in delight of the dreamed-of grace. 7
She was ta'en from herself by love, not sleep;
It was blood, not tears, that her eyne did weep.
Her nurses gently rubbed her feet, 8
And lauded her beauty's garden sweet.
When she oped her quilt like the rosebud fair 9

1 There is here a very favourite and constantly recurring amphibology. The word mihr means both 'sun' and 'love', and is very often used by the poets in both senses at the same time. It is impossible to preserve this word-play in an English translation: all that can be done is, in case of need, to hyphen the two meanings thus: — 'sun-love.'

2 i. e. the world, which had been in repose during the night, became busy and eager when the beautiful sun rose.

3 The sweet morning breeze is here said to be hewā-engiz, a term which means at once 'air-stirring' and 'desire-stirring', the word hewā having the two senses of 'air' and 'love-desire.'

4 i. e. the songs of the birds rejoicing in the fresh morning.

5 When the opening rosebud bursts the calyx it is said 'to rend its garment.'

The poets often picture it doing this out of ecstasy at the song of its lover the nightingale.

6 i. e. Zelīkhā.

7 i. e. the vision of Joseph.

8 Great people in the East, when troubled by insomnia, often get their attendants to lull them to sleep by gently rubbing their feet with the palm of the hand; sometimes the attendants seek to accelerate the process by droning some tale or poem in monotonous voice. People are occasionally gently wakened by the same means.

9 As the bursting bud opens its calyx, so did Zelīkhā, the rosebud beauty, raise the quilt as she awoke.
She gave their vaunt to her roses rare.

When her narcisse-eye from sleep was raised,
Into every nook in haste she gazed;
She was plumed so deep within yearning's sea
That she deemed her vision verity.
As that rosy-cheek was nowhere found,
She bode, like the bud, for a space heart-bound.
Sleep went, and her eyes with tears were full,
And hence as a dream fled her peace of soul.
And the Moon of the Sunset-land was fain
To rend her robe, like the east, for pain.
But the hand of her valiance stayed her course,
Though hot in her breast did the sun-love dance.
There remained therein yet a mote of shame.

1 i.e. she showed her rose-red lips, thus enabling them to boast silently how their loveliness put the roses themselves to shame.

2 i.e. Joseph.

3 While the bud is still unopened it is often spoken of as 'heart-bound' or 'heart-straitened', and is then taken as a type of sadness or distress.

4 When the dawn breaks, the east is said to rend its robe.

5 Dole is conceived as having seized the collar of her robe and as trying to drag her back or down, while she has planted her foot on her skirt (i.e. patience) the better to resist its attempt.

6 i.e. her cypress-like figure moved about in the garden.

7 The 'taper' is the emblem of a bright beauty. When lit, the taper is said 'to smile', and of course there is then a fire at its heart.

8 The flower of the tulip is often likened to a cup of red wine.
This air in her head, in her breast the sore. Whome'er she saw, on her love she thought; To her mind each picture his beauty brought. In Either World for her love she yearned, And her sweet heart for a sweetheart burned. The thought of his eyebrow arched her heart, Her soul for love of his eyne did smart. To her lips came a thousand times her spright Ere the day of yearning turned to night. The lovers' helpful fere is night. The lover's familiar dear is night. He who made night the cloak of secrecy Bade her many a sorrow's balm to be. As night over secrets draws the pall, She is the chosen of lovers all. 'Night is the stranger's', thus they say, 'Tis the hapless nightingale's in fay, That he to the rose may tell his love While never a thorn knows aught thereof. The Sun of the Sunset hid away, And turned to the wall in sad dismay.

1 Hewá, the word used here, means both 'air' and 'love-desire' (see p. 204, n. 3). The head, that is the open flower, of the tulip is filled with air (hewá); the head of Zelíkhá is filled with love-desire (hewá).

2 The Eastern poets very frequently speak of what they call the dágh or 'sore.' This is a black clot of blood supposed to form in the heart through brooding over some inward grief, generally that resulting from unrequited love. Physiologically the 'sore' was imagined to be caused by a derangement of the humour sevda or 'melancholy' (see vol. i, p. 301, n. 1).

3 i. e. she was constantly at the point of death by reason of her agitation.

4 She yearned for the night in the hope that her beloved would again visit her in her dreams.

5 Suggested by the Koranic text (LXXVIII, 10), 'And have we not made the night as a cloak?'

6 There is, or was, a proverb to this effect. This proverb, which does not appear to be generally known among modern Turks, perhaps refers to the fact that in old times a traveller had at night a right to claim shelter and hospitality.

7 Night is the time for the nightingale to unburden his soul in song.

8 The thorns are sometimes looked upon as the guardians of the rose, set over her to keep away undesirable lovers such as the nightingale.
Is it strange if she who in love doth fall
Turn her back to the folk, her face to the wall?
When the Hidden note made her bud-heart Bloom.
The key of her soul did with fire consume.
The cloud and the ocean wept her pain,
The treble and bass with her did plain.
Her eyes were a torrent, the tears rushed down;
For the woe of her heart she thus made moan:

Ghazel.

E'er since they answered 'Yea!' when Love the seed of woe did sow,
Hath Love with dolour's water caused hapless me to grow.
When Grief by threshing long had beaten out my grain for me
Straightway the blast of Love to all the winds my crop did blow.
And since that Dule hath made my heart the sere of you sweet one,
Love maketh aliens unto me all them I erst did know.
And Health hath ceased to give me hail e'er since that Love to me
His greeting sweet by sad Reproach's hand hath deigned to throw.
Nor aught of sleep abides within mine eyen filled with tears;
'I wot not what these shifts and haps of Love at last will show.'

Thus saying she sighed in her drearhood,

1 Nihuft 'Hidden' is the name of one of the notes in Eastern music.
2 Perde-i Ján, literally, 'the veil of the soul.' The word perde means both 'veil' and 'key (in music)'; so we have here another amphibology.
3 The weeping of the clouds, i.e. the rain, is the treble, and the roar of the waves the bass.
4 i.e. at the Primal Conclave; see vol. i, p. 22.
5 Love being the motive power that brought about creation and all that this involves.
6 Zelikhá here pictures herself as a plant the seed of which was sown in sorrow by Love on the Fore-eternal Day, and which this same Love has fostered ever since, watering it with dolour, the nourishment best suited to its nature, till now at length it has blossomed forth.
7 By her 'grain' Zelikhá means the profit of her living, which has been acquired only by long and constant suffering, even as the seed is separated from the straw by threshing.
8 i.e. she is so much absorbed by the thought of her beloved that she is heedless of all her former friends.
9 The lover being generally, in the poets, an object of reproach among his fellows.
And made of her eyeen founts of blood.
As the beauty's form in her mind did rise
Her rubies scattered pearls this wise: —
'O thou who hast plunged me in grief and woe,
'And stricken me brent by love's fierce love,
'Ere my bulbul-heart hath thy rose-face seen
'I weep and wail for the thorn of teen.
'Since thy fantasy I beheld in sleep
'But a fantasy is become my sleep.
'Like thy hair without end separation's night,
'If aid not thy union's morning-light.
'O gem, if I knew where thy mine might be,
'Thither I straightway would strive to flee.
'I have found neither thee nor trace of thee;
'This anguish will leave no trace of me.
'Thou art King, what region owns thy sway?
'Thou art Moon, in which sky is thy mansion, say:
'Is any so poor as I in part,
'For I have nor heart nor yet sweetheart?
'A rose, ere I oped I smiled for glee;
'In the garden I waved, a cypress free.

1 i. e. her red lips uttered these beautiful words.
2 i. e. since I beheld the fantasy, (khayál), i. e. image (see p. 36, n. 7) of thee in my sleep, my sleep has become a fantasy (khayál), i. e. an unreal, imaginary thing.
3 Separation from the beloved is like night, a night long and dark as the beloved's hair.
4 Reunion with the beloved is the bright morn that follows the night of separation.
5 The mine being the native home of the gem.
6 This must be taken as merely rhetorical, without regard to astronomical accuracy: for of course the twenty-eight mansions of the moon being all in the Zodiac, are in the eighth heaven or sphere, while the moon itself is located in the first (vol. i, p. 43).
7 Referring to the condition of Zelikha before her vision. The bud is said to 'smile' when it opens: but she smiled, i. e. was happy, ere she opened, i. e. ere her heart was opened by love.
8 The cypress is often qualified as free (azád), for being evergreen it is exempt from the annual loss of foliage which is the lot of most trees.
No thorn my foot had ever smit,
No dust on my frame had e'er alit,
With a puppet it was they captured me
When thy fantasy they made me see.
My breast by thy love is rent and torn,
My pillow a stone and my couch a thorn.
How should I rest on the cruel brier?
Whence were there peace to a heart on fire?
My headstrong self on the wind thou'st cast,
Then drown my fire in thy water fast.
Thy beauty's gear is great of price,
With me no wealth but of anguish lies.
Should aidance from thee never come me nigh,
'I wot that no help in myself doth lie!'
Thus all that night till the morning brake
With the fantasy of her love she spake.
Now she fanned the flame, now she beat it low;
Now she drenched her heart, now she made it glow.
No peace the plight of the lover knows,
For power of choice from the lover goes.
In the morn in this wonder-garden gay,
A smile on her face, in her heart dismay.
Like a rose, with the blooming flowers she laughed,
With the silvern-arms the ruby quaffed.
And such for a space was her weary plight,
A smile by day and in tears by night.

The last extract that we shall take from this poem tells of Joseph's invitation from his father and mother to join them in Paradise and his joyful acceptance thereof.

1 The term 'puppet' or 'doll' (lu'bet) is sometimes applied like 'idol' (sanem) and 'picture' (nigár) to a young beauty. Here the word suggests further that what captured Zelikha's heart was but a simulacrum, not a living person.
2 Thou hast cast me into hewá ('air' or 'wind', and 'love-desire.')
3 In this couplet we have three of the four elements.
4 i. e. (1) the world, (2) the garden of her palace.
5 'As we have just seen, when the rose opens it is said to 'laugh' or 'smile.' Here the 'blooming flowers' stand in the second place for Zelikha's girl-companions.
6 The 'silvern-arms' are her white-skinned companions, the 'ruby' is the red wine.
From the Yúsuf u Zelíkhá. [113]

Joseph (on whom be Peace!) seeth his Father and Mother in a Vision and prayeth God to reunite him with them.

To the prayer-niche he passed alone one night
To pay to the Lord his service-rite.
In sleep unoblivious closed his een,
He journeyed mid the World Unseen.
He saw his father and mother there,
Their faces bright as the moonlight fair.
To Joseph they said, ‘O son, till when
‘Will the frame the humán-soul impen? 3
‘Immure it not in water and clay;
‘To the World of Soul let it wing its way.
‘Return to thy home; for thee we yearn!
‘Thou art Heaven’s bird; to thy nest return!’

When Joseph up from his sleep awoke
In his bosom longing’s fire outbroke.

