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THE POET LABID.

HIS LIFE, TIMES, AND FRAGMENTARY WRITINGS.

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED

TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LEIPSIC

FOR THE

PURPOSE OF OBTAINING THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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1877.



THE POET LABRID.

HIS LIFE, TIMES, AND PRACTICAL WRITINGS

A DISSERTATION

BY

TO THE HONORABLE SOCIETY OF THE CLERGY OF LONDON



WILLIAM J. M. MALLIN

PHYSICIAN IN CHIEF

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I.

The enthusiasm of every people in the patriarchal period of its history for its poetry and poets is a phenomenon which by the regularity of its occurrence has ceased to excite wonder in the minds of those who investigate the history of civilization. The childish temperament of men in a rude state of society finds in the outpourings of the bard material for the exercise of fancy and glories in the lavish praises with which the poet extols his tribe and its ancestry. The chieftain recognising in the songs of his people the only means of transmitting the fame of his achievements to posterity bows before the genius of their authors and finds room in his household for the creator of the stanzas which are to render him famous in after ages. No nation has cherished with greater care the first fruits of its literature than that which inhabits the sandy peninsula which Asia stretches out toward the Indian Ocean and the confines of Africa. The miraculous raptures with which the early Welsh and Teutons listened to their scalds, or the dwellers on the borders of the Aegean to their rhapsodists scarcely exceed the exalted attention with which the Bedouin listened and still listens to the reciter of the Suspended Poems or the pathetic love tales of the ancient Arab minstrels. The veneration for the beauties of his language was not however confined to the wanderer of the desert. It was a living principle in the inhabitant of the city. Even in the most cultivated period of the califate, when Damascus and Bagdad harbored in their walls men skilled in the philosophy of Aristotle and Plato, in the mathematics and astronomy of Euclid and Ptolemy, and the medical systems of Galen and Hippocrates, the rival philological schols of Cufa and Basra wrangled over

the complicated constructions and fine shades of meaning, which every learned doctor held to be the characteristics of the most perfect and exquisite language that ever existed. No treatise in any scientific field of research, however abstruse, was acceptable to the world of letters unless adorned by quotations and rhetorical ornaments drawn from the poetical literature which every Arab considers the pride and wonder of his race.

The marked characteristics of this diadem of elevated thought and source of all ennobling emotions are embodied in many of those similitudes of which the oriental mind is so productive. Poetry is to the Arab like a series of pearls in a necklace, *) each sentence perfect in itself, each thought carefully rounded to a marvellous gem, the whole an ornament for princes and peoples. Again it is a garden**) full of the buds and flowers of thought, rich in the products of fancy and the fruits of the imagination abounding in all that is pleasant to the senses. A famous oriental traveller, whose cooler western judgment seeks for a simile which may represent the peculiarities of Arabic poetry to our minds compares it to the »dim, grand outlines of a picture which must be filled up by the reader guided only by a few glorious touches, powerfully standing out, and the sentiment which the scene is intended to express.«***) Like the exquisite figures in lace, its forms of expression and wonderful imageries are separate and distinct, its sentences stand out perfect in themselves, and delicate threads of community of purpose only unite them all into a congruent whole, in spite of the rapid transitions of thought and apparent interruptions of the continuity.

A poetry, held in such high estimation among the people who produced it, formed on models so different from any

*) السموط. Nöldeke: Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Poesie der alten Araber, p. XXI. Wenig: Zur allgemeinen Charakteristik der Arabischen Poesie, p. 9.

**) Ibn Doraid: مقصورة, v. 226.

***) Burton: A Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, II. 242. Tauchnitz Edition.

known to the western world, and possessed of such a wealth of genuine sentiment is a rich field for the investigator. Undeveloped into the Epos or the Drama, the causes of its confinement to the fields of lyrical and descriptive poetry are to be sought in the subjectivity of the Semitic character. The Arab lives only in the present and for himself, However majestic may be the flow of his thought, his nature forbids him to put into the mouth of another what the actor might have said, he only tells as far as it is known to be true, what his hero actually did say, and although there are some traces of an approach to dialogue in the models on which all the longer poems are constructed, they are faint and are crowded aside by the emotional description of the poets longings for a loved one, of the impressions which the phenomena of nature make upon his soul, of the pleasures of the chase or the excellence of a noble steed. The personal character of Arab poetry is plainly seen in the groups into which their own writers divide it. According to some its character is a fourfold one, including panegyric, satire, the eulogy of women and elegy: others add a fifth division, that of self-praise. Another analysis divides it into panegyric, satire, gnomic poetry and burlesque. The subjects of the first class are the dead, the poet himself, the poet's family and tribe and those whom he thanks for their generosity; of the second, censure, remonstrance or reprimand, and reproach on account of delay; of the third, comparisons, penitential songs, and admonitions; and finally of the fourth, love, jollity game and wine. But the material is even more extended than this nor is the division which the Arabs make a sufficient one. For the purpose of giving a clear idea of the manifold thought expressed in Arabic poetry the following summary is nearer perfection. In his relations to Nature the poet describes and compares the works of nature and of art, the beauties of the heavens, the stars and the rain, the ruins of deserted villages, his arms, the litter of his loved one with the gorgeousness of its hangings and the gardens with their glories of trees and running waters, while in later days his exultation in the pleasures of the chase was the theme of many a song by

the festal board. In his relations to his fellow Man he sings of his friendship, his enmity and his love. His friendship leads him to extol his relatives, his tribe, himself, and his own family, while his guest, his bosom friend, and those whom he esteems in general together with the interchange of letters furnish him with never failing sources from which to draw descriptions of the joys of life and the praise of the ruddy wine, the eulogy of his associates and lamentations for the dead. His enmity glows in his satires and his passion in outpourings which are always erotic, some times obscene. In his relations to God, he mourns over his sins, declares his creed and utters aphorisms and the results of his experiences in life; while in later times the mysticism of the then prevailing sufical systems showed itself in compositions of which this was the only theme. *) The same masterly hand which has filled in the picture of which these are but the outlines adds: »if we ask ourselves then what classes exist in Arabic poetry, the only possible answer is, that, lacking the epic and dramatic element, it is stamped with a lyric character, which does not however always appear bordered by distinct lines of demarcation, but often shows itself in a composite form. Inasmuch however as the lyric characteristics are the main ones we may perhaps adopt the name of descriptive lyrical poetry or in short odical poetry. (**)

The earliest and simplest forms of metrical composition which are still preserved among the Arabs are the so-called *ragez* poems, written in the metre of that name which means trembling. The metrical basis being a *diamb*, many variations in lengthening or shortening syllables were admissible and so it afforded the simplest vehicle for the short improvisations about the cares of life, or the course of fate and the bitterness of the author's hatred of his enemies, which were the beginnings of a literature that in a short time took to itself such manifold forms. Later, in the commencement of the classical period,

*) Ahlwardt: Ueber Poesie und Poetik der Araber, pp. 29—60.

**) Ibid. p. 30.

there was established a more polished and artificial model, which abounded in longer and more complicated metres and was formed on rules which, till the time of poetic decadence, determined the excellence of every production. His was the *Ḳaṣīda*. Composed of distichs, in the first of which both halves rhymed, but whose second halves only ended throughout the whole poem in the same syllable, confined in limits which rarely exceeded one hundred and twenty verses, and treating of various set themes in a prescribed order, it seems to us rigid and inflexible in its character; but, with that pertinacity which belongs to their race, even the latest Arab poets do not deviate greatly from its established rules. A native rhetorician describes its characteristics as follows: »As I have heard from a learned man, the author of *Ḳaṣīdas* began with the mention of (deserted) dwellings, of days (gone by) and of the traces of (former) inhabitants; then wept and bewailed the habitations, begged his companions to remain standing that he might take occasion to speak of the departed occupants, because the dwellers in tents as concerns their settlements and nomadic wanderings are different from those who have fixed places of abode, seeking new pasturage (for their flocks) emigrating from one water-source to another and searching for districts where rain had fallen. He then added the erotic part and bewept his love woes, the deep sorrow of parting and the violence of his feelings, that he might therewith win the hearts of his hearer, draw his glances toward himself and arouse to attention; because the sorrows of love affect the soul and touch the heart, inasmuch as God has so created his servants as to imbue them with joy in love and affection for woman (to such a degree) that it would be difficult to find any one who had no share therein or had no longing therefore whether in innocent or unlawful ways. Were he now convinced that he was observed and listened to, he hinted at what was his due and then continued in his tale and complained of weariness, watchings, nocturnal journeys and the leanness of his steed. If he were then certain that he had cogently explained to him whom he addressed the justness of his hopes and expectations and had paint-

ed the difficulties of his journey (to his patron) he commenced his eulogy, spurred (his listener) on to gratitude and generosity, celebrating him as superior to all his equals in station and lowering in contrast with him all that was great. A good poet is he who follows this path and restrains himself within proper limits in the various parts, neither being so tedious as to weary his hearers nor so concise as to leave them thirsting for more."*) This was, however, the judgment of an author who lived when public opinion deviated to the greatest extent from the rules established earlier and who know the poet only as a courtier and satellite. Formerly the praise of a prince had seldom been the aim of a poem and even in his own day the erotic part was altogether omitted from elegies.**)

