

THE L-POEM OF THE ARABS.

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THE  
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THE L-POEM OF THE ARABS.

W. REBHOUSE, M.A., MRS. J. REBHOUSE



THE I-POEM OF THE ARAB



THE  
L-POEM OF THE ARABS,

قَصِيدَةُ لَامِيَّةِ الْعَرَبِ

BY SHANFARA

لِلشَّنْفَرِيِّ

REARRANGED AND TRANSLATED BY

J. W. REDHOUSE, M.R.A.S., H.M.R.S.L.,  
ETC. ETC.

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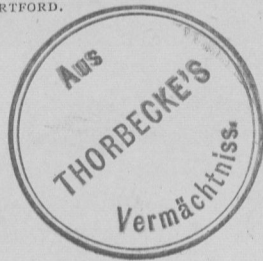


THE  
L-POEM OF THE ARABS

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## THE L-POEM OF THE ARABS.

HAJJĪ KHALĪFA gives the pedigree of Shanfarà in the following manner: Shanfarà الشَّنْفَرِي, son of Aws أَوْس, son of Hujru-'l-Hinwu حُجْرُ الْهَيْمُو, son of Azd أَزْد, son of Gawth غَوْت, son of Zayd زَيْد, son of Kahlān كَهْلَان, son of Saba' سَبَأ.

De Sacy (Chrestomathie Arabe, vol. ii. p. 345, 2nd edition, 1826) says of Shanfarà, that he was a contemporary of Ta'abbata-Sharran; and that they lived a short time before the days of Muhammad.

The Arabic preface to the edition of Shanfarà's poem given by De Sacy is to the following effect;—very interesting, if not thoroughly critical:

“Shanfarà is *one who has large lips*.

“He was a poet of the tribe of Azd, and was one of the *Runners*.

“There were among the Arabs certain runners, whom horsemen could not overtake. Of them were this (Shanfarà), Sulayk son of Sulaka, 'Umar son of Barrāq, Usayr (or Asīr) son of Jābir, and Ta'abbata-Sharran.

“Now Shanfarà had vowed that surely he would slay of the tribe of the Banū Salāmān a hundred men; and he had (already) killed ninety-nine of them (towards the accomplishment of his vow). For, whenever he met a man of that tribe, Shanfarà would call out to him: ‘This for thy eye!’ Then he would shoot at him (with an arrow), and would strike out both his eyes.

“After this, they devised a stratagem against him and seized his person. The man who captured him was Usayr son of Jābir, one of the runners, who watched for Shanfarà

until the latter alighted in a confined spot to drink water one night; he then stood up before Shanfarà and seized him.

“The tribe put Shanfarà to death.

“Long afterwards, one of their number, passing that way, saw the skull of Shanfarà, and kicked it. A splinter of the skull entered his foot; and of the wound he died; so making up the full tale of one hundred killed by Shanfarà. But God knows best as to this matter.”

This story, like all the others collected, two or three hundred years after the promulgation of Islām, by the traditionists and folklore-mongers of Bagdād, is a mere adaptation, a patchwork of various tales preserved or invented in the desert to account for ancient songs or proverbs current among its inhabitants.

Our poem itself mentions the name of Shanfarà as that of a dire slaughterer of his enemies.

A number of proverbs were picked up, which speak of a Shanfarà and a Sulayk, as also of a male ostrich, a snake, a wolf, a scorpion, the mange, and gaping, as things to surpass which was difficult, in running or in attacking,—... *أَغْدَى وَسِّنْ*. In the first-named three proverbs, the commentators preferred to understand speed in running; in the five last, aggressiveness. They are probably correct; but their conclusions are mere inferences; even if we admit the proverbs to be genuine and ancient.

Shanfarà's poem lends itself to the supposition that he really was swift of foot, by asserting that, when striving to reach some scanty pool of water, he could easily outstrip the sandgrouse birds, though these are said to fly a distance of ten and even twenty days' journey (for an Arab on foot),—say, from one to two hundred miles,—between the earliest day-dawn and the sun's attaining an altitude of a few degrees.

Of course, such speed in Shanfarà is merely poetical exaggeration. But, that a trained man can outrun a horse is a fact well proved in our own times.

The Shanfarà of the poem, and the Shanfarà of the proverb, may therefore be reasonably supposed to refer to the same individual.

But De Sacy, in his notes to the poem, carries this probability much further. He there cites an anecdote, which, if not a mere invention *ad hoc*, as appears very likely indeed, proves that Shanfarà was a contemporary and a confederate of the poet Ta'abbata-Sharran, who is known, on other grounds, to have lived, as mentioned above, but a short time before Muhammad.

What this last expression may have been intended to mean, is not well defined by De Sacy; and I have not sifted the question myself. "To have lived a short time before Muhammad" may mean, in one sense, to have died not very long before the year A.D. 569, in which Muhammad was born;—*the Year of the Elephant*, the year of Abraha's expedition from Yaman, to destroy the *Cubical House* of Makka. While, in another sense, it may signify to have died some time during the latter part of the forty years that elapsed between Muhammad's birth and his announcement of himself as charged with a heavenly mission to his countrymen in A.D. 609; that is, to have died about the year A.D. 600;—several years before Ethelbert, the Saxon king of Kent, was converted to Christianity by the monk Augustine. At any rate, it is universally admitted that Shanfarà and his poem were things of a period anterior to the promulgation of Islām among the tribes of Arabia.

The anecdote given by De Sacy commences thus:

"Ta'abbata-Sharran, Shanfarà, and 'Umar son of Barrāq, were in league together against the tribe of Bajila بَجِيلَة. The tribe placed a party of their men in ambush near a tank to which the three confederates were to come by night, to drink."

Now, as it is not likely the tribe could have had any certain knowledge of this fact, the probability is that the tank was a convenient station between the camping-grounds of the tribe and those of the confederates. The tribe may have been informed that these latter were about to carry out an attack against them in the usual Arab fashion, by surprise, and by night. The tribe could calculate that the raiders would be in

the lightest marching order, unarmed; also, that they would naturally visit the tank, both to refresh themselves on their journey, and to ascertain whether the coast were clear of the tribe, ere they ventured further.

On the other hand, the tribe may have been out themselves on a similar marauding expedition, bound to surprise the confederates, if possible. They, too, were unarmed; but they were provided with ropes to bind any prisoners they might chance to take.

The anecdote then proceeds:

“When the three confederates reached the neighbourhood of the tank, Ta’abbat declared to his companions that it was beset by the foe in ambuscade, *as he could hear the palpitations of their hearts.*”

The natural explanation of this passage is, that the confederates were proceeding with due circumspection. Ta’abbat-Sharran, either in his turn, or as the most experienced local guide, or as the acknowledged captain of the triumvirate, was leading the van, acting as scout in advance. His acute ear informed him at some distance that the neighbourhood of the tank was not untenanted. He had, in consequence, fallen back on his friends, or had waited for them to join him. Then he communicated his discovery. But, meanwhile, the Bajila party had also become aware of the approach of the trio, or of some one unknown. The word had been passed round among them, and all was now as still as death.

The anecdote runs on:

“The two friends assured Ta’abbat that (as they could detect no sound) he must have been deceived by the beating of his own heart. He took their hands, placed them on his bosom to convince them how tranquil all was there, and remarked: ‘My heart never palpitates audibly from fear.’”