1 For the mihrâb or prayer-niche in a mosque see vol. i, p. 224, n. 1. It is deep enough to permit of a man’s performing the prayer in it.
2 ‘Sleep oblivious’ (Kháb-i ghafla) is the ordinary sleep of the ordinary man, as opposed to ‘sleep unoblivious’ (Kháb-i bi-ghafla), which is that sleep of the prophets and saints in which, though the body be unconscious, the soul is in the Spirit World, where it perceives the Reality, and in this way becomes the recipient of the Divine Revelation (see vol. i, pp. 57—8). The two following hadîses bear upon this: "وَكَذَلَكَ الأَنْبِيَّاَ تَلَدُّمُ أَعْمَىٰهُمْ وَلَا يَلَدُّمُ قَلَبَهُمْ. As to the Prophet, his two eyes are asleep, but his heart sleepeth not: and thus is it with the Prophets, their eyes sleep, but their hearts sleep not. ‘The true dream of the righteous man is one part of the six-and-forty parts of prophethood.’ For the meaning of ‘true dream’ see vol. i, p. 57, n. 1.
3 For the humán or fabled bird of Paradise see vol. i, p. 331, n. 5.
4 Water and clay (earth) being those two of the Four Elements which enter most largely into the composition of the body.
That cypress did from the prayer-niche sway
And straight to Zelikha made his way.
He told her whate'er he had beheld
And how that longing his bosom swelled.
Zelikha's heart was grief-dismayed
As soon as she heard the words he said.
But Joseph's yearning waxed the more,
And forth of the world his heart would soar.
He turned his eyes from the house of pain,
He was of the Presence-Palace fain.
For fleeting pleasures grieved not he;
He made his prayer for eternity: —
'0 Thou who grantest the hope of each,
'Who makest the traveller home to reach,
'Thou hast set me o'er Egypt's legions King;
'Thou hast taught me of dreams the interpreting.
'My Patron in Either World art Thou;
'Oh leave me not in the house of woe.
'With Thy mercy whelm the soul of me,
'Join me with the righteous company!'

We shall now take two passages from the Leylâ and Mejnûn.
The first recounts Mejnûn's conversation with the crow after his flight from Nevfel and his rescuing of the gazelles.

From the Leylâ u Mejnûn. [114]

Mejnûn speaketh to the Crow.

At dawn, what time the sphere of azure blue
Had made the yellow rose shed gold anew,

1 i. e. the world.
2 i. e. Heaven, the Palace of the Immediate Presence of God.
3 All of this passage is copied very closely from Joseph's prayer as given in the Koran (xii, 102), several of the actual words of the sacred text being repeated by Hamdi. The Koran has it: — 'My Lord! Thou hast given me dominion, and hast taught me the interpretation of sayings; O Creator of the heavens and the earth, Thou art my Patron in the world and the Hereafter; take me to Thyself resigned, and join me with the righteous.'
4 The 'yellow rose' is the sun which sheds its golden light as a rose sheds its yellow pollen, or as a yellow rose sheds its yellow petals.
And smiled the earth's face like the ruddy rose,
A beam as 'twere the beauty Leylá shows,
Did Mejnún, like the rose by autumn shent,
With faded face and sear, and eyes blood-sprent, 1
In sadness walk, o'erwhelmed in his tears;
Thou'dst say he like a shipwrecked wight appears. 2
By noontide's sun the soul of him was scorched;
No screen was his, his every limb was scorched.
For he was shadow-like, no gear had he; 3
He therefore sat him 'neath a shady tree.
A green and lofty tree with shade profound
A necath which lay a lovely mead and pond.
And round e'en like the spher al pond was this, 4
Its water clear and pure as Kevser's is.
About its banks did the fair meadow lie;
A further lustre gained the pond thereby.
With burning heart up went he to the bank
And, like the mead, his fill of water drank,
Himself like shadow on the mead he laid,
As 'twere a figure upon green brocade.
On that brocaded couch himself he placed,
And then to that fair tree his eye raised,
When there, perched on a branch, he saw a crow
Whose eyes like night-lamps 5 in the night did glow;

1 From his 'weeping blood.'
2 i. e. he is so wretched, and moreover he is drenched by his tears as a shipwrecked man would be by water.
3 Mejnún is often described as 'shadow-like,' he being so wasted by grief. Here he is 'shadow-like' in the further sense that he has no more property than a shadow has. [Some of the Arab poets go even further in describing the wasted form of the lover. Thus Ibnul-Farid, in the first poem in his Diwan (which is also one of the most celebrated) says — مَثَّلَ مَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْنُ فَإِنَّمَا لَمْ يَمَّا يَرِيد أَشْمَيْn
4 "So greatly hath longing wasted him that he hath no longer even a shadow", and Mutanabbi says, speaking of a lover's emaciated frame, that, if the wind did not blow his garments about, he would be invisible. ed.]
5 The 'spheral pond' means simply the vault of heaven which appears round like a pond, or at least like this pond.
6 For the fabled jewel called 'night-lamp' see vol. 1, p. 291, n. 1.
Whose plumage black as 'Abbásí ensign seemed, ¹
Whose ruddy bill a piece of brazil gleamed, ²
(That ruby beak upon his bosom lay,—
Lo, brazil worked on ebon, thou would'st say.)
With head frock-covered,³ lonely, silently;
He sat, black-vested like a Khalveti. ⁴

Whene'er love's eremite ⁵ that crow did sight
He held him fellow of his blackened spright. ⁶

'Thy lot is peace, thy steed the garth', he said,
'O white of scroll, ⁷ then wherefore black thy wade?

'Why night-hued, O illuminer of night,
Whose day and night are day-tide of delight?
Thou fliest in the bower with heart at ease,
Then wherefore black thy plumes and black thy case?
Perchance thou wearest mourning for my woe;
But wherefore should my burning stir thee so? ⁸

'Nay, who hath burned thee, say, for whom dost yearn? —
That thou art black-faced e'en as they who burn! ⁹

¹ The standards of the 'Abbásí Khalifas were black.
² Baqám, or 'brazil-wood' (in old times generally 'brazil' with the accent on the first syllable), the well-known reddish wood from which a red dye is obtained. The name was originally applied to a dye-wood which was imported from India, and which is now called sappan. The country in South America was called after a similar wood, which was found there in great quantities by the early explorers. In Eastern poetry brazil is always associated with the idea of redness.
³ i. e. with his head seeming to rest upon his bosom, his neck being drawn in.
⁴ i. e. a member of the Khalveti dervish-order.
⁵ i. e. Mejnún.
⁶ The lover's soul being held to be scorched, and so blackened, by the fires of passion and sorrow.
⁷ 'White of scroll' i. e. of blameless life. The allusion is to the Defter-i A'mál or 'Register of Deeds' kept by the recording angels, in which is entered all that a man does of good and evil; the Register of him whose good actions greatly predominate is said to be white, while his whose evil deeds largely preponderate is black.
⁸ Mejnún has hiterto been asking why the crow whose life is so happy and innocent should wear black, the colour of mourning and sin; he now conceives that this may be because of the bird's sympathy with his own sorrows; but this seems an insufficient reason, so in the next couplet he fancies the crow himself must be a victim of unhappy love.
⁹ The allusion is to those doomed to hell. In Koran, m, 102—3, we read,
Thou wearest black, like them that burn art thou;  
Then why from one who burneth fliest now?  
Thou’rt like a negro slave who seeks to flee;  
A Hindu or a Hindu-boy thou’dst be.  
Ah, may be thou the Crow of Parting art;  
For thou art like the sore within my heart.  
Thou’rt perched above me there on the green tree,  
And like my black fate overhangest me.  
But then if thou wert my black star indeed,  
Thou hadst not hither come my plight to heed.  
When like my sighing’s smoke thou fleest away,  
Go seek yon dear one, and my secrets say,  
Thus: Askest thou of yonder stranger’s woes?  
Yon nightingale’s, far sundered from his rose?  
If thou reach him no hand, his case is spent;  
For anguish is his face to ruin bent.  
If woe come near thee”, saidst thou, “come will I.”  
Ah, woe is come, but thou art come not nigh!  
When goes the eye for ill of eecity,  
What good thereto from tutty shall there be?  

On the Day (i.e. the Last Day) when faces shall be whitened and faces shall be blackened; as for those whose faces shall be blackened, — “Did ye blaspheme after your faith? then taste the torment for that ye were blasphemers.” But as for those whose faces shall be whitened, they are in the mercy of God, abiding therein for aye.’

1 Here the crow must be supposed to hop to a higher branch.
2 The Hindu or Indian is, like the Zenji or Negro, always a type of blackness in this poetry.
3 Ghurábul-Beyn ‘the Crow of Parting’ is a nickname given to the crow, which, being considered a bird of ill omen, was sometimes supposed by its presence to presage the parting of friends or lovers.
4 The ‘sore’ (dagh) in the heart (see p. 206, n. 2 supra) was supposed to be black. Mejnün now begins to fear that the appearance of the ill-omened bird may portend some calamity.
5 The lover here rejects the idea that the crow is a harbinger of evil, as in that case he would not have sat perched up there looking down with sympathy on him.
6 We have often seen sighs compared to smoke, here the quality of blackness is common to the sigh, the smoke, and the crow.
7 This is the beginning of the message which Mejnün charges the crow to bear to Leylá.
8 For tutty see p. 49, n. 4 supra.
"Or when the wolf hath snatched the lamb away,
What boots the shouting of the shepherd, say?
Or when the flood hath the foundation mined,
What profit though with steel the walls they bind?
Or when the torrents spread the fields of grain
With stones, what good though pearls descend for rain?"

While he the shaft of speech thus lusty threw,
The crow took fright, from branch to branch he flew;
When Mejnún whetted speech's arrow bright,
His auditor flew thence and passed from sight.
He had the crow for fellow-sufferer ta'en;
The crow flew off, this oped his wound again.

When night her corvine plumes had round her wound,
And earth as in a net of black was bound,
And heaven had the stars as lanterns lit,
Or made them crow-eyes in the darksome net,
Mejnún, his heart-lamp quenched, laid him down,
The crow of patience from his hand was flown;
As 'twere a quenched taper there he lay;
His peace, a party scattered, past away.

The second extract from this romance describes the lonely death of Mejnún.

From the Leylá u Mejnún. [115]

The Death of Mejnún.

The diver
This history on this wise finisheth: —

1 i. e. when the torrents have brought down stones from the mountains and covered the corn fields with them so that the grain cannot grow, and man is left without food, what good were it to him though the heavens should rain down pearls on him? If one can get no food, of what use are riches? The same idea is the motive of the 17th story of the third Book of Sa'di's Gulistán.

2 When undisturbed, one's peace of mind is said to be 'collected;' conversely, when it is destroyed or ruffled, it is said to be 'scattered,' 'dispersed' or 'distracted,' and is not unfrequently compared to a party that has broken up, all the guests being 'scattered,' having 'dispersed' to their several homes.