As to an exact definition of what a *Ḳaṣīda* is and of what the word means there is among orientalisists much difference of opinion. Sir William Jones says, and with truth, that its inner form corresponds in a remarkable degree to that of the class of poetry to which the Greeks give the name *Idyll*.***) Baron Hammer-Purgstall interprets the meaning of the word itself as a *Zweckgedicht*, a poem with an aim, and thinks the aim is the praise of some object. She *Ḳaṣīda* is, according to his explanation, „the interpreter of elegiac, warlike and often of satirical inspiration.”†) Professor Ahlwardt is of the opinion that although the aim of the composition may be praise it is not necessarily so, as the earlier and better models contain no eulogies, that every poem of moderate length was so called in contradistinction to the shorter improvisations or iambics (أرجوزة), and that the name means a poem in which each verse is „broken” into two halves, or in which the subject matter is broken into several parts.††) Like the threads of connection which bind

*) Ibn Cotaiba in Nöldecke: Beiträge zur Kenntniss der Poesie der alten Araber, p. 19. Vgl. d. Ausg. des Ibn Kutaiba v. Rittershausen (Leiden, 1875) p. 17.

**) Ibid.: Note.

***) Jones: Poeseos Asiat. Commentariorum, ed. Eichhorn, p. 70.

†) Hammer: Motenebbi, der grösste arabische Dichter. Einl. p. XX.

††) Ahlwardt: Aechtheit der alten arabischen Gedichte, pp. 24, 25.

the varying themes of these poems into a congruent whole it is possible that the principles which underlie their right to the name are to be sought not so much in their outward form as in the mind of the poet and the sympathetic feelings of the hearers.

The classical period of Arabic poetry begins with Imrulkais, who flourished forty years previous to Mohammed, *) and ends with the fall of the Umawi dynasty in the year of the Hegira, 117. According to the learned Suyuṭi the last poet who could lay claim to being a classical writer was Du-l-Rumma. **) If a wealth of imagery and a certain poverty of intellectual subtlety, if an ascendancy of fancy over reason be traits of all Arabic poetic literatures they were so in a marked degree during this century and a half. But aside from this the productions of the bards who lived before and shortly after the rise of Islam were by reason of other clearly defined qualities unlike those of their successors under the reign of the dynasty of Abbas. The praise of the virtues of their respective tribes, of courage, generosity, hospitality and eloquence, the censure of the cowardice of an enemy, of avarice and cruelty, such were their themes. The artlessness of true children of nature ruled in all its purity their mind and genius and infused into their works that chivalry, generosity and constancy in love, which they so continually sing. ***) Before the time of Mohammed the Arab was in a higher degree possessed of the good qualities of the Bedouin of the present day. His manners were free and simple but full of dignity. He was fierce in revenging an insult but easy to be appeased after his notions of honor were satisfied, a compound of gentleness, determination, and gene-

The distinction between a raġeẓ poem and a Kaṣida is shown to have been a marked one in the minds of the Arabs by a verse of the raġeẓ poet Aglab preserved in the Kitab al Aghani. Boulac ed. XIV. p. 97. It runs

أَرْجُوْا تَرْيِدَ أُمَّ قَصِيْدَا نَقْدَ طَلِبْتِ هَيْبِنَا مَوْجُوْدَا

*) Ibn Cotaiba in Arnold's edition of the Moallakat, p. 2. Slane's Diwan of Imrulkais, p. XVIII.

**) Suyuti in Weil: Die poetische Literatur der Araber, p. 81.

***) Ibid. p. 91.

rosity, good-tempered, yet of a grave turn of mind, solemn and dignified yet fond of a jest.*) But the most ennobling of his traits was his regard for and the social position which he accorded to woman. Separated by the duties which devolved upon him in the countless wars of his people from the pleasures of home and family, the hero-poet regarded his women with an idealised tenderness and affection worthy of more enlightened society.***) When he poured out his heart in song it was often but to delineate the charms of his beloved, the pleasures of her society and the pains of a separation which the calls of duty in distant wars made inevitable. He flees on his swift steed the violence of his own sorrow and is only able to recover himself when he thinks of his own fame, the glories of the tribe of which he is an ornament; and as he casts a last sad look upon the long line of receding camels burdened with the litters which contain the cause of his tenderness, he girds on his arms, strikes the rowels into his barb and rides on through the terrors of the night and the desert to seek new trophies and renown, to perform those heroic deeds which he calls upon his hearers to imitate.

Mohammed appeared; and with the growth of his religion there were infused into the minds of its devotees a fanatical dogmatism and that disregard for women as the social equals of men, which characterised its founder. The former ideas of chivalry died away and the harem was instituted as a means of multiplying the faithful. The progress of civilization in the growing empire of the califs and the contact with foreign nations into which war and trade constantly brought the people, introduced more scientific modes of thought and increased the sum of knowledge. The old isolation, so favorable to the culture of a peculiar literature, passed away. Although under the Umawi dynasty heathen poets were still tolerated and even encouraged it was only that their talents might be employed in the praise of the ruling prince. The old models still re-

*) Burton: A Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, II. p. 229.

***) Weil: Die poetische Literatur der Araber, p. 31.

mained and were heard by the people with delight and studied in the schools with care, but the poems formed after them were without a vigor of their own, only shadows of that which they sought to imitate. The incentives which had formerly fired the hearts of the people, the motives which had given tone to the earlier expressions of feeling were utterly wanting. The different tribes were united under powerful rulers to one great nation, the incursions of one clan into the territories of another ceased. War was no longer a means of gaining fame for the individual and the soldiers of Islam fought only in obedience to the precepts of their religion or for the sake of the rich booty which their wily masters distributed among them. Provincial governments were formed and the viceregents set over them established courts which were only eclipsed in splendor by that of the reigning calif, gathering around them all that they could of culture, literature and song. The Bedouin still roamed the desert, but the glories of their minstrelsy were fast departing to shine with diminished splendor at the banquettings of princes and the assemblies of ambitious rulers.

The zenith of all that was good in Arabic poetry was reached at the time of Mohammed. For a century after his appearance the fall was a gradual, almost imperceptible but sure one, and although under the reign of Harun al-Raschid there was a revival which almost rivalled the earlier times, yet the causes of that ruin that finally prevailed are to be sought in the rise of Islam.

During the latter days of the empire the life of a poet was almost a picture of the political conditions unter which he lived. The spiritual supremacy of the califate of Bagdad was drawing near its end. The central power was broken. Military adventurers established themselves in the various provinces through the support of their armies as independent rulers. Booty became the main object of war. The welfare of the individual was no longer cared for, even the safety of peoples was uncertain from day to day. The poet became a wanderer. The court which had loaded him with wealth both yesterday falls

to-day by the onset of a powerful rival*). He was forced to seek new patrons as the old ones succumbed to the blows of fortune. His only safety lay with the most powerful, who was only to be propitiated by abject fawning and flattery. Thus the life of the minstrels was a stirring one. It enabled them to gratify something of what was good in their natures, all that was weak and bad. Between them and their predecessors before the advent of the prophet there was nothing in common. The one was a courtier without regard to race or feeling; the other was enthusiastic only for the tribe of his birth, its allies and his own family. The one was avaricious and used his genius to procure for himself largess and wealth; the other was generous to a fault and considered it the main glory of his life to employ the material fruits of his powers in feeding the poor of his people. The one strained his abilities to invent glowing praises for a prince or court just as long as his inordinate avarice was satisfied by the gifts of his patron; the other celebrated in his songs the highest virtues which adorn the human mind. The one was an artful, affected frequenter of cities, with a genius equal perhaps to that of his forefathers in literature but bound in the fetters of dependence and covetousness; the other was a true son of Ishmael, independent and free, with the fire of undegenerate nature in his veins.