The two friends were satisfied on that score. Still, all was silent. After a while, spent in listening, as woodsmen and Arabs can listen, Shanfarà, perhaps pressed by thirst and urged by chivalrous devotion, determined to run the risk of being seized, but felt persuaded there was no real danger. Most likely there was no other water available within attain-

able distance. He went, drank, and returned in safety; assuring Ta'abbat that the water was not beset. He had seen and heard nothing. And yet, this was the Shanfarà of the Lāmiyya poem, who could glide in and out among the watchdogs of his foes, without arousing them. Still, Ta'abbat was sure he had not been mistaken. His answer to his friend was, simply: "It is not you they want."

The other confederate of the three, 'Umar son of Barrāq, now went to the tank, drank his fill, saw and heard nothing, and returned also without molestation.

Ta'abbat was not to be deceived. He knew what he had heard, but he knew also that he must drink or perish. He therefore addressed his companions: "As soon as I stoop down to drink, they will set upon me and seize me. When you witness that, do you, Shanfarà, betake yourself quickly to the foot of yon hillock, and hide yourself there for a short time. You will hear me shout: 'Seize! Seize!' Then do you at once make for me, and release me from bonds."

Shanfarà went off towards the hillock swiftly and stealthily. The foe remained in ignorance of his action.

Ta'abbat then turned to 'Umar, and said: "I shall propose you as my hostage to these men. Go not far away; but suffer them not to touch you."

That, like most or all of similar historical details, the whole of this scene is drawn from the imagination of the narrator, is evident from the childish inconsistency of its elements. With the darkest of dark nights, always selected for such expeditions, shortly after a new moon, the hidden foe, so securely ensconced away as to be utterly inscrutable to two such men as Shanfarà and 'Umar,—that foe is still able to distinguish unerringly their forms, or the fall of their footsteps, from that of Ta'abbat, their own arch-foe. Ta'abbat can hear their hearts beat; but he can instruct his friends in a suddenly conceived plot, which they carry out forthwith in every detail; and yet those hidden foes gain no inkling of the plan, as we shall presently see.

"Having thus taken his measures, Ta'abbat now advances to the tank, stoops, drinks, and, as he had anticipated, is

pounced upon, and instantly secured with a stout rope, or a thong of raw hide."

Shanfarà, notwithstanding the darkness, witnesses the proceeding, unseen, from the foot of the hillock where he has taken up his post.

"Ta'abbat then addresses his captors aloud: 'Men of Bajila, I offer you to ransom myself on equitable terms; and 'Umar son of Barrāq shall be your hostage for me.' They accept his proposal. Ta'abbat now calls out: 'Come forward, 'Umar. As for that fellow Shanfarà, he is already off to some friendly tribe, near at hand. You, 'Umar, must be hostage for me.'

"'Umar stood forward in full view,"—in spite of darkness and distance,—"and said: 'Not until I have shown them how to run.' So saying, he ran swiftly towards the hillock, and then back again towards the Bajila party," all of whom had now shown themselves, and were looking on to watch and admire 'Umar's deftness of foot.

"When he had repeated this course, to and fro, several times, the Bajila men imagined that he would be sufficiently out of breath to be easily made prisoner," without becoming hostage for his friend.

According to Arab laws of private warfare, there would be no treachery or dishonesty in this. He had not yet chosen to constitute himself their hostage and guest. He was still their foe at large and had foolishly tired himself, out of bravado. He could be, therefore, honourably seized.

"The Bajila men," all of them in a body, the simpletons, "set out, therefore, in pursuit of 'Umar," leaving Ta'abbat unguarded, even by a single sentry. He was so securely bound, he could not possibly escape.

Seeing the opportunity he had so adroitly planned, and the perfect manner in which his bait had been taken, Ta'abbat, when his captors were sufficiently distant at the heels of 'Umar, who kept just clear of them, without making clean off,—dangling, as it were in their grasp, and so enticing them to continue the pursuit,—"Ta'abbat shouted aloud," as though to cheer them on: "'Seize! Seize!' At this signal, Shanfarà

came forth from his hiding-place, swiftly ran to Ta'abbat, cut loose his bonds, and set him free. The two now made for their companion 'Umar,' still in spite of the pitchy darkness.

"Having joined him, Ta'abbat, in a vein of irony, addressed his late captors: 'Men of Bajila! you have seen how 'Umar can run; look now, and admire the speed of Ta'abbata-Sharran!' With this, the three friends put on speed, and were soon out of reach of their foes."

Such is the tale on which is said to have been based a proverb, not founded on the fleetness of foot of 'Umar, or of Ta'abbat, but on that of our bard, Shanfarà, respecting whose celerity not a word is explicitly stated in the whole course of the anecdote.

As a further proof that the Shanfarà proverb was founded on the nimbleness displayed by his double, Ta'abbat, on that memorable night of accommodating darkness, when all distant objects were so conveniently visible, De Sacy gravely continues to quote his Arabian guide, and gives the following three distichs, said to have been composed by Ta'abbat in commemoration of that night's adventure, but which might have been indited by any bard on almost any occasion of a nocturnal chase.

In these verses, it is not Ta'abbat who calls out; it is the men of Bajila. Again, it is not the whole of them who run after 'Umar, but only their swiftest men who pursue Ta'abbat, while the rest urge them on with their voices. The verses do not fit the anecdote; the anecdote does not tally with the proverb; and the verses of Shanfarà himself, fully bearing out the sense of the latter, are not quoted in support of it, as though they were unknown to the commentator. These are the verses:

لَيْلَةً صَاحُوا وَاعْتَرَوْا بِي سِرَاعِهِمْ  
بِالْعَيْكَتَيْنِ لَدَى مَعْدَى بْنِ بَرَّاقِ  
كَأَنَّمَا حَاكَحُوا خُصًّا قَوَادِمُهُ  
أَوْ أَمَّ خَشْفِ بِيذِي شَتِّ وَطَبَّاقِ  
لَا شَيْءَ أَنْسَرُّ مِنْ جَتْبَرِ ذِي عُدْرِ  
أَوْ ذِي جَتَّاحِ بِجَتْبِ الرَّيْدِ خَفَّاقِ

"On a night when they shouted, and excited against me

their swiftest ones, at the two thickets near (the camping-ground of) Ma'di son of Barrāq, it was as though they were scaring (a bird) whose primaries had fallen out (in moulting), or a doe gazelle with her fawn, at Dhū-Shathth and at Dhū-Tabbāq; there being nothing more fleet than a young bustard<sup>1</sup> with an infirmity, or with one sole wing (uninjured), that flutters convulsively along, on the brink of a mountain ledge."

Accepting, then, the supposition that Shanfarā the poet, the exterminator of his foes, the rapid runner, and Shanfarā the confederate of Ta'abbata-Sharran, were one and the same individual, having died ere Muhammad appeared on the scene, we have to inquire why his poem has been entitled *the L-Poem of the Arabs*.

I do not know by whom this splendid piece of verse was rescued from obscurity, perhaps from impending oblivion; nor where, nor at what date, it was dug out from its native desert home. Neither can I say from whom or why it has received its special designation; who was the first known to have written a commentary on it, at what date, where, and by what title it was first mentioned? Was that title from the first the now well-known "*L-Poem of the Arabs*"; or was it originally distinguished, as is so usual, by its opening words?