3 No doubt Nizámí is meant.
That one whom Parting mid the flames had hurled,
Aweary of his life, cast off the world.
His body, broken by the stones of grief,
Was wasted like unto an autumn leaf;
The strength went from his body day by day,
He, feeble, wretched, without power or stay,
Nor joy nor patience lingered in his breast,
Nor easance lingered in his soul nor rest.
His soul came up into his mouth for woe,
And sought for an excuse from thence to go.
The Silent Voices whispered to him fair
Of tidings glad of union with his dear.
Then straight he to his loved one’s grave did haste,
And shadow-like himself thereon he cast.
He clasped the earth, and bitterly he moaned,
And verses sang, and in his anguish groaned.
Alone and sick, without or friend or fere,
With only savage creatures seated near;
Nor friend nor brother nigh to render aid,
A stone his pillow, the bare earth his bed:
No man to whom his parting words to tell,
But Death the sword, the headsman "Azra'il.
The rain-cloud was the cotton on that day,
It filled his mouth with water as he lay.
His comrades, they were thunder, lightning, rain.
They moaned, and burned, and wept for him amain.

1 i. e. Mejnân.
2 Lisân-i Hâl (or Zebân-i Hâl), literally, ‘the Tongue (or Language) of the Case,’ but generally best rendered by ‘mute eloquence’, is a very frequent term applied to the manner, looks, or condition of a person or thing, as appealing directly to the heart or mind without making use of words. It is opposed to Lisân-i Qâl or ‘uttered language.’
3 "Azrâ’il is the Angel of Death.
4 It is usual to put cotton-wool in the mouth, nostrils, etc. of a corpse. The fleecy clouds are here conceived as cotton-wool, and the rain-drops that they shower as the pieces thereof put into the corpse’s mouth. The intention is to point out that the only friends round the dying Mejnân are the wild beasts and (as further shown in the next couplet) the forces of nature.
5 This couplet contains an example of the rhetorical figure called leff u neshir (vol. i, p. 115), the thunder moaning, the lightning burning, and the rain weeping for the dying man.
Then Mejnûn turned to God, beseeching there.
He raised his eyes and oped his hands in prayer;¹
He said, 'Creator of all things that be,'
'By every soul elect I cry on Thee
'That Thou release me from this anguish drear,
'And glad me with reunion with my dear!'
Then e'en as from his mouth this prayer sped,
Along therewith his humâ-spirit fled;
He clasped at the last breath his dear one's dust,
And crying 'O my Love!' gave up the ghost.

The following passage from the Mevlid recounts the first interview between Gabriel the Angel of Revelation and Muhammed the future Prophet.

From the Mevîd-i Nerbî. [116]

Gabriel announceth his Mission to Muhammed.

When the Mercy to the Worlds² had gone one day
To Hirâ,³ and there intent did watch and pray,
Sudden flashed the truth before his eyen there,
And the Holy spirit⁴ did to him appear.
Said he, greeting that Belov'd⁵ in fair accord,
'I am Gabriel, O Prophet of the Lord!
'Unto thee hath God fulfilled His favour great,⁶

¹ When praying God for any blessing or favour, the Muhammedan looks towards the palms of his hands which he holds before him like an open book, and then draws over his face from the forehead downwards.
² We have already seen this title of Muhammed, vol. i, p. 245, n. 1.
³ It was on Mount Hirâ, a wild and lonely mountain near Mekka, whither Muhammed used often to repair to fast and watch, that the announcement of his prophetic mission was made to him by the Archangel Gabriel.
⁴ As we have seen (vol. i, p. 239, n. 2), 'the Holy Spirit' is in Islam a title of Gabriel.
⁵ The 'Beloved of God', another of Muhammed's titles, see vol. i, p. 243, n. 2.
⁶ There is here a reference to Koran, v. 5, which is said to be the last verse revealed to the Prophet: 'To-day I have perfected for you your religion and I have fulfilled upon you my favour.'
Thee as imám over men and jinn hath set. Ten especial gifts too hath He given thee,
'Never such to any Prophet granted He.' When that Mustafá of these had question made,
Thus the messenger of God in answer said:
One is this, wherever God is mentioned, lo,
'Shall Muhammed Mustafá be mentioned too.'
'God hath made thy folk the best of folk that be,
'Them the folk who bid and forbid made hath He.'
'He hath let the cleanly earth be clean for these;
'Fair the cleanness, fair the honour, fair the peace.
'Other peoples, if they could no water get,
'Counted were unclean; 'twas thus the Law was set.
'These shall learn moreover the Koran by heart;
'Other folk have never in this gift had part.'

1 Imam, in its more restricted sense, is the title given to the precentor or leader of a congregation of worshippers; in its wider sense it is applied (as here) to a chief, or leader, or teacher in general.
2 Muhammed's mission being to the jinn (see vol. i, p. 245, n. 5) as well as to mankind.
3 Mustafá, i. e. Muhammed Mustafá the Prophet.
4 In allusion to the Kelime or Muslim Confession of Faith: 'There is no god but God; Muhammed is the Apostle of God.'
5 Referring to Koran, iii, 106: 'Ye are the best of nations brought forth unto mankind; ye bid what is good and ye forbid what is ill, and ye believe in God.'
6 This refers to Koran, iv, 46, where, speaking of the canonical ablution, it is said, 'if ye cannot find water, then use good sand and wipe your faces and your hands therewith.' This permission to use sand for ablutionary purposes in place of water, when the latter is unprocurable, is looked upon as one of the concessions granted by Heaven to the adherents of Islam, the followers of the earlier dispensations being reckoned canonically unclean unless the prescribed washings were made with water, as is stated in the succeeding couplet.
7 i.e. their canonical cleanness is perfect, so is their honour as strict observers of the Law, and so is their peace of mind as to the proper accomplishment of their duty.
8 It is reckoned one of the special miracles in connection with the Koran that so many of its followers know it by heart. There have at all times been among every Muslim people thousands of Háfizes, that is, persons who know the whole Koran by heart; so that if at any time every written copy of the sacred volume should disappear from the face of earth, it would be perfectly
None hath known the Pentateuch by heart but three
Of that nation, Moses, Jesus, Ezra, they.

God hath pardoned thee thine every sin for aye,
Done thy former and thy later sins away.  
By thy faith all other faiths annulled hath He,
Though averse thereto the polytheists be.
Then the angels and the Lord of all who live
Hail to thee and greeting fair and noble give.

Saith God — extolled and exalted be He! —
God and His Angels salute the Prophet. O ye who believe!
Salute ye him!

Whoso seeketh for his soul the Stream of Life,
Greeting unto yon Beloved let him give!

easy to restore it down to the minutest detail. Such has never been the case
with the scriptures of any other community.

1 The tradition is that Ezra, after having been dead for many years, was
raised to life, and dictated from memory the whole of the Jewish scriptures,
which had been lost during the captivity; a feat which led the Jews, according
to the Koran (ix, 30), to call this prophet the Son of God.

2 As in Koran, XLVIII, 2: 'That God may forgive thee thy former and later sin.'

3 As in Koran, LXI, 9: 'He it is who hath sent His Apostle with the
guidance and the Religion of Truth to set it above all religions, averse though
the polytheists may be.'

4 This couplet is versified from the Koranic passage (XXXIII, 56) which is
quoted immediately after in the text.

5 This couplet is a refrain, and occurs from time to time throughout the poem.

Up to this point the conversation recorded between Gabriel and the Prophet
is purely imaginary; it rests upon no Koranic basis, and is supported by no
generally accredited authority; it consists simply of a number of unconnected
passages from the Koran strung together. The universally accepted account
of what happened at the first interview between the Archangel and the Apostle
is that which the poet now proceeds to narrate. It is to the effect that the
Angel appeared to Muhammed and bade him, 'Read!' In fear and trembling
the future Prophet answered that he was an unlettered man and could not
read. Thereupon Gabriel seized him and pressed or shook him violently, and
again bade him, 'Read!' This was repeated three times, after which the Angel
read to him these five verses which occur at the beginning of ch. XCVI of the
Koran: —

'Read! in the name of thy Lord who hath created,
Hath created man from congealed blood,'
When he by these words had done away his dread,
'Read!' he said. 'I know not how to read,' he said.
Seized and clasped him then the Messenger of God
That the heart of Mustafà be wide and broad.
'Read!' he said. 'O brother mine,' then Ahmed ¹ said,
'I am all unlettered, I can nothing read.'
'Read!' he said, and thrice he clasped him without ruth, —
(Some there be who tell he put him thus to proof).
Since he might read nothing of his own accord,
'Read thou,' said he, 'in the name then of thy Lord!'
Gabriel then read to him the chapter through
Till he reached the passage 'what he did not know.'

The extract which follows from the Tuhfet-ul-'Ushsháq or
'Gift to Lovers' describes the young merchant's first sight
of the vezir's daughter at the close of the feast at her
father's house.

From the Tuhfet-ul-'Ushsháq.

The Merchant's Son seeth the Daughter of the Vezir. [117]

With heart at peace while in this case he ² lay,
With eyes and spirit that around did stray,
A curtain opposite was sudden drawn,
And forth therefrom a Moon ³ in beauty shone.
How fair a Moon! the sun each day doth kiss
The dust that on her beauty's pathway is. ⁴
Her lip's sherbet 's physician of the soul;
Her hair to madness drives the wise and whole.
How brave a sorcerer that curling tress! —

'Read! by thy Lord the Most Gracious!
'Who hath taught the pen,
'Hath taught man what he did not know.'

These five verses are therefore the first that were revealed.

¹ Ahmed, i. e. Muhammad.
² i. e. the young merchant.
³ i. e. the vezir's daughter.
⁴ The sun shining on her pathway is said, by the figure aetiology (vol. 1, p. 113), to kiss the dust she treads on.
Each hair a myriad souls holds in duress.
Were 't strange if they should sell the world for naught
Who once a sight of yonder hair-waist caught: 1
The star which I praise is yonder may
Whose cheek bestows on sun and moon their ray.
Her ornaments gave lustre to her moon; 2
Her shadow formed a cloud anear the sun. 3
A lasso she on either shoulder bare 4
That she therewith the merchant might ensnare.
Her brigand-eyes were ready therewithal
Upon the booty of his wits to fall.
And lo, Life's Water of her lips she bore
To give fresh life to him who life gave o'er.
From head to foot was she in red arrayed
That she the Kingdom of his heart might raid. 5
She held in hand Jemshid's translucent bowl, 6
Each drop whereof would horse full many a soul. 7
That Cypress fair 8 advanced with arch demean,
('I was like the sun with radiant moon beseen); 9
Her head before the merchant bowed she,
And then she sate her by him knee to knee.
That Peacock to yon Humá gave the bowl, 10
And straightway to the air she flung his soul. 11

1 There is here a hint at the connection between 'naught' and the girl's hair-waist which is so slight as to be (almost) nothing; cf. vol. i, p. 218, n. 6.
2 The 'moon' here stands for either the girl's face or her person, the idea being that she has heightened her beauty by her elaborate dressing, etc.
3 She herself is the 'sun', so her shadow is conceived as a cloud by the side of this.
4 i. e. her curling tresses hung down over each shoulder.
5 'Red,' 'arrayed', and 'raid' are in imitation of the original, and are brought together merely for the sake of the tejnis or paronomasia.
6 Jemshid's translucent bowl is simply the wine-filled bowl. For the allusion see p. 71, n. 1.
7 i. e. would carry myriads of souls to exaltation.
8 i. e. the slender, elegant girl.
9 The girl is the sun; the wine-filled goblet, the bright moon. Generally when the moon is seen near the sun, the former appears faint; but in this case, strange to say, it preserves its radiance.
10 The Peacock is the girl; the Humá, the youth.
11 The humá is always associated with air, in which it lives, never alighting
The wine his diffidence threw to the wind,
The flames of love around the merchant twined.