Of the great poets who lived during the fourth and fifth centuries of the Hegira, we may take the three greatest as types of the rest. Motenabbi flourished in the household of Seifeddaula, a prince of the house of Hamdan, upon whom he lavished praises, and afterwards mocked at Kafur in Egypt because the rich presents of the latter did not satisfy his greed. Tograi was a favorite of the Selgukan Sultan, Melikschah, and Hariri of his successor, Mahmud. Motenabbi was once asked why he who praised in his poems the magnanimity and generosity of others was himself so avaricious. Friend, replied the poet in apology, money makes the man. I had an instance

*) The life of Imrul-Kais shows that even in them earlier times this was also the case.

of this in my youth which I will never forget. I arrived at Bagdad with five Dirhems in my pocket and while crossing the market-place observed a fruit-dealer who had five fine melons. I tried to bargain for them, but the man repelled me with the remark that they were not for my palate. How much are they? asked I. Ten Dirhem, he answered, I stood and looked at him in great embarrassment for I had only half the sum at my command. Presently there passed by an aged merchant to whom the dealer called, begging him to buy the fruit. Let me carry them to your dwelling, said he. Well, how much do they cost? Only five Dirhem, Willst thou take two? Yes, for aught I care, said the huckster and carried them with cringing bows into the house. When he returned I asked him why he had made such a bad bargain. Stupid, he replied, be still, that man is worth a hundred thousand Dinar. And if he had twice that sum what odds does it make to you as long as he only gives you two Dirhem? But the tradesman could only reply, the man is worth a hundred thousand Dinar. This then I bore in mind: that honor depends on the size of the purse and from that time on I strive to become rich so that it can be said of me: The man is worth one hundred thousand Dinar*). For a man with such principles no gift could be too large, no present too extravagant; nor was any hyperbole too high-sounding as long as it flattered the wealthy and opened their purses for the benefit of the contriver. The same poet compares the generosity of a protector with that of the clouds in shedding rain and says: »Never did the clouds equal thy bounty, they are only attacked with fever at the sight thereof (being ashamed of their own stinginess) and their outpourings are but the fever sweat**).«

Doubtless the guilds of minstrels but kept pace with the times in which they lived. The life of the dwellers in cities

*) Ahlwardt: Ueber Poesie und Poetik der Araber, p. 22.

***) Mutanabbi's Divân ed. by Dieterici p. 201, v. 42:

نَمْ يَحْكُ نَادِلَكَ السَّحَابُ وَإِنَّمَا حَمَّتْ بِهِ فَصَيَّبِيهَا الرُّحَصَاءُ



was in strong contrast to that of the nomadic Bedouin. Already in the days of the calif Omar, the wealth which the steady flow of commerce between southern Arabia on one side, and Syria and Egypt on the other, deposited in Mecca and Medina, produced increase of luxury and a tendency to gratify desires undeveloped in the poor and hardy inhabitants of the desert. In spite of the rigid regulations of the Koran the patricians indulged in feasts at which the richly ornamented bowl of wine went round and round, where the couches of the guests were adorned with myrtle, jasmine and other fragrant herbs and flowers, where Greek and Persian singing-girls kept time to the cadence of their voices on the lute, and where the poet intoned his verses in praise of wine and love. Even the laws of the Harem were disregarded and the young revellers of Mecca pursued their love adventures up to the door of the holy Kaaba. »A barbaric luxury joined with a subtle refinement in the forms and customs of sociability. Poetry and song beautified everyday life and destroyed its monotony. Clubs were founded, where chess and draughts could be played and reading-rooms were opened for those who chose to frequent them«^{*)}. This carelessness concerning the ethical system of Islam transplanted itself from Mecca with the dynasty of Umawi to Damascus and with that of Abbas to Bagdad. The beginnings of elegance and pomp in the holy city, developed into the magnificence of the court of Walyd II.^{**)} and into the extravagant splendor of that of Harun al-Raschid. No wonder that the old artlessness and simplicity which belonged to the black tents and roaming habits of earlier times were doomed. The scanty fare of the desert, camel's milk or a handful of dates gave way to plenty; the mat on which a countryman's frame took its night's repose was supplanted by luxurious couches, the exposure to the seasons was avoided in gorgeous palaces. And so with the increase of ease and comfort, with the growth of knowledge and refinement in society,

^{*)} v. Kremer: Culturgeschichte des Orients, I. p. 22.

^{**)} Ibid. p. 100.

with the loss of personality, and the absorption of power into central governments, the poetry of the Arabs assumed a character as different from that which it bore in its classical period as the life of a Motenabbi was unlike that of a nomad chieftain.

II.

The poet in whose life some of the main causes of the decline of Arabic poetry may best be traced is Labid. As the connecting link between the ante-mohammedan poets and those who flourished after the rise of Islam, all that concerns him must be of the greatest interest as a means of judging how far the religion of Mohammed and its founder were the causes of a change of tone in the literature of song. It has been said that Mohammed and Labid were the destroyers of good taste in Arabic poetry. How and to what extent this is true the life and sayings of the latter go far to show.

The proposition that he was a true classic poet before his conversion to Mohammedanism is one that scarcely needs to be proved, and in that period were composed the most if not all of his writings that have been transmitted to us. His right to be considered as one of the masters of his art is admitted by the Arab critics themselves. Not only is he one of the great seven, whose poems collected under the name *Moallaqât* and are considered the first in the whole language but the learned always mention him in their treatises as one of the few who are entitled to the first rank among their fellows. *Imrulkais* is almost always considered as the greatest of all, but then come *Sohair*, *Ennabigha*, *Elascha*, *Ṭarafa*, *Amr ben Kulthum*, *Labid*, *Antara*, *Elharith ben Hillise* and *Alqama*,*) each one of whom is thought to have some distinguishing merit, either in happy comparisons, in the grandeur of the expression of passion, in originality of expression, or in the pecu-

*) Ahlwardt: Ueber Poesie und Poetik der Araber, p. 11.

liar beauties of the different parts of their *Kasidas*. Elferasdak, himself a poet of renown, was one day walking before a mosque of the Benu Ukaisir at the door of which stood a man in the act of repeating the verse of Labid's:

The brooks lay bare the ruins as if they were
Like books whose text the pen renews.*)

Elferasdak immediately bowed, whereupon he was asked: What behavior is this? O Abu Feras. He answered: Ye are familiar with the passages of the Koran where reverence must be done but I recognize the passages of poetry where reverence ought to be done.**) It is also related that the great poet Ennabigha, being at the court of Noman ben elmundhir, noticed Labid, who was engaged in sporting with the young men of his tribe and said to him: Youth, thine eyes forsooth are the two eyes of a poet, canst thou not recite something poetical? He answered: Yes, O Uncle. Recite something which thou thyself hast composed, said Ennabigha. So he recited the verses beginning,

Dost thou not stand upon the solitary mounds,
Once Selma's near Ma-dha-ib and Kufal?

Thou art, O youth, the greatest poet of the Benu Amer, said Ennabigha, recite something further to me. He then repeated the verses:

Old are the ruins which belonged to Chaula in Rusais
In Ma'akie and Anamin they are but tattooed
Pictures in the hand.

Thou art, said Ennabigha, the greatest poet of Kais, the deepest thinker, let me hear more. Whereupon he declaimed the lines:

Deserted are the peaceful dwellings and halting places
In Miná, solitary are Ghaul and Rigam.

*) Arnold's Edition of the Moallaka. Labid, l. 8.

**) Kitabal Aghani. Boulac Ed. XIV, p. 97. The story is related on this authority.

احمد بن عبد العزيز + عمر بن شبة + محمد عمر أن الضبي +
انقسام بن يعلى عن المقصل الضبي

De Saçy, Calila et Dimna, p. 125.

Go on, said the listener, thou art the greatest poet of the Arabs. *)

The calif Mu'tassim was reclining one day at a banquet, when a certain musician sang these verses to him:

The sons of Abbas never let fall (the word) No.
But over their teeth comes easily Yes
Their greatness of mind adorns their humanity
Just as this adorns their liberality.