If these questions cannot be answered (though I merely avow my own ignorance on the points), the circumstance may be taken as a glaring instance of the imperfect methods of the native commentators. They write page after page of mere verbal exegesis, or of prosodial technicalities, but they seldom afford the student a guide by which to understand the allusions of their author. Here and there, at rare intervals, such a light is vouchsafed; but generally it may be said of the Arabian scholiasts, as of the old astrologer: "They can scan the distant orbs of heaven; they cannot perceive what lies at their feet."

<sup>1</sup> De Sacy has *جَمِير*, where I have conjecturally used *جَمِير*. He found *غِير*, without vowels, and translates quite differently; but avows himself dissatisfied.



The name of *L-Poem* is given to any piece of verse the rhyme of which is based on the letter *L*. There are numerous such poems preserved to us of the ante-Muhammadan period. In the "Six Diwāns," edited by Ahlwardt, I find that Nābiga has left four L-poems; 'Antara, two; Tarafa, three; Zuhayr, five; 'Alqama, only one fragment; but Imra'u-'l-Qays has fifteen, among which is his Mu'allaqa, with seventy-six distichs. Other "*L-poems*" and fragments are doubtfully attributed to each of these great songsters of the desert.

But all those ancient "*L-poems*," with the exception of the masterpiece of Imra'u-'l-Qays, are of less magnitude than the poem of Shanfarà. The second longest, by Imra'u-'l-Qays, has but fifty-nine distichs to weigh against the sixty-eight in that of Shanfarà. 'Antara's longest has but thirty-one, and Nābiga's two longest, thirty distichs each; all the rest being shorter. The masterpiece of Imra'u-'l-Qays, with its seventy-six distichs, being distinguished as his Mu'allaqa, it would appear that the commentators have perceived in this circumstance a plausible reason to glorify Shanfarà's poem by the proud title of "*The L-Poem of the Arabs*."

D'Herbelot (Bibliothèque Orientale), under the sadly-degraded word "Lamiat" (by which the Arabic *Lāmiyya* لَامِيَّة, is rather hinted at than indicated), explains that "there are three such poems, rhyming in *L*, much esteemed in the East. The first bears the name of Lamiat al Arab, and was composed by Schafari. The second, entitled Lamiat al Agem, . . . had for author . . . al Thograi . . . Of all these four poems (he has discovered a fourth since he first wrote *three*), that of Thograi is the most famous, and the most elegant. . . Pococke has translated this poem into Latin, and has illustrated it with learned notes."

Whatever may have been, or is, in the east, or in the west, the relative degree of celebrity of the two "*L-poems*," by Shanfarà and Tugrā'i, the date of the latter being about A.D. 1120—five hundred years posterior to the former—I may venture, having recently made a new English prose

translation of Tugrā'i's poem also,<sup>1</sup> to assert that Shanfarā's verses, as they read in my rearrangement of the text, are as superior to those of Tugrā'i as it is well possible to conceive. The former are original, natural, rich, and soul-felt; the latter are imitative, bald, stilted, bombastic, and inconsequent.

The Argument of Shanfarā's poem, still according to my rearrangement of some of its distichs and sections, is the following:

Section 1, verses 1-3. The poet calls on his fellows or followers, "Sons of my Mother," to come with their ready-prepared beasts for a new expedition, as he wishes to visit other familiars of his,—“a wolf, a leopard, and a hyæna,”—which represent, perhaps, the nicknames, or similes, by which he would allude to such confederates as Ta'abbata-Sharran, 'Umar son of Barrāq, and the like, as becomes more apparent a little further on, by a well-known rule of the Arabian rhetoric.

Section 2, verses 4-7, first praises the rare fidelity and courage of those familiars, but then asserts that, in the hour of danger, Shanfarā is even more brave than they. It then vaunts the generous self-denial with which he yields precedence to them at meals, “when hands are stretched forth towards the provisions”; to them, really his inferiors, “for the most excellent is he who confers favours.” Shanfarā's venturing first to the tank beset by the “men of Bajīla,” in his expedition with Ta'abbata-Sharran, is a very apposite instance of his superior readiness to encounter an apprehended peril.

Section 3, verses 8-13, recounts what, in the poet's estimation, compensates him for the absence of those who rightly value not his favours, or even remain unconscious of them; namely, his heart, his bared blade, and his twanging bow, “that moans like a bereaved mother whenever it parts with a sped arrow.” It proceeds to assert that there is room in

<sup>1</sup> Published in Mr. W. A. Clouston's recently issued “Arabian Poetry for English Readers,” Trübner and Co., London, 1881, p. 468.

the land, or a refuge, for a brave and wise man, be he on an aggressive expedition or seeking his own safety in flight.

Section 4, in the next six verses, 14-19, describes more than as many different kinds of moral defects, from which the poet declares himself free—thirstiness in a camel-herdsman, uxoriousness in a young husband, timorousness, slothful foppishness, ungenerous spitefulness, sleepiness, effeminacy, bewilderment in the dark in strange places.

Section 5, verses 20-28, describes first the toughness of his bare "hoof-like toes," that crush the flints and elicit fire from them; next, his endurance of hunger, and his avoidance of all that might savour of laying himself under an obligation to a pretentious benefactor; asserts that should he choose to exert his power, all the necessaries that men require would be possessed by him alone; mentions his invincible impatience of wrong, his moderation in weal and in woe.

Section 6, verses 28-38, contains a vivid description of the sufferings from inanition of the "lean-haunched wolf," to which the poet compares himself.

Section 7, verses 39-44, sets forth the poet's boasted fleetness of foot, his outstripping the sandgrouse in its most anxious exertion to attain a scanty pool of water, and the tumult the birds raise when they reach it, as he turns away satiated.

Section 8, verses 45-50, describes the burning heat of noontide in the dog days—"when the gossamer floats about, and the vipers among the over-heated rocks writhe in agony"—which the poet faces with no other protection than a tattered rag, and a long-unkempt, shaggy head of hair. Like the antelope of the sands, he braves the sun on scanty fare and barefoot; for "he wears the armour of patience over the like of the heart of the wolf-hyæna, and he practises discretion."

Section 9, verses 51-55, recounts the cares to which the poet is exposed, from the assaults of his enemies, and describes his long pedestrian journeys through wastes "as bare as the back of his shield," and usually untrod by man; such

journeys being occasionally diversified by the ascent of a hill on which to sit down for a little rest, or to stand erect and scan all around, in anticipation of danger.

Section 10, verses 56-59, describes his mode of reposing by night during such journeys, on the bare earth, where a level spot can be found; his spine-like vertebral processes forming his only couch, and his scraggy arm, "with prominent joints like gamblers' dice," his hard pillow; the female chamois flocking round him, under the mistake that he is their buck.

With Section 11, verses 60-62, the scene changes to a cold dark night, "when the archer is fain to burn his very bow and arrows" to keep life in him. The poet then tramps forth in the pitchy darkness and drizzle, "with naught but hate and misery for his companions." Suiting his actions to such concomitants, "he makes widows and orphans" (in one tent), and "repeats this again and again while the night is at its very darkest."