What time that love o'er him did cast its shade
His beauty's full moon did to crescent fade;
His rose-face changed to pallid eglantine,¹
And red, as it were rubies, turned his eyne.²
When yonder Fawn³ into this dolour fell
He voiced his case in this musk-sweet ghazel: —

Ghazel.

'The taper of the heart is from the lowe of love alight,
'And moth-like in that burning lowe y-brent are soul and spright.
'The world hath reached the tide of spring, and smileth like the rose;
'My heart and brain are dyed in blood, e'en like the tulip bright.⁴
'What while my vagrant heart was wand'ring free, the huntsman Love
'Gave chase thereto, and round its neck his lasso flung forthright.
'O preacher, preach not unto us, for wode and wild are we;
'If wise thou be, no sermon read to bound and fettered wight.⁵
'How should not Hamdí make his moan as morn and eve come round? —
'For peace is fall'n asleep, and woke are pain and woe and blight.'

When that her end was gained the maiden saw,
She made as though that she would thence withdraw.
The merchant thereon seized her skirt and cried,
'O thou, who'st fired my soul's stackyard,⁶ abide!
'O love, whose tresses have my wits bewrayed,
'Whose Leylâ-locke have me their Mejnûn made!⁷

on earth (vol. i, p. 331, n. 5). The word here used for 'air' is that which
means also 'love-desire', see p. 204, n. 3, and p. 206, n. 1.
¹ In this poetry the eglantine is generally associated with the idea of whiteness.
² Because of his tears of blood.
³ i. e. the young merchant. The fawn (or deer) and musk are associated.
⁴ The 'tide of spring' represents the beautiful girl; all rejoice through her,
and her lover alone is filled with anguish.
⁵ Madmen were usually fettered (vol. i, p. 330, n. 5, and p. 360, n. 8);
there is no use in exhorting madmen, they cannot understand: the youth is
mad with love, he is fettered in the huntsman’s lasso, i. e. the girl’s long hair.
⁶ For the explanation of this metaphor see p. 55. n. 3.
⁷ 'Leylâ-locks' implies 'night-black locks', just as 'their Mejnûn' implies
'their bewitched one.'
The while that bird, my heart, was flying free,
By guile thou'st snared it in the love of thee.
Thy quarry 'tis, forsake it not, O Soul! 1
Nor go and leave it in the springe of dole.
A stranger I fall'n in thy sorrow's stead, 2
A bulbul who hath reached thy beauty's mead.
To make the souls of stranger-wights thy prey
Thy chin a pit for guests is, welaway! 3
Since pow'less I this yearning to endure,
Oh cast me not in parting's prison dure!

The following passages are from the Qiyāfet-Nāme or 'Book of Physiognomy,' and from them it will be seen that the ruling principle of the science is that due proportion in the bodily features is the index of an evenly balanced nature, every physical departure from such proportion being indicative of an excess or deficiency in some moral quality.

From the Qiyāfet-Nāme.

Of the Complexion. [118]

A ruddy hue showeth hasty blood.
A dusky tint is the sign of good.
Whose tint both red and clear is, 4
Politeness and modesty are his.
The man whose complexion doth sallow be
Is false of heart, and a traitor he.
That yellow that doth to black incline
In all of his nature is false and vain.
This is token and sign of proportion right, —
That the red be red and the white be white. 5

1 i.e. O beloved.
2 i.e. I am a stranger who has chanced upon the land of sorrowing for the love of thee, i.e. who has fallen in love with thee, and suffers in consequence.
3 The chin's 'pit' is the dimple. By 'guests' 'strangers' are here meant, but strangers who have some claim to hospitable treatment.
4 That is, whose skin is clear and whose cheeks and lips are red, i.e. who has a good complexion.
5 i.e. that those parts are red which should be red, such as the cheeks and lips, and those white which should be white.
He who is white without trace of red,
And whose eyes in blueness do exceed,
A traitor shameless and lewd is he,
Supreme in the world for levity.

Of Laughing. [119]

Wheresoever excess of laughing be
Hope not there for sincerity.
To smile full oft shows a gracious heart,
To guffaw is of shamelessness the part.

Of the Ear. [120]

Who hath ass's ears,¹ a fool is he,
Though in memory he perfect be.
Whose ears are small, as it were a cat's,
In thieving will put to shame the rats.²

Of Movement. [121]

Who fidgeteth much for selfish know;
Lewdness and craft are his ways, I trow.

We have now examined ³ five of Hamdi's mesnevis, and
have found that, with one exception, they are all composed
in a comparatively simple and unpretentious style, which
does not greatly differ from that of the majority of his
contemporaries and immediate predecessors. We have further
found that the one exception, viz. his Joseph and Zelíkhá,
falls into two parts, of which one is in the same simple style
as his other poems, while the other (avowedly modelled upon
the work of Jámi) is highly artificial and elaborate. We have

¹ i. e. large ears.
² The ears should therefore be neither too large nor too small, but of due
proportion and medium size.
³ This concluding passage, down to the end of the chapter, was written
in pencil on a loose sheet of paper which lay between two leaves of the
manuscript, to which I have added it in what is obviously its place, though
I am not certain whether or no it was the author's intention to print it. ED.]
seen moreover, that it is on this exceptional work alone that the poet's reputation rests; that his other mesnevis never attained popularity, and have long age passed into oblivion. These facts lead us to two conclusions: first, that Hamdi's natural style, when he is left entirely to his own resources, is the simple and somewhat bald though straightforward diction observable in the great bulk of his work: secondly, that had he not been lucky enough to encounter Jámi's Joseph and Zelikhá before issuing his own, and skilful enough to adopt and assimilate successfully the hints as to style and treatment conveyed by this masterpiece, he would have fared no better at the hands of posterity than have 'Ishqi, Bihishti, or any other of the long-forgotten romanticists who were his contemporaries.

After the Joseph and Zelikhá, Hamdi's Leylā and Mejnun is his most artistic poem. This is not surprising, as he wrote it at a later period of his life, after he had had the advantage of studying Jámi's great work.
CHAPTER VIII.

MESIIH.

The only other poet of eminence whose career falls wholly within the reign of Bāyezīd II is the talented and original writer generally known by his pen-name of Mesiih. Sehī and Riyāzi alone among the biographers mention the personal name of this poet, which, according to them, was Mesih. But neither they nor any of the others have aught to tell us concerning the poet's parentage, all that we can learn from them being that he was born at Prishtina, an important town of northern Albania. As the population of this town has at all times consisted chiefly of Albanians, it is by no means improbable that there may have been something of an Arnaut strain in Mesiih, which might perhaps account in a measure for his unwonted audacity as a poet.

'Ashiq is the only one of the biographers to give us any particulars concerning Mesiih's history. From what he says it is evident that the future poet must in early life have found his way to Constantinople. He appears to have begun his career as a softa, that is, a student of the Law; but he soon turned his attention to calligraphy, in which he took great pleasure, and which he practised with much success. His skill in this art won for him the good graces of the illustrious vezir ʻAlī Pasha, 1 one of the greatest contemporary

1 Khādīm ʻAlī Pasha, or ʻAlī Pasha the Eunuch, was one of the most
patrons of men of talent, who honoured him with his friendship
and appointed him to be his divan secretary. But Mesihi
was, unfortunately for himself, of a careless and pleasure-
loving disposition, and failed to take due advantage of his
opportunities. A certain 'Ali Chelebi, another of the vezir’s
protégés, who had been Mesihi’s boon-companion, told the
biographer 'Ashiq that that ‘city lad,’ as the Pasha used
to call the poet, was never at hand when wanted to draw
up a letter or other document, and used invariably to be
found by the porters sent to seek him, either in the disre-
putable quarter of Under-Castle, or in the taverns, or in
the pleasure-gardens with his favourites. The Pasha was not
unnaturally annoyed at this conduct, and so put off promoting
his secretary or raising his salary till he should mend his
ways. But before this happened 'Ali Pasha was killed, in
the First Rebi 917 (June 1511), in battle against the Shi’i
rebels of Tekke, and Mesihi found himself without a patron
distinguished public men of Bayezid II’s time. He was equally famous as a
soldier and a statesman; and twice held the office of Grand Vezir. He was
an appreciative and generous patron of every description of talent.

1 This 'Ali Chelebi, as well as his son Merdumi the poet, was amongst the
numerous acquaintances of the biographer 'Ashiq. He had originally been a
soldier; but he acquired his reputation through his penmanship and his skill
in other arts connected with the decoration of manuscripts, to which no doubt
he owed the vezir’s patronage. On 'Ali Pasha’s death he received some subor-
dinate government appointment.

2 Shehr oghlani, ‘city lad’, is the term ‘Ashiq puts into the Pasha’s mouth.
[It is nearly obsolete nowadays, but corresponds in meaning, as I am informed
by Khalil Khalid Efendi, to the modern shehirli, which is used in the sense
of a timorous or cowardly person. Ed.]

3 Taht-al-Qâla ‘Under-Castle’, i.e. the walk or esplanade under the castle
(but vulgarly Takhta-Qala ‘Wooden Castle’) is the name of a somewhat shady
district in Constantinople lying along the Golden Horn to the west of the
great mosque called Yeni Jami or ‘New Mosque.’ It still contains many low
coffee-houses and taverns.

4 When Timur was devastating Asia Minor the Sufi sheykh, Sadr-ud-Din, managed
to obtain from him immunity for the people of the province of Tekke, most of whom were followers of his doctrine. From that time the
and without the means of livelihood. His first necessity was of course to discover another protector, but this was far from easy. He applied first to Yûnus Pasha the General of the Janissaries,¹ to whom he presented a beautiful qasîda which was at once an elegy on his late master and a prayer for the Agha’s protection. Disappointed in that quarter, he turned next to the Nishânji Pasha or Lord Chancellor, Jaʿfer Chelebi, ² himself a distinguished poet, to whom he offered what is probably the finest qasîda he ever wrote. Little more success attended this effort, though possibly the revenues of a small fief in Bosnia, which we are told were made over to the poet, may have been the result of this appeal to his fellow-craftsman. In any case the dole was insufficient; and poems presented to Prince (afterwards Sultan) Selîm, then busy fighting with his brother Ahmed, were no more fruitful, being overlooked in the preoccupations and excitements of the campaign. And so Mesîhî died in neglect and poverty when the sun was setting on Friday the 16th of the First Jemâzî 918 (30th July 1512), little more than a year after the master by whose kindness he had so foolishly failed to profit.