I do not know this poem, said the calif, who is the author? Labid, answered the musician. What had Labid to do with the sons of Abbas? Nothing, replied the singer, he referred to the Benn Raiyan and I have substituted the Benu Abbas. The calif approved of what he had done and gave him a present. Mu'tassim held the poetry of Labid in high esteem and said: Which one of you can give the continuation of these verses, — We wax old but the stars which control the life of man do not grow old. One of those who sat near answered: I. Recite them to me, said the calif. Thereupon he declaimed:

We wax old but the stars which control the life of man do not grow old,
For there remain after us the mountains and citadels.
Once was I protected by an enlightened neighbor,
But he deserted me, the enlightened neighbor, in Arba.

Here Mu'tassim wept until the tears rolled down his cheeks, for he thought of his brother Mamun and said: Such a one was he. Then he continued the recitation himself and repeated the remaining verses.

*) This story is given in two forms in the Kitab al Aghani XIV, pp. 100 & 101. They only vary in the omission by one of them of the last recitation and Nabigha's comment there on. The shorter has hies authority:

أحسن بن علي + قال حدثنا محمد بن القاسم بن مهرويه -
قال حدثنا هرون بن مسام عن العمري عن الهيثم بن عدي عن
حماد الراوية -

the longer this chain:

عمر + العمري عن لقيط عن أبيه وحماد الراوية عن عبد الله بن
قتادة المكاربي

It is no reason for sadness when fate separates us
 Since time is for every man full of woe.
 For mankind is naught but dwellings and their inhabitants
 There comes a day on which they leave their homes which are in the
 morning waste,
 And depart in troops while these remain after them,
 Just as the fingers shut fast on the (empty) palm, (after something
 has fallen out.)
 Man is but like a shooting star and its brilliancy
 Falls back in ashes after it has mounted up but once and given light
 afar.
 And piety is nothing but the secret of the fear of God
 And wealth naught but a loan, a something that must be returned,
 Is there not behind me when the day of my death is delayed
 The necessity of learning upon a staff, around which my fingers
 bend?
 I relate tales of generations that have passed away.
 I crawl, as if I, as often as I stand upright were still bent (with age).
 Like to a sword am I, whose scabbard is battered
 The days of its maker are departed but its point still cuts.
 Strive not to me escape, Death is for us a promised meeting
 For he is near his coming, yea, he comes.
 O Caviller what makes thee know if not conjecture,
 When men depart who, if any, will return?
 Art thou sad concerning what time brings forth with liberality?
 Who is the noble one whom misfortune does not overtake?
 By thy life neither the flight of birds nor their number
 Nor the auguring from the flight of birds can show thee what Allah
 will do.

So he spoke, and, adds the author of the *Kitab al Aghani*, we admire the beauty of his expressions, the corrections of his diction and the exquisiteness of his taste.*)

The constant theme of conversation among the learned in the Orient is the question, Who is the greatest poet? His question was one day answered by Labid in this wise. He happened to be present in a gathering of the Benu Nahal in Cufa and supported himself on a staff which he had. The assembled members of the tribe sent one of their number to him to ask concerning that one of the Arabs who might be the greatest

*) *Kitab al Aghani* XIV, 98. Authority :

أسمعيل بن يونس الشيبعي + عمر بن شبة عن ابن البواب
 De Saçy, Calila et Dimna, p. 125.

poet. Labid answered: The roving king, the lord of the boils. The messenger repeated his question and he then explained his meaning and said, Imrulkais. The messenger again asked: Who next to him? The murdered youth of the Benu Beer, was the answer which was explained to mean Tarafa. The messenger then asked a third time; Who next to him? The poet answered: The companion of the staff, meaning himself, in consequence of that passage where he says:

In truth the fear of our lord is the richest booty
And Allah permits my loitering and my haste
I praise Allah who has no rival
In whose hands all good lies. He acts as he will.
Whomsoever he allows to proceed goes on
In the paths of virtue and he leads astray whomsoever he will
Allah forgive my sins, added the pious old man. *)

Our ideas of modesty are not common in the east. That Labid should mention himself as third in the ranks of fame is a sign of great moderation and sensibility. The answer generally given when this question was asked was, When I am dead, the greatest poet will be so and so, or first I myself, then such and such an one.

These narratives sufficiently prove the high estimation in which Labid and his writings were held among his own people, and that, by those who were best fitted to form a judgement. European orientalists are divided in opinion as to the value of what he has produced. Ahlwardt says that Labid was rather

*) This anecdote is also given twice in the Kitab al Aghani XIV, pp. 97 et 98; the first account omitting the passage on which Labid founds his own rank as a poet. The authorities are respectively.

I. اسعيل بن يونس + عمر بن شبة + احمد بن حكيم عن خالد بن سعيد

II. احمد بن عبد الله بن عمار + يعقوب النخعي وابن عياش ومسعر بن كدام كلهم عن عبد الملك بن عمير + من أرسله سليمان بن صرد الخزاعي والمسيب بن نجبة الفزاري وخالد بن عرفطة النهري و مسروق بن الاجدع الهمدني وهانئ بن عروة المراد

De Saey, Calila et Dimna p. 120.

famous by reason of his great old age and the weariness of life which he finally felt than on account of the few poems which together with the Moallaḡa have been transmitted to us. *) But Rückert, the poet-professor, speaks of his poems as purely pagan, **) that is classical, in their character and says: The Moallaḡa of Labid, artistically composed of splendid pictures, exceeds all others in the skilful use of language and tasteful harmonious expression. ***)

Of the authorities for the facts of our poet's life, the most important is by reason of his fulness Abulfaraḡ al-Isfahāni, †) who lived in the tenth century. His compilation, the Kital el Aghani, is the oldest work on the history of Arabic poetical literature. ††) Next to him comes Ibn Cotaiba, an historian of the ninth century, whose statements are somewhat meagre. †††) A third to whom, as a modern savant of the east and possibly possessed of authorities not known to us, credence is to be given, is Abkarius. *)

The genealogy of Labid shows that he was one of the Benu Ḡaafar of the tribe of Kais Aylan, which was a branch of the so-called naturalized Arabs. **) His cognomen was Abu Akil

*) Ahlwardt: Ueber Poesie und Poetik der Araber, p. 12.

**) Rückert: Hamasa übersetzt, I. 388.

***) Rückert: Amrilkais, der Dichter und König, p. 106.

†) Abūl Farāḡ Alī b. al-Hosain al-Isfahāni died in 356 (= 966/7 Chr.)

cf. Ḥāḡḡi Khalīfa ed. Flügel I. p. 366. s. v. الأغانى.

††) كتاب الاغانى نلامام أبى انفرج الاصبهاني (†) Boulac, ed. Vol. XIV. pp. 92—101. For the necessity of care in the use of this book and its characteristics compare Ahlwardt: Aechtheit der alten Arabischen Gedichte, p. 85, and Nöldecke: Geschichte des Korāns, p. XVIII.

†††) Eichhorn: Monumenta Antiquissimae Hist. Arabum, p. 46. Ibn Cotaiba, Handbuch der Geschichte, ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 169.

*) The title كتاب روضة الادب في طبقات شعراء العرب is given to his work. Beirut see pp. 255—257.

**) The genealogy as given by Abul Farāḡ is:

هو لبید بن ربیعة بن مالك بن جعفر بن كلاب بن ربیعة بن عامر بن صعصعة بن معاوية بن بكر ابن هوازن بن منصور بن عكرمة بن حصفة بن قيس بن عيلان بن مضر

(كُنْيَةً) taken probably from some tribe which inhabited the north-eastern part of Arabia or Mesopotamia.*) He was descended of a family which was noted for its generosity and courage. His father was surnamed Rabia (the spring) of the poor because of his extraordinary liberality, while his uncle, Abu Bera, **) was celebrated in a verse of the poet Aus ben Haġar as he who sported with lances (مَلَاعِبَ الْأَسِنَّةِ and رِبِيعَةَ الْمُعْتَرِبِينَ). His mother was Tāmira, daughter of Zinbà' of the tribe of Abs. ***) His age according to Abulfaraġ was one hundred and forty five years, according to Ibn Cotaiba one hundred and fifty seven and according to Abkarius, one hundred and forty. The first and third of these statements can be reconciled on the supposition that the latter is but the round number without regard to the odd five years. As to the second, which is given with apparent attention to exactness there is a greater difficulty. Abulfaraġ is not a careful critic and pays often but little attention to chronology, whereas Ibn Cotaiba, although very concise is more painstaking and accurate. Prior to the time of Mohammed the Arabs, who followed the Jews in their manner of reckoning by lunar years, had been in the habit of intercalating, every third or second year as the case might be, an extra month in order that the time for the pilgrimage to Mecca might fall in the autumn as being the most convenient season for the pilgrims. †) In this way they unwittingly reduced their lunar years to solar ones. This had been strictly forbidden by

by Ibn Cotaiba: هو لبديد بن ربيعة بن ملك بن جعفر بن كلاب

by Abkarius: هو أبو عقيل لبديد بن ربيعة بن مالك بن جعفر العامري

الشاعر المشهور من أهل العراق Compare also Sale's Koran, p. 504, Table 2.