Section 12, verses 63-66, gives, chorus fashion, an imaginary conversation between two parties of the survivors, which artistically brings into relief the details of the preceding summary of the slaughter. They had heard their watchdogs slightly growl, but those sentinels had again composed themselves to sleep. The men had therefore imagined that some beast or bird had been scared to an untimely movement, and had themselves gone to sleep again. Dawn having shown them the reality of the havoc, they are most graphically pictured as musing: "Verily, if a demon has done it, his work is horrible, even for one of them; and, if a human being was the butcher . . . ; but no! what man could do it?"

The drama is thus concluded in twelve sections; and, in an epilogue of two verses, 67-68, the poet discloses his name, with the sombre reflection: "If the Mother of Qastel be now in despair through my act, she has for much longer time enjoyed an advantage over me. She sleeps only when I sleep; and even then her eyes (spies) are open, spying for an occasion to wreak mischief on me."

No poem could be more in accordance with the unities than this defiant, though foreboding, effusion of the ante-Muhammadan Arabian warrior, whose direst vengeance assailed not directly the women or the children. It is the most perfect drama I can call to mind, now that its distichs and sections are duly co-ordinated. What sacrilegious mutilation has been wrought upon it during a thousand years by, I believe, the blunderings of successive generations of commentators and translators, blindly following in each other's footsteps! May I not dare humbly to hope that my venturesome attempt at a tardy rectification will be pronounced unanimously, by competent critics, to be correct in its main features, even though a detail here and there may still admit of further amelioration?

The exact meaning of the poet's expression: "the mother of Qastel," is not known. One commentator has guessed—it is nothing more—that the term means "a calamity," *آفة*; another opines that it may signify "war" or "a battle," *أالحرب*; a third, again, truly states, in my opinion, that it is (the designation of) "*a woman*."

With the two concluding distichs of my rearrangement separated from each other by six intervening verses, according to the manuscript of the India Office Library, or by one verse, as in the order adopted by De Sacy, their close connexion is entirely masked. Again, by being forced back to the place of the forty-fourth, and forty-sixth or fiftieth verses respectively, their true significance is effaced, their office is ignored, and the whole poem is shattered into dislocated fragments, entirely void of interdependence. But, coming together at the end of the poem, as I have placed them, it seems to me that their true meaning is as clear as the day; viz. "*Qastel*," which is a name for "*the dust*," was the youthful chief of the tribe assailed by Shanfarà, and was most likely one of those done to death by his hand in that night of horrors. His father may have been Shanfarà's foe in bygone days, and have died by some other hand, Shanfarà being suspected and persecuted by the widow and son in

consequence. They had inflicted for a long time grievous wrongs on the unyielding man; but in that night he, in his turn, had struck a heavy blow at the vindictive widow's heart, through the slaughter of her son Qastel. As a woman, she was herself sacred, having no violence to fear at his hand personally; but he openly declares his conviction that she was ever hatching plots against his safety, sleeping, when she could sleep, with all the eyes (of her spies)<sup>1</sup> wide open, seeking how best to pour down calamity on his devoted head.

Such is the sense in which I have come to understand the expression and the paragraph. As such I submit it, with all due reserve, to be weighed by the learned.

قَصِيدَةٌ لَأُمِّيَّةِ الْعَرَبِ لِشَنْفَرَى

THE L-POEM OF THE ARABS, BY SHANFARÂ.

1 (1-1).

أَقِيمُوا بَنِي أُمِّي صُدُورَ مَطِيئِكُمْ      فَرَأَيْتِي إِلَى قَوْمٍ سِوَاكُمْ أَمِيْلٌ

Get ye up, O sons of my mother, the return of your beasts from their watering; for verily I am eagerly inclined (to be off) to a set, other than you.

2 (2-2).

فَتَدَّ حُمَمَاتِ الْحَاجَاتِ وَاللَّيْلِ مُقَمَّرٌ      وَشُدَّتْ لِيَطِيَّاتِ مَطَايَا وَأَرْحُلُ

For matters (to look after) have sprung up; and the night is bright with the moon. The beasts, too, and the saddles, are ready girded for expeditions.

3 (5-5).

وَلِي ذُونُكُمْ أَهْلُونَ سَيْدِ عَمَلَسْ      وَأَرْقَطُ زُهْمَلُومٌ وَعَرْفَاءُ جِيَّالٌ

And I have (other) familiars besides you;—a fierce wolf, and a sleek spotted (leopard), and a long-maned hyæna.

<sup>1</sup> The word for "eyes," here, being in the plural, not the dual, cannot mean "her two natural eyes."

4 (6-6).

هُمُ الْأَهْلُ لَا مُسْتَوْنَعُ السِّرِّ ذَائِعٌ لَدَيْهِمْ وَلَا الْبِجَانِي بِمَا جَرَّ يُخْذَلُ

They are a family with whom the confided secret is not betrayed; neither is the offender thrust out for that which has happened.

5 (7-7).

وَكُلُّ أَبِيٍّ بَابِلٌ غَيْرَ أَنِّي إِذَا عَرَضَتْ أَوْلَى الطَّرَائِدِ أَبْسَلُ

And each one (of them) is vehement in resistance, and brave; only, that I, when the first of the chased beasts present themselves, am (still) braver.

6 (8-8).

وَإِنْ مَدَّتْ الْأَيْدِي إِلَى الزَّادِ لَمْ أَكُنْ  
بِأَعْجَلِهِمْ إِنْ أَجْشَعُ الْقَوْمِ أَعْجَلُ

And if hands are stretched forth towards the provisions, I am not the most hasty of them. For the greediest of a party is the most hasty.

7 (9-9).

وَمَا ذَاكَ إِلَّا بَسْطَةٌ عَنْ تَفَضُّلٍ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ الْأَفْضَلُ الْمُتَفَضِّلُ

And that is naught but a stretch of (my) generosity, out of a kindness towards them. And the more excellent is he who confers a favour.

8 (10-10).

وَإِنِّي كَفَانِي فَقَدْ مَنْ لَيْسَ جَازِيًا بِشِعْمِي وَلَا فِي فُرْبِهِ مُتَعَلِّلُ

And verily, there will compensate to me the loss of whomsoever requites not a benefit, or is unmindful of its proximity,

9 (11-11).

ثَلَاثَةُ أَصْحَابٍ فُؤَادٌ مُشَيِّعٌ وَأَبْيَضٌ إِصْلِيَّتٌ وَصَفْرَاءٌ عَيْطَلُ

Three companions;—a dauntless heart, and a trenchant drawn sword, and a slimly-long yellow (bow)

10 (12-12).

هَشُوفٌ مِنَ الْمَلْسِ الْمَثُونِ تَزِينُهَا رِصَاعٌ قَدْ نَيْطَلَتْ إِسِيهَا وَمِحْمَلٌ

That twangs loudly; of those with smooth flat surfaces,  
ornamented with clasps passed on to it, and a suspensory,

11 (13-13).

إِذَا زَلَّ مِنْهَا السَّهْمُ أَنْتَ كَأَنَّهَا مُرَّرَاةٌ نَكَلَى تَسْرُنْ وَتُعُولُ

Which, when the arrow glides forth from it, moans, as  
though it were a bereaved (mother) robbed of her child, who  
lifts up her voice and weeps aloud.