Mesîhî, though a reckless debauche, seems to have been Persian sheykhîs had enormous influence in Tekke, and when the Persian Shâh Ismaʿîl, the descendant of the holy Sheykh Safi-ud-Dîn began, at the dawn of the sixteenth century, to conceive the project of a great heterodox state, he was energetically supported by the Tekke sectaries. These heretics at once threw in their lot with the Persian Shîʿî adventurer, and revolted against their orthodox master in Constantinople. Under their leader, who called himself Shâh-Quli or ‘the Shâh’s (i.e. Ismaʿîl’s) Slave’, but whom the orthodox dubbed Sheytân-Quli or ‘the Devil’s Slave’, they succeeded in defeating the Imperial troops, so that it became necessary for the vezir himself to lead an army against them. In the furious battle that ensued both ʿAlî Pasha and the Devil’s Slave were killed. ʿAlî Pasha is the first Grand Vezir of Turkey who was killed in battle.

¹ This Yûnus Pasha, then General of the Janissaries, the corps d’élite founded by Sultan Orkhan (see vol. i, p. 179, n. 1), was in 923 (1517) made Grand Vezir by Sultan Selim, who a few months afterwards cut off his head.

² An account of Jaʿfer Chelebi’s life and work will be given in the next chapter.
a man of bold and independent character. His literary work bears witness to this in more ways than one, while 'Ashiq tells us that although in order to execute his writing he 'would wrap his skirt about him \(^1\) like the letter, and bend down his head like the reed, yet he would bow the head pen-like to no man.' \(^2\) We shall see by and by the proud answer which, according to Latifi, he returned to the poet Zátí when the latter charged him with plagiarism.

That Mesihi was one of the most gifted, as well as the most original, of the earlier Ottoman poets is beyond question. All the critics agree in praising his exceptional talents. Thus Latifi lauds the subtlety of his fancy and the originality of his conceptions, though he adds that his thoughts are indeed often too subtle to give pleasure to the mass of the people or even to every poet, his special style being appreciable only by the elect. 'Ashiq, playing on the name Mesihi, \(^3\) says that this poet was the Messiah who gave fresh life to the dead frame of verse by breathing into it the spirit of poetry. Ahmed Pasha, he continues, founded in Rûm the edifice of poetry, of which Nejáti was the first column and Mesihi the second. Comparing him with his contemporary Zátí, the biographer declares that although the poetry of the latter, who was skilled in every kind of verse and in all the arts of rhetoric, is pretty, that of Mesihí is coquettish and elusive, and that although with Zátí the garb of diction suits the figure of the conception, with Mesihí it fits close. His qasidas and qitáas are pronounced unrivalled, his elegy on 'Ali Pasha is of the category of 'unapproachable simplicity', \(^4\)

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\(^1\) i. e. prepare to begin work.

\(^2\) When a letter is folded it may be conceived as wrapping its skirt about it. The head or point of the pen has of course to be held downwards to write.

\(^3\) Mesihi means 'Messianic'; Mesih, i. e. 'Messiah', is a name occasionally met with amongst the Turks.

\(^4\) See vol. 1, p. 240, n. 2.
while the spring qasida, that which he presented to Ja'fer Chelebi, is described as exceedingly artistic and ingeniously wrought and as being highly esteemed by great and small. Hasan proceeds on the same lines, but is as usual more bombastic in his strain; thus he says, 'It is fitting he should be famed under the pen-name of Mesihî, for Messiah-like he revivified the dead of speech and through the channel of his musky-figuring reed made the Water of Life to flow.'

'In subtlety of fancy and in grace and delicacy of diction he is without peer, and it is meet he should be called the Third of the Trinity of the poets of Rûm.' 'His eloquent poems are world-renounced as the sun in the ethereal heaven.'

'It were no figure of speech to say that the hosts of fancies mustered in his eloquent Diwán have never before been assembled at any divan, and that the stars of imagination that shine in the heaven of his pages have never before been gathered together in a single place.'

These extracts suffice to show that the critics nearest to his own time held a very high opinion of Mesihî's merits as a poet; and there can be no doubt that his verse is among the very best work of its kind that had yet been produced in Turkish. It is probable that Mesihî was still a young man at the time of his death (Sehî, who places him among his own contemporaries, speaks of him as 'a youth of talent'); at any rate his literary work is not great in extent. It consists of a not very bulky Diwán and, according to Latîfî, a collection of epistolary models which bears the title of Gul-i Sad-Berg or 'The Hundred-Leaf Rose.'

The Diwán contains as usual a series of qasidas and ghazels,

1 Alluding to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, for he is still playing with the meaning of the name Mesihî. Ahmed Pasha and Nejâti are no doubt the other two Persons of his Trinity of poets.

2 Mesihî's Diwán is unprinted. The British Museum possesses two MSS., Or. 1152, and Arundel Or. 18.
together with a few pieces in other forms, and it contains as well (at least there is usually incorporated with it) a mesnevi poem of about 180 couplets called Shehr-Engiz or 'The City-Thriller', which is Mesihi's most original and most memorable contribution to literature. The lyric poems are well above the average of their class. They are distinguished by a certain novelty in the imagery; the conventional paraphernalia are indeed retained, but the well-worn figures are often presented in new combinations or under fresh aspects; and, more important, a number of altogether novel pictures and images are introduced which are skilfully worked in with the stereotyped landscape. These latter innovations, it is interesting to note, are almost all drawn from objects or scenes that must have come under Mesihi's personal observation; and his audacity in introducing such into literary verse is another proof of his daring and independence as a poet. His verses are moreover characterised by a peculiar and indefinable clear-cut quality, which seems to arise in some decree from the absence of the usual verbosity, and which is perhaps what 'Ashiq means when he speaks of the garment of the poet's diction 'fitting close' on the figure of his thought. In any case this crystalline quality gives a sharpness and translucency to the author's work, and sets it apart from that of any of his contemporaries.

One of Mesihi's lyrics has had a strange and unique fortune among Turkish poems. This is a murebbâ1 or four-lined stanzaic poem on that most favourite theme of medieval writers, the return of spring. This particular spring-poem is a very favourable example of its class; for although the conventional background is preserved, many of the pictures are fresh, while pictures and language alike suggest something

1 See vol. 1, p. 91. The murebbâ in question is of the variety called mutekerrir.
of the sparkle of the dew on flower and leaf on a sweet spring morning. Some gleam of this freshness and brilliance was perceived by Sir William Jones, who printed the text of the entire work in his Latin treatise on Eastern poetry published in 1774, — a distinction which he accorded to no other Turkish poem. This text, which is very faulty, is accompanied by a yet more imperfect Latin translation; but the intrinsic beauty of the work, even when so presented, combined with the circumstance that it was for many years the only complete Turkish poem available, secured for this murebbā a reputation in Europe such as has never been attained by any other Ottoman poem. There has probably been no book or article dealing in any way with Turkish poetry, published from that day to this, in any Western language, in which ‘Mesîhi’s Ode on Spring’ does not figure in one form or another.

But Mesîhi’s truest claim to distinction as an original poet rests on his little mesnevi called Shehr-Engîz. This title, suggested by the subject, which is trivial enough, being merely a semi-burlesque catalogue of the pretty boys of Adrianople, is rather awkward to translate; I have rendered it by ‘City-Thriller’, the idea being that through the description of the beauties which it gives, the poem will create a furore in the city. This poem is original in two ways; firstly, it is the invention of Mesîhi, both subject and treatment are his own conception, he had no Persian model, for there is no similar poem in Persian literature; secondly, it is the first attempt at humorous poetry in Turkish. The work makes no pretension to be poetry of a high order, the lines on which it is planned would preclude anything of the kind; it is simply a jeu d’esprit, a play of wit, in which the author seeks to amuse himself and his readers.

1 Poeseos Asiaticae commentariorum libri sex cum appendice (Leipzig).
It offers a much needed relief from the great stream of intensely serious poetry, whether the elusive rhapsodies of the mystics or the often affected sentimentality of the lyric and romantic writers. Indeed it is difficult to avoid a suspicion that Mesihí is here poking fun at the latter, for while he says hardly anything that they might not have said, the manner in which he makes his statements shows clearly enough that his intention was to provoke a laugh.

That the poet should have chosen for his subject the minions of the bazaars is the result of the social conditions of his time. Nowadays a corresponding production would deal with the principal courtesans of a city. But in the East in the fifteenth century, and indeed for many years afterwards, things were different; and further, we must bear in mind that, strange as it may appear to modern notions, such a poem as I have suggested would have been reckoned an immeasurably greater outrage on public decorum than the work Mesihí actually wrote.

In style this poem is in sharp contrast to the lyrics; it is very much simpler, and there is little, if any, display of subtle ingenuity or rhetorical brilliance. Unlike the author's other works, it is written in a way that must have made it at once intelligible to the ordinary man. It is full of allusions no doubt, but they are allusions that were common property, known to all. Again, both in vocabulary and in idiom it is considerably less Persian and more Turkish than the lyrics and indeed than most contemporary Ottoman poems. This last peculiarity marks so to speak the starting-point for what becomes a general rule in subsequent Ottoman poetry, namely, that in proportion as verse is humorous in intention it approaches the vernacular in language. Some such tendency prevails in the poetry of probably every people; but with the Ottomans, whose serious poetry is so
highly artificial, the difference is marked with peculiar emphasis.

There is no mention of any date in the Shehr-Engiz. It was probably written in Adrianople, as in the only hint concerning the composition which the poet gives he says that the King (presumably Bāyezid II) had gone to that city where he remained a year or two, and that he himself had repaired thither 'as a share of the royal favour had reached him.'

The poem, which is in the same variety of the hezej metre as Sheykhi's Khusrev and Shírín and Hamdī's Leylà and Mejnûn, consists of three parts: a Prologue, the Catalogue, and an Epilogue.

The Prologue (Dibāje) is divided into five sections. In the first two of these the poet confesses his sins and implores God's pardon, but even here he gives play to his humour in the whimsical illustrations by which he magnifies his own wickedness. At the end of the second, Mesihí prays God to make 'this City-Thriller' (Shehr-Engíz) famous in the city, which shows that the author himself gave this title to his little work. The next two sections are devoted, the one to a picture of night, the other to a sketch of morning; these have no direct connection with the proper subject of the poem, of which they are the most conventional parts, though it is at the close of the second that the author speaks of his going to Adrianople. The fifth section opens with the praise of that city, and then goes on to tell of the boys bathing in the River Tunja on which the town is built.