*) Compare de Saçy: Calila et Dimna, p. 124 Note (2).

**) Ibid. p. 111 Note (2).

***) Her genealogy is:

تامة بنت زنباع لعيسية إحدى بنات جديمة بن رواحة

†) See Sale's Koran. Preliminary Discourse, p. 106, and Nöldecke: Das Leben Muhammed's. Vorrede, VII. Compare Ibn el Athir, Chronicon, ed. Tornberg. Year XLI.



the prophet. If we take the statement of Ibn Cotaiba, who lived half a century previous to Abulfarağ as giving the number in strictly lunar years, according to the system of the Koran and that of Abulfarağ as being in the reckoning common before the time of Mohammed there is still a discrepancy of nearly seven years which cannot be explained. *) The latter authority also states that Labid died in Cufa toward the end of the califate of Muawia. **) The others say respectively Ibn Cotaiba that he died on the night when Muawia made his victorious entry into that city (A. D. 661. September), although he admits that many fix the date later; Abkarius that his death took place during the first years of Muawia's califate. The last is the most probable statement as it enables us to reconcile all the facts of his life which have been handed down to us. This would fix the period of his birth about fifty years previous to that of Mohammed. The only absolute certainty is that he was one of the class of poets called Mukhadram (مُخَضَّرَم) or poets who lived before and after the rise of Islam and that of all these he was the most famous. His two poems, the Moallaka and the Elegy on Arbed, were both written previous to the conversion of their author. As has been related he recited the Moallaka ***) to Ennabigha who died shortly before Mohammed's appearance in the character of apostle †) and there can be but little doubt that the elegy on his brother, who died previous to the meeting between him and the prophet ††), was made not long after the catastrophe which it laments. In addition to this probability it contains none of that class of aphorisms which a pious Moslem, newly converted would be likely to enunciate.

*) It is a strange coincidence although no stress can be laid on it that one hundred and fifty seven years of twelve months of four weeks each are within a few days equal to one hundred and forty five solar years.

**) Kitab al Aghani XIV, p. 93.

***) Celui de Labid fut composée, suivant les traditions des Arabes sous le règne d'Amru ben Hîndu. De Saçy in Magasin Encyclopédique I. 514.

†) Ahlwardt: Aechtheit der alten Arabischen Gedichte. p. 39.

† †) De Saçy: Calila et Dimna, p. 129.

The conversion of Labid to Islam would have been *) a great triumph for its founder, and would have assisted him to establish in the minds of the Arabs the authenticity of the Koran as a revelation from God, if the fable were true. That the poet was so impressed with the beautiful diction of the first verses of the second chapter of the Koran as to immediately embrace the religion of their author and to tear down from the Kaaba some verses of his own which were hanging near the same, is a statement which seems to have been almost universally accepted on the authority of Devletschah, a Persian writer of the fifteenth century. The same historian says that Labid died in the one hundred and forty first year of the Hegira, being one hundred and forty years old, but that he was of the greatest assistance to Mohammed in answering the lampoons of Imrulkais, made against the prophet and the faith which he proclaimed! **) These declarations are not only contradictory but absurd, Mohammed died when according to them Labid could have been but eleven years old and there is no doubt but that Imrulkais flourished forty years before the time of the prophet. ***) Such an utter disregard of consistency and facts must make us hesitate to accept the truth of other statements by the same author. A fact of such importance as the conversion of one of the greatest wits of his time by the mere reading of a chapter in the Koran would not be forgotten or omitted by any Moslem writer. And yet none of the three authorities mentioned refer to it.

Labid came to Mohammed with an embassy of the sons of Kelab after the death of his brother Arbed, he then embraced Islam, fled from Mecca to Medina with the prophet, was faithful to his confession and took up his residence in Cufa under

*) Compare Abul Mahasin. Annales, ed. Juynboll (+ 815) I. 136.

**) D'Herbelot: Bibliothèque Orientale, Art. Lebid.

***) Slane's Edition of Imrulkais Diwan, p. XVIII. Compare also the introduction of the commentary to Imrulkais' Moallaka. Arnold's Edition, p. 2.

the reign of Omar. The first ninety years of his life were spent in ignorance of Islam,*) according to Abulfarag.

To bring unity into these conflicting statements is an impossibility. The Kitab al Aghani, to recapitulate, makes the poet to have been one hundred and forty five years old, to have died at least fifty years after the Hegira, previous to which he became a Mohammedan, and therefore to have been born about the year five hundred and thirty. Ibn Cotaiba fixes his death in the year six hundred and sixty one, the thirty ninth of the Hegira, and his age at one hundred and fifty seven, which would make the year of his birth, five hundred and four. Abkarius holds a middle course and says he died about the year six hundred and sixty five and, putting his age at one hundred and forty, would fix his birth in the year five hundred and twenty five.

Labid's first success in composition was on the occasion when he accompanied some delegates of the Benu Gaafar, among them his uncle Abu Bera, on a mission to the court of Noman, king of Hira. They found with the ruler, Rabia ben Zayad, of the tribe of Abs. This Rabia was a boon-companion of Noman's as well as a certain Syrian merchant, whose name was Zarahaum ben Naufil and who was a partner with Noman in the latter's speculations in trade, an educated man, skilful in story-telling and a man to be desired at a drinking-bout,

*) Kitab al Aghani, XIV. 93. These facts are given on the authority of the following chains of tradition.

احمد بن عبد العزيز الجوهري + عمر بن شبة عن عبد الله بن محمد
 بن حبيكم = And الحسن ابن علي + ابن مهوريه + عبد الله بن ابي
 سعد عن علي بن الصباح عن ابن الكلبي وعن علي بن المسور عن
 الاصمعي وعن المدائني وعن رجال ذكرهم منهم ابو اليقطين وابن داب
 وابن جعدية و الوفاص

The scholiast of Arnold's edition of the Moallaka evidently tries to combine two statements. He says Labid died in the forty first year of Islam but agrees with Ibn Cotaiba in the length of his life.



Nóman rather slighted him however; but when he wished to be incited to drink sent for him, his physician Nitasi, and Rabia ben Zayad and in their company amused himself. The Benu Gaafar, after their arrival, sought audience of Nóman concerning their affairs, while Rabia mocked at them as they went out and circulated evil reports concerning them, for the Benu Gaafar were at enmity with his tribe. This he continued to do before Nóman and succeeded in making him unfriendly toward them. One day the delegates appeared and were treated with rudeness by the king, whereas he had formerly been well-disposed toward them and had used them honorably. They departed full of anger. Labid had remained behind the Caravan guarding the baggage and feeding the camels, in as much as it was his duty to lead them to pasture every morning. As night came on, the others conversed together about their affair with Rabia. Labid asked them concerning the circumstance, but they concealed it from him. By Allah, said he, neither will I guard your baggage nor lead your camels to pasture if you do not relate to me why you behave thus. Now Labid's mother had been an orphan in the house of Rabia, so they answered him: Thine uncle on the mother's side is more powerful than we with the king and has caused him to turn his countenance away from us. Can you, said Labid, so manage it as to bring me and him together, I will drive him from before your face by means of a sharp speech which will mortify him and Nóman will never look with favor on him again. Canst thou do something of that kind, said they. Yes, he answered. We will try thee, said they. On what subject, said Labid. Ridicule this plant for us then, they answered. Now there was before them on the ground a little plant, of which the twigs were few in number, the foliage insignificant and which clung to the soil. Its name is Thariyya (ثريّة). So be said:

This is the Thariyya, which is useless to stop the chinks of a dwelling, to kindle a fire with or to please a neighbor. Its wood is worthless, its foliage but little and its value small. It is the vilest of edible plants, the shortest as regards its

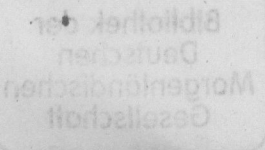
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Morgenländischen
Gesellschaft

branches and the most difficult to train; the room it occupies is extended but he who eats there of remains hungry and he who continues to do so will be like a beggar. Bring me to the brother of Abs, I will expel him in utter ruin and as concerns his affairs leave him in desperation. We will wait till morning, said they, and observe your behavior with reference to our plan. Watch this youth, said Amer (to his companions) meaning Labid, if ye find that he sleeps then there is nothing in it, he only says what rises to his tongue, but if ye find that he remains awake he is its companion (i. e. this satire was thought out and is not a chance hit). So they watched him secretly and found that he had seated himself on a packsaddle, upon the bow of which he gnawed till it was morning. Then they exclaimed: Thou art its companion (the properman). They then took him and shaved his head, leaving a tuft of hair in front and put a cloak upon him and he accompanied them that morning to No'man. They found the king at breakfast with Rabia ben Zayad; the two were eating alone together, no third person being present; but the house and benches were full of newly arrived people. After his breakfast was finished No'man granted the Benu Gaafar permission and they went in to his apartment. As they were nearly at the end of the address relating to the affairs on account of which they had come, Rabia ben Zayad interrupted them, whereupon Labid immediately broke out:

Is then each day my head to be threatened?
 Many a conflict is better than rest and peace.
 We are the sons of the mother of four sons,
 Whose swords revenge, whose beakers are full.
 We are the elect of Amer ben Sa'sa'a,
 And they who in the din of arms hew heads in pieces.
 And distribute full chargers (of food to the poor).
 Be on thy guard, ward off the curse from thyself eat not with him*).

Hereupon No'man lifted up his hand from the food and said: Thou hast, by Allah, O youth, destroyed my appetite,

*) The remaining four lines are too scurrilous for translation. The original text is printed in De Sacy: Calila et Dimna, p. 116.



I have never seen a day like this. Then Rabia drew near to No'man and said: He lies, by Allah, the son of a harlot. I have used his mother as I chose. He like of you, said Labid, deals in that way with a handmaid of his house and a relation, but my mother is one of those women who are not bawds as you relate. No'man immediately gave orders that what the Benu Gaafar wished should be done and took his leave of them. Rabia ben Zayad went directly to his dwelling. No'man sent to him a sum less than he had been accustomed to send and commanded him to betake himself to his family. Rabia remonstrated with No'man but in vain. Two poetical letters in a vein of bitter satire passed between them but all to no avail. Labid's victory was complete*).

He is said to have made some other satirical verses against Rabia of which the following is a translation:

O Rabia, let no camel-driver bring thee to me
 For (he would be so treated that) he would seek revenge and what he
 most highly prizes (would be abused by me)
 So that he who is weary and he who runs (i. e. every one) would know
 That thou, when the battle draws nighs thee art naught
 But a thing that retards even hindrauces,
 That thou art a quaffer of cups and an epicure.
 Necessary is to thee such blinking (from thine eyes)
 As shows thee to be frivolous,
 That thou art an unreliable, mischievous old man
 Who plots dishonorable things and embraces them. **)

Labid must have been as brave in war as he was intrepid in his speech, for in an expedition of Hareth, one of the kings of Gassan, where his little band of one hundred men was opposed to an army of one hundred thousand under Mundhir in Syria, the poet was one of the smaller number, having joined them for the purpose of bringing about a peace, although still a mere youth. ***)

*) This story and the following verses are given of the authority of
 محمد بن الحسن بن دريد + ابو حامد السجستاني + الاصمعي
 De Sacy: Calila et Dimna, p. 114.

**) The authenticity of these verses is very doubtful.

***) Ibn Cotaiba in Eichhorn: Monumenta Antiquiss. Hist. Arabum p. 165.

Aside from these narratives we possess no further account of his youth and middle age. In his riper years when he had passed the period of life beyond which only the more favored enjoy the full possession of their faculties, a moralizing tendency led him to express his resignation and finally his weariness of life. When he had attained the age of seventy-seven he sang:

My soul presents itself to complain to me while overwhelmed with tears;
 »Seven years after the lapse of seventy have I borne thee,
 And if thou increase my life by three, (I answer) thou wilt have brought
 me to the utmost limit,
 For in three years will eighty be complete.

After he had completed his ninetieth year he said:

It is as if I, since I have reached ninety years,
 Had thrown thereby the cloak from off my shoulders (deprived myself of
 all protection).

After he had lived to be a hundred and ten years of age,
 he asks:

Is there not in the hundred years which a man has (already) lived,
 And in the completion of ten more, a life?

And after he had lived still longer he complains:

In sooth I am long since weary of life and its continuance,
 And of the inquiries of the people here: 'How is Labid'?
 It conquers man but is itself unharmed,
 The long, the eternal, the ever-returning cycle.
 I see a day, how it overtakes us, and a night
 And both how they come back, after their course is run.
 And I see another day how it approaches, like to one just spent
 It loses nothing, while I grow weak and it grows strong.*)

*) Compare De Saçy: Calila et Dimna, p. 113. These verses are also given twice in the Kitab al Aghani, XIV. pp. 94 and 100. The first time on this authority:

عمر بن شبة + عبد الله بن محمد بن حكيم

The second time they are put in the mouth of the dying Abdulmelik according to

محمد بن خلف بن انمرزيان + احمد بن الهيثم + العمري عن الهيثم
 بن عدى عن عبد الله بن عياش



Finally as he felt that his end was approaching he called his brother's son, for his own offspring consisted of but two daughters, and said to him: My dear son, thy father is not dead but is nevertheless worn out with age. As soon as he dies turn his face toward the Kibla and wrap him in his mantle and raise no sounds of woe over him, as a mourner, but take the two bowls which I was accustomed to use, fill them both and carry them to the mosque: and as soon as the Imam has finished, serve them and after the people have eaten say: Come to the funeral of your brother. Then he repeated these verses of his own.

And when thou hast covered thy brother, lay
Upon him wood and earth
And strong beams, whose firmness puts to rights the branches.
So that he may retain the beauty of his face
In spite of the earth's corruption, although it be in vain.*)

As he was about to die he said to his two daughters:

My two daughters desire that their father should live.
Am I of different mold from Rabia or Modar?
If perchance your father dies
Scratch not your faces nor shave your locks,
But say: This is he who never deserted an ally
Who never deceived a friend nor used him wrongly;
Till a year has passed, then peace be with you both
For he who mourns a whole year hath done his duty.**)

They obeyed the commands of their father and putting on their mourning went each day and bewept him, but did not wound their faces. And when the year was over they ceased.

The third and most important class of anecdotes told of Labid are those which go to prove the effect which his con-

*) Kitab al Aghani, XIV. 101. Authority.

أحمد بن عبد العزيز + عمر بن شبة + عبد الله بن محمد بن حكيم
عن خالد بن سعيد

Koran account of the burial customs of the Bedouin see Burton: A Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, II. 253.

**) Kitab al Aghani, XIV. p. 101. Authority.

أحمد بن عبد العزيز + عمر بن شبة + أبو عبيدة -

De Saey: Calila et Dimna, p. 128.

version to Mohammedanism had upon his activity as a poet and show how far his mind was influenced by the dogmas of the new religion which he embraced. Abulfarag' says that he composed nothing after his conversion but the verses.

Praise be to Allah that my death did not befall me
Until I had drawn on the garment of Islam.*)

Abkarius states that Labid used to say: God has given me the Koran instead of poetry, but that according to some he made a single verse:

The noble man censures nothing so much as himself
And it is such a man that the true ally treats with consideration.