12 (4-4).

لَعَمْرِكَ مَا بِالْأَرْضِ ضَيْقٌ عَلَى أَمْرٍ سَرَى رَاغِبًا أَوْ هَارِبًا وَهُوَ يَعْقِلُ

By thy life! There is no straitness in the land for a man  
who journeys by night, seeking or shunning, he being wise;

13 (3-3).

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ مُنْأَى لِلْكَرِيمِ عَنِ الْأَدَى وَفِيهَا لِمَنْ خَافَ الْغَلَى مَأْكُولٌ

And in the land (there is) a refuge from molestation for  
the noble-minded. And therein, for him who fears enmity,  
(there is) a place towards which to turn.

14 (14-14).

وَلَسْتُ بِمَهْطَابٍ يُعَشَى سِوَاهُ مُجْدَعَةٌ سَقْبَانُهَا وَهَى بَهْلٌ

And I am not one impatient of thirst, who pastures his  
free-grazing she-camels by night, their young male colts  
being driven away, while they themselves are left with their  
dugs free;

15 (15-15).

وَلَا جَبَاءٌ أَكْهَى مُرَبِّ بَعْرَسِهِ يُطَالِعُهَا فِي أَمْرِ كَيْفَ يَفْعَلُ

Nor a faint-hearted poltroon who cleaves to his bride, and  
consults her in his matter in hand, as to how he shall  
manage;



16 (16-16).

وَلَا خَرِقَ كَهَيْتِ كَأَنَّ فُؤَادَهُ يَظُلُّ بِهِ الْمَكَاةَ يَغْلُو وَيَسْفُلُ

Nor a terrified scare-crow, whose heart is, as it were, as though a mock-bird were therein, mounting and descending ;

17 (17-17).

وَلَا خَالِفٍ دَارِيَّةٍ مُتَعَزِّلٍ يَرُوحُ وَيَعْدُو دَاهِنًا يَتَكَحَّلُ

Nor a stay-at-home, who never quits the tent ; but flirts with the women ; who is occupied, evening and morning, with anointing himself and tingeing his eyes with *stibium* ;

18 (18-18).

وَلَسْتُ بِعِلٍّ شَرُّهُ قَبْلَ خَيْرِهِ أَلْفَ إِذَا مَا رُعْتَهُ أَهْتَاجَ أَخْزَلُ

And I am not a good-for-nothing, whose ill precedes his good deed ;—a drowsy-head, who starts when thou scarest him ; who wears no weapon ;

19 (19-19).

وَلَسْتُ بِمُخَيَّرِ الظَّلَامِ إِذَا أَنْتَجَتِ  
هَدَى الْهُوَجِلِ الْعَصِيفِ يِيْمَاءَ هُوَجِلُ

And I am not one bewildered by the darkness when my huge she-camel takes the direction of the trackless waste.

20 (20-20).

إِذَا الْأَمْعَزُ الصَّوَانُ لَاقَى مَسَابِيحِي تَطَايَرَ مِنْهُ قَادِحٌ وَمَقْلَلُ

When the hard flint meets my hoof-like digits, there fly from it the fire-striking and the shivered fragments.

21 (21-21).

أُدِيمُ مَطَالَ الْجُوعِ حَتَّى أُمِيئْتَهُ وَأَضْرِبُ عَنْهُ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا فَإِنَّهُلُ

I make perpetual the term of delay for the satisfaction of the calls of hunger, until I kill it. I then turn away from noticing it, and I forget it.

22 (25-25).

وَأَطْوَى عَلَى الْخُمْصِ الْحَوَايَا كَمَا أَنْطَوْتُ خَيْوُطَةَ مَارِي تَعَارٍ وَتُقْتَلُ

And I twist my intestines about my inanition, as the yarns of a spinner are twisted when spun and laid.

23 (22-22).

وَأَسْتَفُّ تُرْبَ الْأَرْضِ كَيْلًا يَرَى لَهُ عَلَى مِنَ الطَّوْلِ أَمْرٌ مَسْطَوُّنٌ

And I lick up the dry dust of the earth, lest some pretender to generosity should imagine in himself a superiority over me (by offering food).

24 (23-23).

وَلَوْ لَا أَجْتَنَّبُ الدَّامَ لَمْ يُلْفَ مَشْرَبٌ يُعَاشُ بِهِ إِلَّا لَدَيْكَ وَمَأْكُلٌ

And were it not for (my) shunning what might be blamed, there would not be found, to subsist on, a potable or edible thing, excepting with me.

25 (24-24).

وَلَكِنْ نَفْسًا مَرَّةً لَا تُقِيمُ بِي عَلَى الصَّيْمِ إِلَّا رَيْثَمَا أَتَحَوَّلُ

But (I possess) an unyielding spirit, that will not be quiet with me under a wrong, save while I turn over (in my mind what to do).

26 (48-53).

وَلَا تَزْدَهِي الْأَطْمَاعُ حِلْمِي وَلَا أَرَى سَوْوَلًا بِأَعْقَابِ الْأَحَادِيثِ يَنْمُلُ

And covetings turn not to giddiness my sobriety; nor am I seen inquisitively prying at the heels of occurrences (or, news).

27 (46-51).

وَأَعْدِمُ أَحْيَانًا وَأَغْنَى وَإِنَّمَا يَنْتَالُ الْغِنَى نُوَ الْبُعْيَةِ الْمَسْتَبْدَلُ

And I become poor at times, and (then) rich. For verily, the entertainer of desire, who does not spare himself, obtains opulence.

28 (47-52).

وَلَا جَزَعٌ مِنْ خَلْتِ مُسَكِّفٍ وَلَا مَرِحٌ نَحْتِ أَلْعِنَى أَتَحِيلُ

And I am not a repiner in poverty, habitually parading (my need); nor an exulter, proudly assuming, under wealth.

29 (26-26).

وَأَعْدُو عَلَى الْقَوْتِ الزَّهِيدِ كَمَا غَدَا أَزَلُّ تَهَادَاهُ السَّنَائِفُ أَطْحَلُ

And I go forth early, upon the most frugal fare; as the dun-coloured, lean-haunched (wolf) goes forth, which deserts direct, the one to the other.

30 (27-27).

غَدَا طَاوِيًا يُعَارِضُ السَّرِيحَ هَافِيًا يَجُوبُ بِأَدْنَابِ الشَّعَابِ وَيَعْسَلُ

He goes forth betimes, fasting; he questions the wind, hungrily; he traverses the outlets of the passes; and skulks along with hanging head and straddling steps.

31 (28-28).

فَلَمَّا لَوَاهُ الْقَوْتُ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَّهُ دَعَا فَاجَابَتْهُ نَطَائِرُ مَحَلُ

Then, when sustenance fails him, where he had sought to obtain it, he cries aloud; and his fellows, lean also, respond;

32 (29-29).

مُهَلَّلَةٌ شَيْبُ الْوُجُوهِ كَأَنَّهَا قِدَاحٌ بَكْفَى يَاسِرٍ تَشْتَقِلُقُ

Thin as laths, hoary-faced ones, who are, as it were, (from attenuation), so many gaming arrows shuffling about in the two hands of a distributor by lot of the joints of a slaughtered camel;

33 (30-30).