Then comes the Catalogue of the boys. There are in all forty-six of these, each of whom is mentioned by name and gets two couplets of comment, with the exception of two, one of whom has three, and the other four couplets. These couplets, placed under the several names, are not really
descriptive; it is very rarely indeed that they contain anything in any way personal or individual. They are almost wholly devoted to humorous, often punning, allusions to the lad's name, or to his own or his father's trade. Indeed they are for the most part so vague and indeterminate that they might be applied to any lad of the same name and trade. This total absence of characterisation puts of course anything like realism out of the question; it is perhaps a reflection of that conventionality and sameness in the type of beauty which we have seen to be a feature of the love-poetry of this school; and if so, it would naturally suggest a doubt as to whether the names here mentioned do really represent actual individuals or mere creations of the poet's brain. Though humorous, these verses are always complimentary in tone; the boys are always spoken of in flattering terms. The humour again is never coarse; it consists chiefly in the whimsical association of ideas, the starting-point for which, as said before, is usually the name or calling of the lad; not unfrequently it is assisted by the apt quotation of some proverb or popular saying. This Catalogue, whether the names it contains be real or fictitious, is not without a socio-logical interest; from it we can learn something as to the classes which furnished recruits of this description. One noteworthy point here is that the names are all Muhammedan; in this Mesihf's list differs from many of the later ones that were modelled upon it, where we find Greek, Armenian, and Jewish names mixed up with the Muslim. Then most of the boys are described as belonging to what we should call the lower middle class; they are almost all either themselves employed in shops, or they are the sons of shopkeepers or artisans; only one or two are connected with the lower ranks of the learned profession.

1 Vol. i, p. 65.
In the Epilogue, which is very brief, the poet says that every one of the boys whose praises he has sung is more beautiful than any angel in Paradise. He then regrets his futile endeavours to confine his vagrant affections to any single one of them; and winds up his poem with two ghazels in which he prays God to bless them all.

So ends this strange poem, the most original piece of work which Turkish literature so far has shown us. When he wrote it Mesihi introduced a new variety into Ottoman poetry, a feat which few indeed have rivalled. For this poem at once became popular, whence resulted many 'parallels', the work of the author's contemporaries and successors. Its playfulness and spontaneity were doubtless felt to be a welcome change from the unbending seriousness hitherto regarded as essential in poetry; while its humour and freedom from transcendentalism would commend it to a certain bias inherent in the Turkish character which had hitherto been rigorously repressed in literature.  

And so during the next two hundred years and more we find many a grave and learned poet laying aside his dignity for the nonce and amusing himself and his friends by trying to rival Mesihi with a 'City-Thriller' in praise of the young beauties of his own day and town. One of these, 'Azizi by name, more greatly daring than his fellows, had the hardihood to write such a poem in honour, not of the boys, but of the girls of Constantinople. Nearly all those 'parallels' follow Mesihi's work in every particular. They are almost all in the same metre; they almost all consist of the three parts, Prologue, Catalogue, and Epilogue; there is almost a description of night in the Prologue; and two couplets of comment are almost always allotted to each name on the

1 See vol. 1, p. 29, last paragraph.
2 An account of 'Azizi and his poem will be given in due course.
list. The tone too is always the same; in every case it is humorous, and at the same time complimentary to the young persons mentioned; the humour moreover is always on the same lines, being invariably sought through playful allusions to the name or calling of the lads or girls, and never degenerating into coarseness. All those poems bear the generic name of Shehr-Engiz or 'City-Thriller' — the individual name of the prototype —, though they are sometimes distinguished as so and so's 'City-Thriller of Constantinople' or 'of Brusa', and so on, according to the town dealt with. One or two have in addition a special title: thus Wahid's 'City-Thriller of Yeñi-Şehr (Larissa)’ is called also Lale-zâr or 'The Tulip Garden', and ‘Azizi's list of the Constantinopolitan daughters of joy bears as its distinctive name Nigâr-Nâme or 'The Book of Beauties.'

In one place Von Hammer seems to overlook Mesihi's claim to be the originator of this variety of poem; he there says that Faqiri, a minor poet of this time, was the first to produce a Shehr-Engiz. ¹ This statement is incorrect; in the first place, Faqiri's poem is not a Shehr-Engiz; it is a versified list of the various trades, professions, and offices of his day, 'in the style of the Shehr-Engizes', to quote the words of ‘Ashiq. ² In the second place, there is no indication

¹ Geschichte der Osmanischen Dichtkunst, vol. 1, p. 136; but farther on (p. 278) he says more correctly that Faqiri wrote a kind of Shehr-Engiz.

² That is to say it resembles the ‘City-Thrillers’ in being a versified list, in devoting a few (it would seem generally three) couplets to each entry, and in being written in the same metre. 'Ashiq quotes four of the entries in Faqiri's poem, those dealing with the Poets, the Pursuivants (Chawush), the Couriers (Ulagh), and the Rope-dancers. These are his remarks upon the Poets: —

'Dost know the Poets' case, how it may be?
'They laud each beauty's locks and mole they see;
'They make of one the snare, of one the bait.
'Tis now to mouth, 'tis now to waist they flit.
'And many words they speak on vainest wise,
'For naught from thence but fantasies arise.'
that his poem, such as it is, was written earlier than Mesíhi's; indeed 'Ashiq's words seem to point the other way, and we know from Latífi that Faqírí was alive later than Mesíhi, as he did not die till the time of Sultan Selím.

It is somewhat strange that, while Mesíhi's 'City-Thriller' thus inaugurated a new fashion in Ottoman poetry, 'Ashiq alone of the biographers should specially mention it; and even his words, that it is 'indeed charming', seem scarcely adequate. It is possible that having regard to the somewhat frivolous nature of both its subject and its style, those reverend masters were a little shy of appearing over-enthusiastic. However that may be, we on our part need have no hesitation in pronouncing Mesíhi, mainly, though by no means exclusively, by virtue of this work, to be, not indeed among the greatest, but, what is perhaps more remarkable, among the most original poets in Ottoman literature.

The following is a translation of the famous 'Ode on Spring.'

Murebba. [122]

Hark the nightingale a-warbling: 'Now are come the days o' spring!'
Thronged are all the garden-ways,¹ for such the merry ways o' spring.
There the almond-tree bescatters silvern showers, sprays o' spring.²

Drink, be gay; for soon will vanish, biding not, the days o' spring!

Once again with diverse florets gay bedeckt are garth and plain;
Tents for pleasance have the blossoms pitched in every rosy lane.³

¹ They are thronged with the bright flowers that look like gaily dressed pleasure-seekers who have gone abroad to enjoy the returning spring.
² The 'silvern showers' are the pale petals which the almond-tree sheds in spring; these are fancied as silver coins thrown among the flower-crowds by the tree.
³ The flowering shrubs and bushes are here conceived as pavilions.
Who can say who dead may be, who whole, when spring comes round again:

Drink, be gay; for soon will vanish, bidding not, the days o' spring!

Every corner of the garden shines fulfilled of Ahmed's Light: ¹
There the verdant herbs, his Comrades; there his Kin, the tulips bright. ²
O ye People of Muhammed! this the time of fair delight!

Drink, be gay; for soon will vanish, bidding not, the days o' spring!

Sparkling dew-drops once again the iris-sabre damaskeen; ³
Lo, the hail hath stormed with those its sky-grenades the flowery green. ⁴
Hearken then my rede, an thou be fain to see so brave a scene:

Drink, be gay; for soon will vanish, bidding not, the days o' spring!

Rose and tulip bloom as beauties bright o' blee and sweet o' show,
In whose ears the dew hath hung full many a gem to gleam and glow.
Deem not thou, thyself deceiving, things will aye continue so.

Drink, be gay; for soon will vanish, bidding not, the days o' spring!

¹ For the original meaning of the 'Light of Ahmed (or Muhammed)' see vol. 1, pp. 34-5. Here it figuratively represents the glory of the returning spring, which makes the pious soul think on the Divine radiance. In a secondary sense, the term Nūr-i Ahmed, 'Light of Ahmed', may possibly be the name of some spring-flower, though I have not been able to discover that this is the case.

² The herbs, clad in green, the sacred colour, are fancied as the Companions of the Prophet; the bright red (al) tulips as his Family (al). The latter may be either his actual or his spiritual family, for he said

‘Whoso followeth me, he is of my Family’, whence the Muslims, or the righteous among them, are sometimes spoken of as Khayr-ul-āl, i.e. 'the Best of Families.'

³ The leaf of the lily is often likened to a sword because of its shape. Here the dew-drops are conceived as the 'watering' on such a sword.

⁴ Hawayi-Top, 'sky-cannon', was the name given by the Turks of those times to some particular kind of cannon then in use. It is frequently mentioned by contemporary authors; thus in his Kitāb-i Usul, or 'Book of Principles', Yahya Bey puts these words into the mouth of a coward who is describing one of Sultan Suleyman's battles with the Hungarians:

‘The sky-guns were fired by yon caitiff fone,
In sooth they'd have slain me if I had not flown.'

Here Mesihī conceives the hail stones, descended from the sky, as the balls from sky-guns, and pictures the garden as having been captured by this cannonade.
See the tulip, rose, and peony within the garden there, —
How the levin with the lancet-rain hath let its blood be ware. 1
So thou’rt wise, in joyance pass this season with thy comrades fair.
  Drink, be gay; for soon will vanish, biding not, the days o’ spring!

Past the time when herb and grass on bed of dole were laid distrest, 2
When the garden’s care, the rosebud, hung its head upon its breast. 3
Come the hour when glow with tulips crag and rock and mountain-crest.
  Drink, be gay; for soon will vanish, biding not, the days o’ spring!

While each dawn the clouds are shedding pearls 4 upon the rosy land,
And the breath of morning’s zephyr, fraught with Tartar musk, 5 is bland,
While the world’s youth-tide is with us, do not thou unheeding stand:
  Drink, be gay; for soon will vanish, biding not, the days o’ spring!

With the fragrance of the garden so imbued the musky air,
Every dew-drop, ere it reacheth earth, is turned to attar rare;
O’er the garth the heavens spread the incense-cloud’s pavilion fair.
  Drink, be gay; for soon will vanish, biding not, the days o’ spring!

All the garden’s boast was smitten of the black autumnal blast;
But to each one justice bringing, back is come earth’s King 6 at last;
In his reign joyed the cupbearer, round the call for wine is past.
  Drink, be gay; for soon will vanish, biding not, the days o’ spring!

1 It was usual for people to be bled in the spring. The rose, tulip, and
peony are red, and being wet with rain, they suggest drops of blood on the
garden. So the poet here fancies the lightning as a physician who with his
lancet the rain — rain falling in torrents looking something like a shower
of lancets piercing the ground — has bled the garden in the spring-time,
which accounts for the drops of blood (wet red flowers) that are scattered
around.

2 In winter many herbs and grasses lie upon the ground.

3 The rosebud is here represented (1) as the ‘care’ i.e. the delicate nursling
of the garden; (2) (because of its shape) as the ‘head’ of the garden. When
the bud droops upon its stalk it becomes like a man’s head hanging on his
breast through care or sorrow. So the drooping rosebud is the head of the
garden hanging on its breast because of the garden’s anxiety for the rosebud.