Ibn Cotaiba in his concise way says merely that he composed no poem. These statements must be taken in the sense that he wrote nothing, long enough to be called a poem or intended for the public ear. The verses which he made concerning himself in his old age and those in which he instructed his daughters as to their behavior in mourning for him are of a strictly private nature. It may be accepted as a fact that his genius produced no poems of any length after his conversion. The cause of this can scarcely be that old age had weakened his powers, for the same beauty of expression and vigor of thought characterize his sayings after this period, few as they are. It can only be sought in the workings of Mohammedanism. These took a twofold form with Labid. His disinclination to relate any of the circumstances of his life before he became a Moslem, in the »period of ignorance«, could only be overcome with the greatest difficulty and when it was, he was subjected on account of the habit of untrammelled thought to indignities which even his devout attachment to his creed could not always induce him to endure.

Those whose business it was to enliven hours of leisure by the relation of adventures were one day assembled at a levee of Walid ben Akaba, governor of the city of Cufa. Labid being present, Walid asked him concerning his adventure at the court of No'man with Rabia ben Zayad. That belongs to

*) Kitab al Aghani, XIV. p. 97.

the events of the time of ignorance, was the answer, Allah has now instituted Islam. I conjure thee, said the emir. It was the custom to consider a wish of the governor, so expressed, as law and so Labid was induced to relate the story. A man of the tribe of Ghani was however jealous of him and said: We know nothing about this. Of course not, O son of my father, said the poet, thy father did not hear of such an event because he is one of those who do not frequent such circles as would enable him to inform thee of it. *)

Labid was renowned for his liberality being one of the most generous of his people. He had made a vow in his heathen days that the east wind (evening wind) should not blow until he had fed the poor of his tribe. The two platters which he mentions in the deathbed instructions to his nephew, he took every day to the temple of his clan and there fed the poor. But the east wind blew one day during the time when Walid ben Akaba was regent of Cufa and Labid had not appeared. Walid ascended the pulpit and addressed the assembly. Your brother, Labid ben Rabia, said he, long since in the pre-islamitic days made a vow that the east wind should not blow without his giving food to the poor. This is one of his days and the east wind has blown. Help him. I, for my part, will be the first to act. He descended from the platform and sent to Labid a hundred young camels and wrote to him some verses which he had composed.

I saw the sacrificer of camels whet his two knives,
While the breezes of Abu Akil blew on.
He carries high his head, with lofty nostril, a true Amerite,
With a long arm, like to a polished sword.
True hath the son of Gaafar kept his agreements,
Maugre his weakness and scanty wealth,
In strangling his herd of camels, while over him are thrown
The ends of his mantle, by the east-wind, as it blows at eventide.

*) Kitab al Aghani, XIV. p. 96. The evidence for the truth of the narrative is:

نَسَخْتُ مِنْ كِتَابِ مَرْوَى عَنْ أَبِي الْحَكَمِ + الْعَلَاءِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ لِمَوْقِعِ



When Labid received these lines he said to his daughter: Do thou reply to him; for, by my life, once I lead a long existence in which I did not hesitate with a poetical answer. — So his daughter, herself a poetess, but judging from the following verses with a tendency toward the rising school of importunacy, made this answer:

When the breezes of Abu Akil are wafted by,
We with our uplifted voice call, as they blow, on Walid,
Who carries high his head, who is of stately form, the Abshemite.
He has aided Labid in his generosity (with camels),
Bike to a mountain, as if a caravan of the sons of Ham had bivouacked
thereon.

O father of liberality, may Allah requite thee with benefits.
We strangle the camels and, give the pieces there of as food.
Renew thy liberality, for noble in sooth is he who gives again.
And my opinion is, exert thyself I pray*) that thou wilt do so.

Thou hadst spoken well, if thou hadst not asked for another gift, said her father. Kings, answered she, are not annoyed by those who importune them. In these words, replied Labid, I discern the true poet. **)

The calif Omar ben Khattab wrote to Mughaira ben Sha'aba, regent of Cufa, saying: Demand of the poets in thy city that they repeat in thy presence what they have composed during Islam. So Mughaira summoned Aglab, the satirist, and commanded him to recite. The latter replied, beginning with the words:

Is it them a Regez which thou desirest or a Qassid?
Lo thou hast demanded an easy thing which thou hast already obtained.

Then the Emir summoned Labid and said to him: Recite

*) لا أبا لك. See. Les Séances de Hariri, ed. de Sacy. II. Edition, p. 165 and Lane's Arabic English Lexicon under أب.

**) Kitab al Aghani, XIV. p. 97. As given by

عمر بن شبة في خيرة الندي ذكره عن عبد الله بن محمد بن حكيم
ابراهيم بن ايوب عن عبد الله بن مسلم. and
De Sacy: Calila et Dimna, p. 123.



to me something. Dost thou want, said the poet, something destitute of taste, meaning something written during the time of paganism. No, answered Mughaira, recite me something which thou hast written during Islam. Labid went away and wrote upon a leaf the second chapter of the Koran, entitled »The Cow«, which he brought back with him and said: Allah has given me this in place of the art of poetry. The regent reported these results to Omar who immediately diminished the gratification of Aglab, which had been twenty five hundred pieces by five hundred and these he added to that of Labid. Aglab complained, saying: O commander of the faithful, dost thou diminish my stipend because I have obeyed thee? Omar allowed him the five hundred pieces again but kept Labid's allowance at twenty five hundred. Abu Zaid says that after Muawia had ascended the throne, he desired to reduce this sum to its former size and said: The two staves, yes, (meaning the two thousand pieces) but where fore this increase? (meaning the five hundred pieces). Permit it to remain none the less, said Labid, for to-day or to-morrow I will be but an owl (i. e. dead), so leave me at least the empty name, perhaps I will never touch the money and there will remain to you the increase as well as the two staves. The calif had compassion upon Labid and left the allowance as it was, but the poet died without enjoying it. *)

Labid was never heard to boast after the introduction of Mohammedanism, except one day in a place belonging to the tribe of Ghani. As he lay upon his back, having disposed himself to rest in his cloak, there drew near a youth of that people, who said:

May Allah punish Tufail for that he spoke,

May Allah give us satisfaction on Gaafar,

When our sandals made us to be among those who walk and slip,

*) Kitab al Aghani, XIV. p. 97. Authority.

احمد + عمى + محمد بن حبيب المهلبى + نصر بن داؤد عن داود
عن ابي هند عن الشعبي

De Saçy: Calila et Dimna, p. 122.

They have refused to aid us. If in sooth our mother
 Had encountered them as they encountered us, she had been sorry,
 The rich as well as the poor
 Had been conducted into mansions with pleasant temperature and shade,
 And she had said, Go into the tent till your recognize each other again.
 And the darkness of night departs, till it grows light.

I would like to know what he had experienced from the Benu Gaafar that he wrote this against them. Labid drew down his mantel from his face and said: Son of my brother, thou hast appeared among men at a time when there have been established a fixed order of things which defends one man against another, and storehouses from which a servant with the proper bags distributes the means of life to the respective families, and finally a treasure-house, whence people draw their allowance. If thou hadst lived when Tufail said these words, thou hadst not censured him. He then stretched himself out again saying: Allah forgive me, nor did he cease to repeat the words, Allah forgive me, until he rose again. *)

The true Bedawy, and such we have every reason to believe that Labid was, was only a rational being as he was embraced by and imbued with his religion. **) For him there could be no flights of fancy but such as were regulated by the barriers of thought which the Koran set up. The time and the events through which he had lived prior to the advent of the prophet must sink into forgetfulness and be ignored; if they were mentioned it was but to compare them with the glorious reign of the new belief and to boast of the superiority of the latter days to the former. The unfettered muse which had exalted his thoughts in former days must droop and languish in the prison of his creed. A liberality, which the poet would have sung with untiring energy in days gone bye, met only with forced thanks and new importunity. The perfect book must take the place of all song, the rhyming prose of the

*) Kitab al Aghani, XIV. p. 96. Authority.

عمر + الكرازي + العمري + الهيثم عن ابن عياش عن محمد بن المنتشر
 De Saçy: Calila et Dimna, p. 119.

**) Zur Geschichte Abu'l-Hasan Al-A'sari's von W. Spitta p. 2.

chapter of the »Cow«, could satisfy every inner craving for glorious thought in profane poetry.

But in addition to this subjective devotedness, there was another and even more cogent reason for the bigotry which began to characterize the writings of the Arabs. Labid had composed, before Mohammed's time, some verses which, in correspondence with the whole tone of his life and writings, were so highly moral that he seems one day to have ventured to recal them, even in Islam. He speaks of the foolishness of mankind in seeking vanity rather than the fulfilment of duty and declares that true piety always makes for itself a way to God. He then asks:

Is not every thing except Allah transitory
And every joy without exception perishable?