أَوِ النَّحْشَرِ الْمَبْعُوثِ حَنَحَتْ دَابِرُهُ مَحَابِيضُ أَرْسَاهُنَّ سَامٍ مُعَسِّدُ

Or, (as though he were) an excited queen-bee, whose swarm the spatulae have roused up, thrust in (to their hive) by a honey-seeking hunter;

34 (31-31).

مُهَرَّتَةٌ فَوْهٌ كَأَنَّ شُدَّ وَفَهَا شُقُونُ الْعِصِيِّ كَالسِّحَاتِ وَبُسْلُ

Open-jawed, wide-mouthed, as though their cheeks were splinters of staves; morose-looking, and determined.

35 (32-32).

فَضَّحٌ وَصَجَّتْ بِالْبِرَاحِ كَأَنَّهَا وَأَيَّاهُ نُوحٌ فَنُوحٌ عَلِيَاءٌ نُكَلُّ

Then he howls, and they howl, in the wide waste; as though they and he were bereaved ones, lamenting upon some high place.

36 (33-33).

وَأَغْضَى وَأَغْضَتْ وَأَتَسَّى وَأَتَسَّتْ بِهِ  
مَرَامِيْلُ عَزَاهَا وَعَزَّتْهُ مَرَامِيْلُ

And he becomes quiet, and they become quiet; and he imitates, and they imitate him; provisionless wanderers, whom he consoles, and who console him, he wandering provisionless.

37 (34-34).

شَكَا وَأَشْتَكَّتْ ثُمَّ أَرَعَوَى بَعْدَ وَأَرَعَوَتْ  
وَالْتَصَبَّرُ إِنْ لَمْ يَنْفَعِ الشُّكُوُّ أَجْمَلُ

He complains, and they complain; then, he refrains at last, and they refrain. And verily, patience, if complaint avail not, is more seemly!

38 (35-35).

وَفَاءٌ وَفَاءَتْ بِأَدْرَاتٍ وَكُلَّتْهَا عَلَى نَكْظٍ مِمَّا تَكَاثَمَ مُجْمَلُ

And he goes back; and they go back in all haste; and all of them are busily intent on what the decent one keeps secret.

39 (36-36).

وَتَشْرَبُ أَسَارِي الْقَطَا الْكَدْرُ بَعْدَ مَا سَرَتْ قَرِيبًا أَحْنَاؤُهَا يَتَصَلُّصُ

And the cinereous sandgrouse birds drink my leavings, after they have travelled a whole night, their sides audibly panting (with thirst and fatigue);

40 (37-37).

هَمَمْتُ وَهَمَّتْ وَأَبْتَدَرْتُ وَأَسْدَلْتُ وَشُمِرَ مِنِّي فَارِطًا مُتَمَهِّلًا

I strive, and they strive; and I quicken my pace, and they lag behind; and a leisurely harbinger, in me, has thus been allowed to tuck up his skirts;

41 (38-38).

فَوَلَّيْتُ عَنْهَا وَهَيَّ تَكْبُولِعْفَرِهِ يُبَاشِرُهُ مِنْهَا ذُفُونٌ وَحَوْصَلُ

Then I turn back from them; and they tumble over at its margin, which their chins and breasts embrace;

42 (40-39).

كَأَنَّ وَعَاهَا حَجْرَتَيْهِ وَحَوْلَهُ أَحَاوِيمٌ مِنْ سَفْرِ الْقَبَائِلِ نَزَلُ

As though their tumult, on each side of, and round about it, (were that of) congregations settling down from migrating tribes

43 (39-40).

تُوَافِينَ مِنْ شَيْئِ إِلَيْهِ فَضَمَّهَا كَمَا ضَمَّ أَنْوَانَ الْأَصَارِيمِ مَهْمَلُ

Coming to it from divers quarters; so that it collects them, as one watering-place collects the camel-troops of various tent-groups.

44 (41-41).

فَعَبَّتْ عِشَاشًا لَمْ مَرَّتْ كَأَنَّهَا مَعَ الْفَجْرِ رَكْبٌ مِنْ أَحَاظَةِ مُجْفَلُ

So they sip a scanty turbid puddle. Then they pass on, as though they were a caravan hastening away from Uhātza with the dawn.

45 (61-61).

وَيَوْمٍ مِنَ الشَّعْرِ يَدُوبُ لُعَابُهُ أَقَاعِيهِ فِي رَمَضَائِهِ يَسْمَلَمَلُ

And on a day of (the canicular period of) Sirius, when his gossamer floats melting about, and his vipers, among his over-heated rocks, writhe in agony,

46 (62-62).

نَصَبْتُ لَهُ وَجْهِي وَلَا كَيْنَ دُونَهُ وَلَا سِثْرًا إِلَّا الْأَحْمِيَّ الْمَرْعَبِلَ

I set up my face right against it, with no screen in front thereof, and no covert, save a tattered At-hamī rag,

47 (63-63).

وَصَافٍ أَدَا هَبَّتْ لَهُ الرِّيحُ طَيَّرَتْ لَبَائِدَ عَنِّ اعْطَافِهِ مَا تُرْجَلُ

And a shaggy head of hair, on which when the wind blows, there fly out, as fluffs from its tufts, what might be combed away;

48 (64-64).

بَعِيدَ بِمَسِّ الدَّهْنِ وَالْفَلْيِ عَهْدُهُ لَهُ عَبَسَ عَافٍ عَنِ الْعَسَلِ مُحْوِلُ

Far, in time, from the touch of oil, and from a riddance of vermin; soiled with filth; excused from washing; dishevelled.

49 (53-49).

فَمَا تَرَانِي كَمَا بَنَتِ الرَّمْلِ صَاحِيًا عَلَى رِقَّةٍ أَحْفَى وَلَا أَنْتَعَلُ

And if thou see me, like an antelope of the sands, exposed to the sun on scanty fare, I go barefoot, and I wear no sandals.

50 (54-50).

فِيَاتِي لَمَوَالِي الصَّبْرِ أَحْتَابُ بَزَّهُ عَلَى مِثْلِ قَلْبِ السَّمْعِ وَالْحَزْمِ أَفْعَلُ

For verily, I am a slave to patience. I wear its armour over the like of the heart of the wolf-hyæna; and discretion I practise.

51 (45-45).

طَرِيدٌ جَنَائِدَاتٍ تَيَاسَرْنَ لِحَمِّهِ      عَقِيرَتُهُ لَأَيِّهَا حَمٌّ أَوَّلُ

(I am a man) persecuted by assaults that imperil life and limb, and that gamble on his flesh as against his death shriek,—which of them is destined to be first had;

52 (51-47).

وَأَلْفٌ هُمُومٍ لَا تَزَالُ يَعودُهُ      عِيَادًا كَحَمَى الرَّبِيعِ بَلْ هِيَ أَثْقَلُ

And a familiar of cares, which cease not to revisit him, returning like the quartan ague; nay, which are yet heavier to bear.

53 (52-48).

إِنَّا وَرَدَّتْ أَصْدَرُهَا ثُمَّ إِنَّهَا      تَثُوبُ فَتَأْتِي مِن بَحِيثٍ وَمِنْ عَلٍ

When they beset me, I drive them away. Then, verily, they spring round, and come upon me from a little below, and from just above.