4 i.e. the drops of rain or dew.

5 Tartary being the country whence musk is brought, see p. 112. n. 4.

6 i.e. Spring; perhaps, in a secondary sense, the Sultan after some journey
or campaign.
Fain I hope, Mesihi, fame may dwell with this my foursome lay:¹
May these four-eyebrowed beauties² bide, my keepsake with the gay.
Wander 'mong the roseeate faces, nightingale so sweet o' say.³

Drink, be gay; for soon will vanish, biding not, the days o' spring!

This is the spring-qasida which Mesihi presented to Jafer Chelebi the Nisháníji Pasha when praying his patronage. It is reckoned by the biographers as the most artistic of his works, and is probably among the last things he wrote. I have omitted some couplets from the panegyric.

Qasida. [123]

Up to wake the florets' eyen from oblivious slumber's sway⁴
Every morning o'er their faces vernal cloudlets water spray.
All the dwellers in the meadow are so filled with fresh'ning life
That were not the cypress foot-bound,⁵ from its steadfast it straight would stray.
Like the body is the garden, and the stream the soul therein,
Like the life the water fleeting onward ever night and day.
See the river-page hath ta'en for ruling-strings the ripples there⁶
Thinking fair to write the story of the rose's visage gay.
Ever as the dew distilleth, e'en as it were drops of milk,
All the Surgeons ope their mouths as though that little babes were they.

¹ i. e. this murebbá of mine.
² A 'four eyebrowed' beauty is a fair youth whose moustachios are just beginning to grow and so look like two eyebrows.

Here the 'four-eyebrowed beauties' are the four-lined stanzas of this poem, each of the lines representing an eyebrow.
³ The sweet-voiced nightingale who is thus bidden consort with the rose-faced beauties is the poet himself.
⁴ This is the deep heavy sleep of material nature as opposed to that sleep in which, though the body is unconscious, the soul is awake. See p. 210. n. 2.
⁵ i. e. were its foot not planted in the earth.
⁶ Alluding to the mister, which is the name of an instrument used for ruling paper. It is made of stout card to which are attached at regular intervals threads to mark the lines. When the paper is laid over this and pressed, the threads make a slight mark which indicates the lines. Here the poet fancies the ripples on the stream as the threads of a mister, the surface of the water being a page whereon the river is about to write a poem in praise of the lovely rose growing on its bank.
When the drops of rain are falling on the water, each is fain
In the fish's ear to hang a ring of silver thou wouldst say. 1
With the rose's scent the morning zephyr makes the bulbul sing,
As 'twere 'Attár teaching every fowl the Speech of Birds as lay. 2
Since that on its hand the cypress-tree the culver reared hath, 3
What if he do love it fondly and do chant its praises aye?
See, the breeze would chain the runnels, 4 saying, 'Lo, the truant knaves!'
Look ye how it draweth pictures on the water 5 every day.
Through the bud the breeze hath opened a balcony from whence
May the beauty-rose her visage to the nightingale display. 6
When I saw the flowers blossom through the fervour of the sun
Deemed I every tree a solar turban 7 had put on in ray.
There before the bride-rose gently glideth on the flowing brook,
Bearing on its head the bubble e'en as maid doth bowl convey. 8
Since the bud hath set its pot upon the branchlet of the rose
Flock the thorns from every quarter and thereon their arrows play. 9

1 In certain Eastern countries they used sometimes to fasten rings of silver through the noses or mouths of fishes kept in ornamental waters.
2 Alluding to the famous book called Mantiq-at-Tayr or 'The Language of Birds' by the great Persian poet Ferid ud-Din-i 'Attár. The word 'Attár, which enters into this poet's name, means 'perfumer', so his mention in this couplet is peculiarly appropriate. The scent of the rose, it should be said, was held to work the nightingale into a state of ecstacy.
3 As the culver or pigeon often sits upon the cypress, they are frequently associated by the poets.
4 The light breezes playing on the surface of water are very often likened to chains because of the lines they form.
5 Naqsí ber áb, 'a picture upon water', is a common term to express any vain and useless work or labour. Here the breeze does draw a picture (of chains) upon the water; and its labour is useless, for the picture at once disappears, and moreover it cannot chain the brooks.
6 The opening of the sepals of the calyx of the bud enables the rose to show itself to its admirer the nightingale, and is compared to the opening or unveiling of a balcony or oriel such as those from which kings and princes sometimes show themselves to an admiring crowd.
7 Shemshí dulbend or 'solar turban' was the name of some particular head-dress worn in those days; it is frequently referred to by contemporary poets.
8 In wedding (and other) processions slave-girls used sometimes to carry bowls on their heads.
9 In this couplet the rosebud is conceived as the pot or jug which was used as a target by marksmen, the thorns round about it being the arrows shot at it. By a figure of speech common in Eastern poetry the thorns are
In the garden is the floral squadrons master: Rose, the target:
Cypress, standard-bearer: Tulip, ensign, in that brave array.

Though that the Last Trump were blown to-day, no man would hear its voice,
For the melodies arising from the balluls' roundelay.

Yea, in sooth, the garth of spring doth boast a world that's all its own,
There the violet is night-tide, there the jasmine is the day. 1

Look ye how the hail hath polished all the leafage of the rose 2
That thereon you grave and stately Signior write his brilliant lay; 3

He the Mine of culture, he the Fountain-head of bounteous grace.
He the Paragon of man, the Flower of the noblesse for aye,
He the Lord of Speech's Climate, 4 the Nishânji Pasha high,
To the target of whose culture fancy's shafts can find no way. 5

He whose dirk is Ibn-i Hasâm, he whose sword Ibn-i Yemín,
He whose star is Sa'd and Eshref, he whose breath is Attár, yea. 6

When the charger of his splendour and his glory gallops forth
Meet it were that dust should reach the spirit of the Sphere, I say. 7

here presented at once as the archers who shoot and the arrows which are
shot by them.

1 The violet being dark and therefore like night, the jasmine being white and
therefore like the bright day.

2 The hailstones are here compared to the glass balls or agate burnishers
which they used to burnish or polish the paper on which manuscripts
were to be written. The rose is often compared to a book with many leaves
or pages.

3 Ja'fer Chelebi the Nishânji Pasha was, as we have said, himself a dis-
tinguished poet.

4 Alluding to Ja'fer's literary gifts.

5 i.e. thought cannot picture the depth and extent of his learning and culture.

6 Ibn-i Hasâm 'Son of the Sword', Ibn-i Yemín 'Son of the Right Hand'.
Sa'd 'Auspicious', and Eshref 'Most Exalted' are all names of Persian poets.
'Attár 'the Perfumer' we have already seen (p. 242 n. 2). [Biographies of
three of these poets are given by Dawlatshâh, on the following pages of my
pp. 225—6; Ibn-i-Yamín (d. A. H. 735 = A. D. 1334—5), pp. 275—7; Sa'd
of Herât (flourished about A. H. 724) seems to have been the son of the
Sa'id mentioned on pp. 157—101: Farîdû 'd-Dîn 'Attár (killed A. H. 627 =

7 (1) The charger gallops so swiftly that the dust he raises reaches to the
Ninth Sphere, the highest object in the universe (vol. 1, p. 43, n. 3). (2) The
expression 'dust on the heart' means chagrin or vexation: so the Ninth Sphere,
the swiftest of all things (vol. 1, p. 44), has in this sense also 'dust on its
heart', for it is chagrined at being outdone in swiftness by the Pasha's charger.
True, the seas might have resembled somewhat his pearl-scattering hand, 
If the largesse that they give the clouds they took not back alway. 1 
When the poets take the chaplet of his verses in their hands, 
This the litany on every tongue: 'I do for pardon pray!' 2 
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
What then if Mesihi see thy praises writ upon the skies 
Since these ranged lines a ladder form whereby ascend they may? 3 
Blushing shamed before thy culture in the garden of thy praise, 
Ruddy glow the virgin fancies' cheeks like to the roses gay. 4 
This my prayer is, that yonder losel ne'er may honoured be 
'Fore whose eyes these roseate fancies do themselves as thorns display. 5 
Never fancies chewed by others would I take within my mouth; 
I'm no weanling child with food by others chewed my wants to stay; 6 
Knowing how the life within my body is a loan to me, 
Of my very living am I shamed a thousand times a day! 7

1 As we have seen before, the sea is the type of bounty, giving pearls and so on; but it cannot vie with the lavish hand of the Pasha which never takes back any of its gifts, seeing that it (the sea) takes back in the form of rain etc. the moisture which through the process of evaporation it gives to form the clouds.

2 Here the Pasha's poetry is compared to a chaplet or rosary, every couplet being a bead. When the Muslims tell their beads, which are 99 in number, they say Subháná-lláh 'I recite the praise of God' for each of the first 33, El-handu-li-lláh 'Praise be to God' for each of the second 33, and Alláhu-Ekber 'God is most great' for each of the third 33. But Mesihi says that when the poets take this particular chaplet into their hands what they repeat at each bead or verse is the formula Estaghfiru-lláh 'I ask pardon of God', which formula is that usually employed when one would speak humbly or in a self-depreciatory sense.

3 The lines of the poem arranged one above the other look like the steps of a ladder.

4 The poet's fancies, though they be virgin, i.e. original, must blush rose-red like young virgins with shame at their feeble though audacious efforts to praise the far higher talents of the Pasha.

5 That is, such unworthy persons as through envy of the Pasha are vexed at seeing him thus praised, or as are jealous of Mesihi's skill in constructing so beautiful a qasida.

6 Sometimes mothers in the East chew food before giving it to very young children.

7 These last two couplets form the answer which, according to Latifi, Mesihi gave Záti when the latter poet accused him of appropriating certain of his ideas (see p. 229). Záti had made his charge in these lines which he sent to Mesihi: —
Here are four of Mesih’s ghazels.

Ghazel. [124]

Ever do the tears of blood the goblet of my eye o’erflow,
Some presentment of thy wine-hued rubies to the folk to show.¹

Could Ferhad but see my plight for thee, O Shirin-dalect lip,²
Taking in each hand a stone, he’d smite him, like the mill, for woe.³

Wheresoe’er I’d flee, the six directions closed on me have these,—⁴
Yonder two locks, yonder two eyes, yonder two eyebrows, c’/en so.⁵

¹ O Mesihí, whose stealth reputation is a knife.
² King art thou in verse’s city; now somehow hath this thing been.
³ Out of Ūzī’s realm of poesy some fancies have been stol’n.
⁴ Which have passed into thy Diwan, where in altered guise they’re seen.’
When reporting this story Latifi does not say that the reply sent by Mesihí occurs in one of his qasidas; and in fact the first line as given by him differs, though very slightly from the form in which it appears in the Diwan; he has it thus: —

⁵ There are two tresses (the hair hanging down each side of the face), two eyes, and two eyebrows, six in all, one to guard each of the six directions.