Suyuti relates that having recited these verses to the prophet, Labid was met with the response that he had uttered a falsehood, for the joys of paradise were not perishable. *) According to Abulfarağ, one of the members of Labid's tribe smote Othman ben Mażun in the face because on hearing the verses he made the same criticism. Being asked if he would not emend the verses so as to make them orthodox the poet said: Such emendation is not a necessity to me until the second existence in Allah shall have hit upon it**) (proved its necessity).

There was no resisting such fanaticism as this. Not the incessant wars which Mohammed waged, not the thunders of his wrath which he denounced against unbelieving poets in the Koran, ***) nor the change in political life, could so vex every lofty mind or discourage it from activity as such senseless, bigoted hypercriticism.

These seem to be the facts and the lessons of the life of Labid. It is in many respects an unique one. The advanced

*) Weil: Die poetische Literatur der Araber, p. 65.

**) Kitab al Aghani, XIV. 99. Authority.

الحسين بن علي + محمد بن القاسم بن مهرويه + محمد بن جرير الطبري
+ محمد بن حميد الرازي + سلمة بن الفضل عن محمد بن اسحق

***) Sura, XXVI. v. 224.

old age which he reached, the two dispensations under which he lived, his life first as a Bedouin and afterwards as a cit, these are peculiarities which are of the greatest interest. But the early years of his life were doubtless spent in the same wild life and struggle for existence which occupied the youth of every Arab tribe. The trade to which they were all apprenticed was that of war. The blood-feud, as it was regarded by the people, made it necessary for every stripling to be ready at a moment's notice to ride forth alone, or with his hardy followers at his back, and not return without the price of blood or the life of the aggressor. In the wars which were constantly waged among the different peoples, the poet must mingle in the thickest of the battle, if only to glorify his own deeds and those of his friends in verse. When long and weary years of fighting could not settle a quarrel, the poet, as the most eloquent of his clan, was selected by a third interested party to act as pleader or arbitrator. Restless and unwearied in the performance of his duties, the warrior must ride over the wastes of the desert in the coolness of night and in the heat of day. But poverty and the scanty productions of nature compelled him often to throw himself on the hospitality of the nearest tents. He was never repulsed, a plea for food and shelter was never made in vain and an entertainment was well repaid by the recitation of a few stirring verses. Returned to his home the woman, who had perhaps aroused his ambition and impelled him to enterprise, could not but be more lovely in his eyes nor could he refrain from extolling her in the songs to which he had recourse, after hardships endured and duty done. Amid such rude virtues Arabic poetry laid hold on the brightest side of life and manners. Three branches did this bubbling fountain of the desert send forth, and on their banks blossomed the most splendid plants: the destroying torrent of war, the intoxicating stream of love, and the comfort-giving river of hospitality.*)

*) Weil: Die poetische Literatur der Araber, p. 91.

Stellung die jetzt inne gehabt, nachdem ich im Herbst 1875 Urlaub nahm und nach Leipzig überzögele, um mich dem Studium der orientalischen Sprache ausschliesslich zu widmen. Während zwei Semester habe ich die Vorlesungen der Herren Professoren Fickler, Kroll und Job besucht. Letzteren Herren Professoren fühle ich mich für den freundlichen Rath, den dieselben mir in allen Fällen zu Theil werden liessen, zu dem tiefgefühltesten Danke verpflichtet.

VITA.

Ich, *William James Milligan Sloane*, wurde am 12. November 1850 zu Richmond im Staate Ohio, Ver. Staaten von Amerika, geboren, wo mein Vater, *James Renwick Wilson Sloane*, D. D. jetzt Professor der Theologie in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, damals Curator einer höheren Schule (Academy) war. Im Jahre 1854 siedelte er nach der Stadt New-York über, woselbst ich vom sechsten bis zum vierzehnten Lebensjahre die Vorschule zu Columbia College, und vom vierzehnten bis zum achtzehnten das College selbst besuchte. Im letzteren hörte ich die Vorlesungen der Herren Professoren *Anthon, Barnard, Davies, Drisler, Joy, Lieber, Peck, Rood, Schmidt* und *Van Amringe*, und wurde nach vierjährigem Cursus und bestandnem Examen Alumnus desselben. Vom Herbst 1868 bis zum Juni 1872 bekleidete ich die Stelle des Oberlehrers für classische Philologie an dem Newell Institute (einer für das College vorbereitenden Erziehungsanstalt) in der Stadt Pittsburgh. Im Sommer 1872 kam ich nach Europa und wurde im Herbst desselben Jahres an der Universität zu Berlin immatriculirt, wo ich während sechs Semester die Vorlesungen der Herren Professoren *Dieterici, Dillmann, Droysen, Harms, Haupt, Hübner, Kirchhoff, Kleinert, Mommsen, Steinthal* und *Zeller* hörte. Inzwischen wurde ich als Privat-Sekretair des damaligen Amerikanischen Gesandten in Berlin, *George Bancroft*, angestellt und arbeitete unter seiner Leitung während anderthalb Jahre an dem zehnten Bande seines Geschichtswerkes. Unter seinem Nachfolger, *Bancroft Davis*, habe ich dieselbe

Stellung bis jetzt inne gehabt, obschon ich im Herbst 1875 Urlaub nahm und nach Leipzig übersiedelte, um mich dem Studium der orientalischen Sprache ausschliesslich zu widmen. Während zwei Semester habe ich die Vorlesungen der Herren Professoren *Fleischer*, *Krehl* und *Loth* besucht. Letzteren Herren Professoren fühle ich mich für den freundlichen Rath, den dieselben mir in allen Fällen zu Theil werden liessen, zu dem tiefgefühltesten Danke verpflichtet.

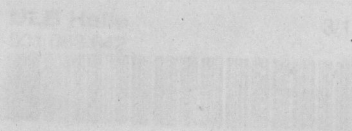
VITA

Ich, *William Jones Wilson Snow*, wurde am 12. November 1810 zu Richmond im State-Ohio, Ver. Staaten von Amerika, geboren, wo mein Vater, *James Kemick Wilson Snow*, D. D. jetzt Professor der Theologie in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, damals Gürtler einer höheren Schule (Academy) war. Im Jahre 1821 siedelte er nach der Stadt New York über, woselbst ich vom sechsten bis zum vierzehnten Lebensjahre die Vorlesungen der *Columbia College*, und vom vierzehnten bis zum achtzehnten das *College* selbst besuchte. Im letzten hörte ich die Vorlesungen der Herren Professoren *Latson*, *Bowen*, *Davis*, *Dwight*, *For*, *Lieber*, *Park*, *Reed*, *Schmidt* und *Van Swiney*, und wurde nach vierjährigem Cursum und bestandenem Examen *Alumnus* desselben. Vom Herbst 1825 bis zum Juni 1827 bekleidete ich die Stelle des Oechners für classische Philologie an dem *Newell Institute* einer für das *College* vorbereitenden Erziehungsanstalt in der Stadt Pittsburg. Im Sommer 1827 kam ich nach Europa und wurde im Herbst desselben Jahres an der Universität zu Berlin immatriculirt, wo ich während sechs Semester die Vorlesungen der Herren Professoren *Dietrich*, *Dillmann*, *Enger*, *Harns*, *Haupt*, *Hübner*, *Kubach*, *Kamner*, *Mannsen*, *Schubert* und *Neller* hörte. Inzwischen wurde ich als Privat-Sekretär des damaligen Amerikanischen Gesandten in Berlin, *George Bancroft*, angestellt und arbeitete unter seiner Leitung während anderthalb Jahre an dem sechsten Bande seines Geschichtswerkes. Unter seinem Nachfolger, *Bancroft Davis*, habe ich dieselbe

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Während der Zeit, in welcher ich im Herbst 1921 meine
wissenschaftliche Arbeit über die Geschichte der ersten
Kaiserzeit zu schreiben begann, habe ich die Vorlesungen der Herren Professoren Fiedler, Klotz und Loh
besucht. Dem Herrn Professor Fiedler bin ich für die freund-
lichen Ratschläge, die ich in allen Fällen in dieser Hinsicht
erhalten habe, zu bestem Dank verpflichtet.



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Nur für den Lesesaal