54 (65-65).

وَخَرَقٌ كَطَهْرِ الشَّرْسِ قَفَرٍ قَطَعَتْهُ      بِعَاوِلَتَيْنِ بَطْنِهِ لَيْسَ يُعْمَلُ

And in a wilderness, (bare) as the back of a shield, which I have traversed, the hither and thither portions of the interior of which are not usually travelled through,

55 (66-66).

فَأَلْحَقْتُ أَوْلَادَهُ بِأَخْرَافِ مَوْفِيَا      عَلَى قُنْتَةٍ أَقْبَعِي مِرَارًا وَأَمْشَلُ

The beginnings of which I have brought together with its endings (by journeying); mounting on a hill-top, to sit down at times; and (again) standing up erect (on the outlook for foes).

56 (42-42).

وَأَلْفٌ وَجْهَ الْأَرْضِ عِنْدَ أَفْتِرَاشِهَا      بِأَهْدَأْ تُبْنِيهِ سَسَائِسُنْ قَحْلُ

And I snuggle to the face of the earth, where it spreads out level, on a crooked back, built up by fleshless vertebral processes;

57 (43-43).

وَأَعْدَلٌ مَأْخُوضًا كَأَنَّ فُضُوضَهُ      كِعَابٌ دَحَاهَا لَاعِبٌ فَهَيْ مِثْلُ

And on a scraggy arm, the articulations of which are, as it were, dice thrown by a player, they thus standing out erect.

58 (67-67).

تَرُونُ الْأَرَاوِي الضُّخْمُ حَوْلِي كَأَنَّهَا      عِدَارِي عَلَيْهِنَّ الْمَلَاءُ الْمُدَيِّقُ

The dusky chamois does wandering around me, as though they were maidens on whom are train-trailing mufflers;

59 (68-68).

وَيُرِيدُنَ بِالْأَصَالِ حَوْلِي كَأَنِّي      مِنَ الْعُضْمِ أَدْنَى يَنْتَمِي الْكَيْحَ أَغْقَلُ

And of evenings resting around me, as though I were, of the white fore-shanked ones, a long-horned chamois buck, with crooked hind legs, bound for the mountain slopes.

60 (49-54).

وَكَيْلَةٌ تَحْسِبُ يَضْطَلِي الْقَوْسَ رَبِّهَا      وَأَقْطَعُهُ اللَّاتِي بِهَا يَنْتَبَلُ

And in a night of wretchedness, when the owner burns his (very) bow, and his fragments (thereof), from which he could make arrows,

61 (55-55).

دَعَسْتُ عَلَى غَطِيشٍ وَبَعْشٍ وَصُحْبَتِي      سُعَارٌ وَارْزِيزٌ وَوَحْرٌ وَأَفْكَلُ

I tramp forth in the dark and the drizzle; my companions being heart-burning, and sleet, and rancour, and shivering.



62 (56-56).

فَأَبَيْتُ نِسْوَانًا وَأَبَيْتُ الْوَدَّ وَعَدْتُ كَمَا أَبَدْتُ وَاللَّيْلُ الْيَلُّ

Then I make widows of women, and I make orphans of children (in one tent); and I repeat (in other tents) as I began; the night being (still) most obscure.

63 (57-57).

وَأَصْبَحَ عَنِّي بِالْعُمَيْصَاءِ جَالِسًا فَرِيقَانِ مَسْؤُولٍ وَآخَرُ يَسْأَلُ

And on the morrow, at Gumaysā, two parties of men arose to a sitting posture (conversing together) about me (in reality),—the one being questioned and the other inquiring.

64 (58-58).

وَقَالُوا لَقَدْ هَرَّتْ بِلَيْلٍ كِلَابُنَا فَقُلْنَا أَمْ نَيْبٌ عَسَّ أَمْ عَسَّ فُرْعُلُ

And they said (to one another): "In the night our dogs growled; so we said: 'Is a wolf prowling, or is it a hyæna-cub skulking about?'"

65 (59-59).

فَلَمْ تَكُ إِلَّا نَبَأَةٌ ثُمَّ هَوَمَتْ فَقُلْنَا قَطَاةٌ رِبْعٌ أَمْ رِبْعٌ أَحْدَلُ

"But it was nothing, only a slight sound; then they dozed off again; so we said: 'Was it a sandgrouse got scared, or did some hawk take fright?'"

66 (60-60).

فَإِنْ يَكُ مِنْ جِنِّ لَأَبْرَحَ طَارِقًا وَإِنْ يَكُ إِنْسًا مَا كَفَى الْإِنْسُ يَفْعَلُ

"Now, if it was one of the genii, verily, he has wrought a dreadful deed! And if it was a human being, . . .!—But what human being could do it?"

67 (44-44).

فِيَانِ تَبْتَسِسُ بِالشَّفَرَى أَمْ تَسْطَلِ كَمَا اغْتَبَطَتْ بِالشَّفَرَى قَبْلَ أَطْوَلِ

Well! If the mother of Qastel is (now) in despair through Shanfarà, verily, the advantage over Shanfarà for which she was envied, was of longer duration!

68 (50-46).

تَمَامٌ إِذَا مَا نَامَ يَقْظَى عِيُونَهَا حَشَانًا إِلَى مَكْرُوهِهِ تَتَعَلَّعَلُ

She sleeps whenever he sleeps; but her eyes (her spies are) awake as she dozes, exercising her utmost (thoughts) in what may wreak misery on him.

Perhaps a few notes may be not quite without use as to some of the idiomatic or poetical expressions that occur in the poem.

V. 1. *صُدُورٌ* is the reverse of *وُرُودٌ* in the matter of the watering of camels. The latter word denotes their *arriving* at a watering-place; the former, their *leaving* it after drinking.

In natural water-courses, cattle always *enter* the water to drink, and *come out* again when they have drunk. Our word *صُدُورٌ* really means *a coming or going out, an issuing*; and is strictly appropriate to a case where the cattle enter the water to drink. It is used, however, to signify their *leaving* a watering-place, whether they enter the water or not.

It is peculiar that the word *دُخُولٌ*, which is the lexical converse of *صُدُورٌ*, is not used in the sense of *coming to, or arriving at* a watering-place, though it may be used to say, explicitly, that the cattle *entered* the water, to drink, to swim, ford, or what not.

The verb *وَرَدُوا*, *they came to a watering-place to drink*, has for its idiomatic converse *صَدَرُوا*, *they left their watering-place after drinking*, whether the water be entered by them or not. In v. 53, the poet uses the verb *وَرَدَتْ* to speak of cares

coming and besetting him, as camels come to a watering-place. He uses the fourth form verb, أَضَدَّ رُتْبًا, to express the idea that he drives them away; literally, *I make them quit their watering-place*; just as though they were camels.

V. 3. Literally, three wild beasts are named. It might be imagined that Shanfarà, from disgust with man, had made those beasts his familiars—poetically, if not actually. But the two following distichs, 4 and 5, somewhat lift the veil from the tropical expression, while verses 6 and 7 complete the elucidation.

Beasts do not “*stretch forth hands towards provisions,*” neither do they provide and carry food for their journeys.