Think not I would stretch my hand forth for the fancies of a clown.’
¹ i. e. some idea alike of the redness of the beloved’s lips, and of the great influence they possess over the lover, which is such as to make him ever shed tears of blood.
² For the story of Ferhad and Shirin the Sweet see the epitome of Sheykhi’s poem in vol. i, ch. vi.
³ Referring to the Eastern quern or hand-mill in which the grain is ground between two stones. Ferhad would beat his breast either for pity of this lover or for vexation at being outdone by him in the intensity of his passion.
⁴ For the ‘six directions’ i. e. every side, see vol. i, p. 43, n. 3.
⁵ For the ‘six directions’ i. e. every side, see vol. i, p. 43, n. 3.
Winsomeness behoves a beauty that the folk in hand her bear, 1 
Elsewise eke the signet-ring both eye and eyebrow hath, I trow. 2

Did I fling not art among my verse I should not bide alive;
So that one may gain his living, needful 'tis an art to know. 3

Should Mesihi from this roll be struck, 4 his like will ne'er return;
What is writ o'er an erasure ne'er is writ so fair, ah no. 5

Ghazel. [125]

For that equal with the cypress riseth every caitiff wight
All the branches of the willow with their dirks themselves do smite. 6

Yea, the waving of thy locks hath oped a door to Paradise; 1
Yea, the magic of thy speech hath locked the rosebud's mouth forthright 8

1 'To bear in hand' i.e. to make much of; this is a literal translation of the Persian idiom mentioned in vol. 1, p. 214, n. 6. Mesihi frequently uses it. The literal meaning of the phrase also is here kept in view to form a connection with the signet-ring (mentioned in the next line), which is both borne on the hand and highly esteemed, its impression being equivalent to the owner's signature.
2 The collet of a ring is called in Turkish the 'eyebrow' and the stone the 'eye.'
3 The point in this couplet lies in the double sense of the word translated 'art,' which means both 'art' and 'handicraft.' It is needful to practise some art or handicraft in order to earn one's living; so if Mesihi did not introduce art into his verse he would starve, as he could find no patron.
4 i.e. if he should die.
5 If in a manuscript a word has been scraped out and another written in its place, the result is always a disfigurement. So if Mesihi's existence is erased from the roll of the living, the change will be for the worse as far as the roll is concerned, even if another poet take his place.
6 The leaves of the willow are sometimes because of their shape compared to daggers. In this verse the 'cypress,' being lofty and upright, represents the noble man; the 'weeping' willow, from its melancholy appearance, represents the thoughtful. The idea is that thoughtful and serious persons wound (i.e. grieve) themselves in this sad age when every base adventurer can even himself with the truly great and noble.
7 i.e. thy tresses, blowing aside, have disclosed thy roselect face, which is the flowery Paradise.
8 There is here an example of the figure husn-i ta'li or 'aetiology' (vol. 1, p. 113). The rosebud's mouth is a common conceit: of course this mouth is locked, i.e. it cannot speak; this fact is here attributed to its being
Like the moonlight, O thou moon-cheek, rest the whiles upon my grave:
For with parting's glaive thou'st martyred me though guiltless of unright. 1

Lo the beggar-Sphere, he weareth still his ancient robe of blue.
Flocks of cotton thence protrading are those scattered cloudlets white. 2

Since Mesihi ne'er hath drunken of the Stream of Life, O Fate,
Wherefore seekest thou to make him, like to Khizr, pass from sight? 3

Ghazel. [126]

What though I rub my lashes in thy dog's foot-prints sans thee? —
No rose within the garth of earth sans thorn may ever be. 4

Let him behold thy frame what time thy shift from thee is stript. —
Him whosoe'er would fain the soul without the body see.

So close the friendship 'twixt me and dale and teen is grown
That neither one a moment e'en can rest apart from me.

The heart hath journeyed over all the realm of mole and down,
But ne'er a cranny hath it found from wiles and torments free. 5

spellbound through having heard the all-lovely tones of the beloved's voice.
It used to be believed that a person could be rendered speechless by magic.

1 Alluding to the Hadis quoted in vol. i, p. 216, n. 2. 'Whoso dieth of
Love, verily he dieth a martyr.'

2 Here the Sphere (vol. i, p. 44, n. 3) is personified as a vagrant beggar clad in an ancient robe of blue (the colour of the sky) which is so worn and tattered that the cotton wadding (the fleecey clouds) with which it is lined is showing in places here and there.

3 For Khizr who drank of the Stream of Life and who has the power of making himself invisible, see vol. i, p. 172, n. 1. Mesihi here asks Fate why it seeks to make him like Khizr invisible (i.e. to make him die) seeing that he has not like Khizr drunken of the Stream of Life.

4 The dog of the beloved is often spoken of, the lover being frequently shown as eager to humble himself before it, because, though but a beast, it is dear to the beloved. The idea was suggested by the attitude of Mejnun towards Leyla's dog (see p. 177 n. 1).

Here the foot-prints of the beloved's dog are, from their shape, conceived as roses, and the lover is presented as desiring to rub his eyelashes (i.e. to bury his face) in them, the eyelashes resembling thorns in shape, and thorns being always connected with roses.

5 i.e. I know all of thy beautiful person, and there is not a single turn of it that is not full of seductive charm.
By beauties bright, Mesihi the ill-starred hath martyred been;¹
And shroudless at the end they've left that vagrant wight perdie.²

Ghazel. [127]

O my Sovran, I thy slave am bounden in thy tresses' chain;
By this title I am leader, foremost of thy servant-train.³

I have reared Love's pavilion, I have struck Reproach's drum;
'Tis my turn for noble's music, I'm a lord in mine own rayne.⁴

Since that heart and soul are turned to den for thee, O brigand-eyes,
I from heart and soul will seek thee, if thou hide from me again.

Thinking on thy lucent rubies,⁵ I am fallen prey to wine,⁶
So that where I see a wine-jar, jarring fall, I then and then.⁷

Is not this a wondrous blessing unto me, Mesihi this, —
That for all my straits these many maids of fancies I maintain.⁸

The following qit'ə has for subject a severe winter; the allusion to the Janissaries, who had no counterpart in Persia, is an instance of Mesihi's looking about for illustrations on his own account.

¹ See p. 247, n. 1.
² i. e. they have plundered him of all he possessed, so that there is not left him so much as will buy a shroud in which to bury him.
³ So great is the honour resulting from being bound in the chain of the beloved's tresses.
⁴ This line refers to the nevbet, that is, the performance by a military band which used to take place at stated times in the courtyard of an Eastern sovereign or governor. The drum was im important instrument in this band. Those great men had also special tents or pavilions for their use when travelling or on a campaign.
⁵ i. e. thy bright red lips.
⁶ Because the red wine resembles them.
⁷ There is nothing in this line except an equivoque, which the 'jar' and 'jarring' of the translation is intended to replace.
⁸ It is only the wealthy who can maintain many maidens (slave-girls); therefore it is wonderful that so poor a man as the poet can fit out so many maidens (original ideas).
Marvel not the snow is lying long and will not hence away;
For from lofty dome \(^1\) 'tis fallen, and alack, its limbs are broke.
Janissary-wise it layeth violent hands on every court,
There before each house it planteth spear of ice \(^2\) with savage stroke. \(^3\)
All the people leave the mosques and bow them to the hearth's mihrāb: \(^4\)
Woe is me, to Fire-adorers now are turned the Muslim folk.
O Mesihî, so I may not dree the rigour of the cold,
'Tis my mind to tope that drunken I may lie till spring be woke.

The remaining translations are all from the 'City-Thriller;' and are sufficiently extensive to give an adequate idea of that poem. The first extract is the second section of the Prologue, which it is translated in its entirety.

From the Shehr-Engiz. \([\text{129}]\)

Whene'er a waving cypress \(^5\) meets my eyes
1 cast me at his feet on shadow-wise.
What time upon a moon-cheeked fair I gaze
The teardrop-stars are planets on my face. \(^6\)
I've shed so many tears upon this score
That now mine eyes are emptied of their store. \(^7\)
The teardrop-pearls adorn the face of me,
'Tis as the Confluence of Either Sea. \(^8\)
Were I the story of those tears to trace,
The Seven Seas \(^9\) were vain to white my face. \(^10\)

---

\(^1\) i. e. from the vault of heaven.
\(^2\) Perhaps, icicles.
\(^3\) This line must allude to some custom of the Janissaries.
\(^4\) The mihrāb or mosque prayer-niche has been often mentioned; the fire-places in old Turkish houses somewhat resembled it in outline.
\(^5\) i. e. a slight and graceful boy.
\(^6\) i. e. thy course down my cheeks.
\(^7\) See vol. i, p. 217, n. 1.
\(^8\) Mejma'-ul-Bahreyn, the 'Confluence of the Two Seas', is a well-known Koranic expression. Here the poet's face, studded with tear-pearls, is the confluence of the two seas that issue one from either eye.
\(^9\) For the Seven Seas that surround the earth see vol. i, p. 38.
\(^10\) My sins in this connection have made my face so black that not all
So obstinate in sinning have I been
That whoso pities me himself doth sin.
Wore God to weigh me with those crimes, I say,
The Scales were broken on the Judgment-Day. ¹
Were all my crimes to be inquired into,
The turn of no one else would come, I trow.
Should God deal by me e’en as I have dealt,
The paynim in his place in hell would melt. ²
I err, for all I’ve sinned so grievously,
I look to-morrow God’s own friend to be.
Though soot and rust may be the paynim’s heart, ³
He yet in lordship may secure a part.
However much of vice be in this thrall,
One grain of mercy can efface it all.
Although my sins be as the stars on high,
When shines the sun of mercy all will fly.
O God, make Thou Thy love the guide of me,
Thy mercy this blind rebel’s staff to be.
If I indeed have erred in writing this, ⁴
Write not it Thou who writ’st not what’s amiss.
Since severance ⁵ hath been my lot to-day,
To-morrow cast me not in hell, I pray.
Since me in the dear’s ward no home thou’st showed,
the water of the Seven Seas would avail to wash it white. For what is implied by ‘blackness of face’ see p. 213, n. 9.

¹ For the Scales or Balance in which the deeds of men will be weighed on the Judgment-Day, see vol. i, p. 174, n. 4.

² Even the cruel infidel in the midst of hell-fire would burn with pity for me if I should be punished according to my deserts.

³ The idea was that when a man committed a sin a small black spot was formed on his heart. In course of time, after years of sin, these grew so numerous that the whole heart was covered with them and became quite black. Hence, a wicked man, especially if an infidel, is often described as ‘black-hearted’ (siyah-dil).

Here Mesihi speaks of such an one as having his heart turned to black soot.

Similarly the heart, which is often compared to a (metal) mirror wherein the Heavenly Beauty may be reflected, is, when obscured by sin, frequently said to be soiled and dimmed by rust.

⁴ i. e. if I have committed a sin in writing this poem.

⁵ i. e. severance from the beloved; since I have been unfortunate in my love in this world.