The three beasts are, then, evidently, three confederates of the poet, of whom he considers himself the moral superior. Just such friends and confederates as Ta’abbata-Sharran and ‘Umar son of Barrāq may be supposed to have been.

The “*chased beasts*” of v. 5 probably alludes to herds of camels which the confederates are to “*lift,*” and which are guarded by their owners, or by the camel-herds.

V. 14 perhaps hints at a failing known to exist frequently among camel-herds, often mere slaves, of driving away the colts, and of themselves milking the mothers for their own use and delectation, when their dugs are left free, بَيْتٌ, for their colts to suck.

At times, all four dugs of a she-camel are covered over, by the owner, with a kind of apron of leather or hide, to prevent the colts from sucking at all. At other times, one, two, three, or all four dugs are left free for the colts to suck; and each of these arrangements has its special name, its special verb.

The “*mock-bird,*” الْبُكْرَاءُ, mentioned in v. 16, is said to take a mischievous delight in deceiving shepherds and the like, by imitating human cries. I am sorry that I cannot state the technical name of this naughty bird.

The effeminate fellow of v. 18, “*who carries no weapon,*” is of rare occurrence in a land where, as a rule, every man’s hand is against his neighbour.

The sense of *يَيْمَاءَ هَوَجَلُ*, in v. 19, is doubtful.

The expression *وَسَائِمِي*, *my hoofs*, of v. 20, is a poetical licence, perhaps for the sake of the metre; but it is also intensely expressive. The singular, *وَسَائِمٌ*, designates the peculiar cushion of the sole of a camel's foot, or, of each one of his toes. Thus, each foot has one, *وَسَائِمٌ*, or it has several, *وَسَائِمٌ*, according to those two divergent views. The poet likens his own bare toes to the *وَسَائِمٌ* of a camel's foot.

In v. 21, the expression *وَسَطَالٌ* signifies what I have not been able to find a term for. It denotes the period of time elapsing between a creditor's asking for payment of the debt owing to him, and the term at which the debtor tells him to apply again.

The poet makes "hunger" his creditor, who presses for payment by the ingestion of food. The poet then puts off his hunger, saying: "Apply again in two or three hours' time," etc.; and he repeats this "putting off" until he "*kills his hunger.*" Then he turns his thoughts to other matters, and forgets his dead creditor.

How many would be glad thus to kill hunger and forget it, instead of their hunger's killing them!

In v. 22, however, the poet admits that, to do this, he has to "*twist his intestines upon inanition, as a spinner lays his yarns.*" Large stones are often tightly bound over the pit of the stomach by starving or fasting men, to quiet their pangs.

In v. 23, he licks up the dust like a medical powder, to appease the gnawings of his empty stomach; so as to be able to put on a good face, while declining assistance from some would-be succourer, to whom he has an aversion from laying himself under an obligation.

His becoming alternately poor and rich, in v. 27, must be understood, it would appear, as the effects of reciprocal robbery, or private warfare. When the poet is "raided" by his foes, he is left to starve; when he succeeds in "lifting" their cattle, he is a man of wealth. He has a wish, and he does not spare himself. Just like our own commercial and

financial sharks, "biting" others one day, "bitten" in turn the next.

V. 32 mentions the "distributor by lot of the joints of a slaughtered camel." Even this description of the little word *يَاسِرٌ* is inadequate. The camel must have been purchased for the purpose by a joint venture. Let us suppose ten men joining together in equal shares to buy a camel for slaughter. As they cannot all have the best joints, they draw lots. The camel is slaughtered and cut up into ten portions as fairly as the butcher's eye can judge, with no scales to assist him in the wild country. Those portions or joints are placed in a row or circle, as we should say, No. 1, No. 2, etc., to ten, with one extra share for the butcher's fee. He, or one of the party who knows the rules of the game, now produces the gaming arrows—headless, featherless shafts, distinguished in some special way from one another. The *يَاسِرٌ*—the distributor by lot—shuffles the arrows in his two hands, as the jaws of the hungry wolves chatter with torment. The sharers draw an arrow each, and so determine which portion each shall have, the butcher taking that which their lots leave to him.

V. 33 is differently explained in the *Chrestomathie Arabe*. Instead of spatulæ thrust into a hive to extract its honey, as is the usual course, De Sacy has imagined a young brood of bees swarming and migrating, the honey-hunter going to the futile trouble of setting up wands here and there, about the rocks, for the queen-bee to alight on; an utterly baseless supposition.

In v. 38, the expression "*all of them are busily intent on what the decent one keeps secret,*" is very recondite. The "*decent one*" is, most probably, the poet himself. What he keeps secret is his gnawing hunger. The poor wolves, going home breakfastless and famished, may well be all busily intent on the pangs they endure, though they remain quiet at last.

V. 40. The expression *شُمْرٌ وَمِنِّي فَارِطٌ وَمَتَمَهْلٌ* is one the signification of which has to be guessed, the commentators,



as usual in difficult passages, being quite useless. The *harbinger*, *فَارِطٌ*, is well known; as is also the custom of tucking up one's sleeves, legs, or skirts, preparatorily to a brush of hard work or exertion.

V. 41. The idea of the "chins and breasts" of the sandgrouse "embracing the margin of the tank" as they alight, is very graphic and poetical. They run with rapidity; and, as their legs are short, their bodies are carried very close to the ground, the steps short and tripping. So say our modern ornithologists, unconsciously confirming what Shanfarà sang of the birds thirteen centuries ago.

The "Uhâtza" of v. 44, and the "Et-hami rag" of v. 46, are not especially known or described.

V. 50. The "wolf-hyæna," a peculiarly bold creature, which I cannot attempt to identify, is supposed to be a cross between a he-wolf and a she-hyæna. The idea of wearing the armour (or the garment) of patience over something that may be like the heart of that beast, is an extremely artistic turn of thought. Perhaps, it is the poet's determination, his unflinching pertinacity, that is hinted at.

V. 51. That "assaults" should gamble (the same root with the designation of the "distributor by lot of the joints of the slaughtered camel" of v. 32) on the poet's flesh and death-shriek is also an artistic expression. But the true meaning of the word rendered "death-shriek," *عَقِيرَتُهُ*, is very doubtful. The commentators have coined an anecdote to explain it; which, as usual, fails.

V. 53. The *إِنَّا وَرَدَّتْ أَصْدَرُهَا* has been noticed in the explanation of the *صُدُورٌ* of v. 1.

V. 55. The "bringing together the two ends" of a space journeyed over is a usual expression.

V. 63. Gumaysa *أَلْعَمِيصَاءُ*, as the name of a place, is not particularly specified. I can imagine the word's meaning, in the distich, *the faint light of the dawn*; but this sense is in none of the authorities.

V. 66. That the genii can sometimes be very cruel is well known to every reader of the Thousand and One Nights.

We here bring our short notes to a close, in order to avoid prolixity. Almost every word and expression in the poem would bear a gloss or a comment.

The distichs of the poem are numbered for the sake of easy reference; and, to facilitate a comparison of the order now adopted, with those given by the India Office manuscript and by De Sacy, we have shown, in parentheses, the number of each distich as placed in their respective texts. The first of those numerals marks the place of the distich in the manuscript; the second, its position in De Sacy's version.

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