

# PERSIAN LITERATURE

comprising

**THE SHÁH NÁMEH, THE RUBÁIYÁT THE DIVAN, AND THE GULISTAN**

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# THE GULISTAN

BY

SA'DI

[Translation by James Ross]

## INTRODUCTION

The Persian poet Sa'di, generally known in literary history as Muslih-al-Din, belongs to the great group of writers known as the Shirazis, or singers of Shiraz. His "Gulistan," or "Rose Garden," is the mature work of his life-time, and he lived to the age of one hundred and eight. The Rose Garden was an actual thing, and was part of the little hermitage, to which he retired, after the vicissitudes and travels of his earlier life, to spend his days in religious contemplation, and the embodiment of his experience in reminiscences, which took the form of anecdotes, sage and pious reflections, *bon-mots*, and exquisite lyrics. When a friend visited him in his cell and had filled a basket with nosegays from the garden of the poet with roses, hyacinths, spikenards, and sweet-basils, Sa'di told him of the book he was writing, and added:—"What can a nosegay of flowers avail thee? Pluck but one leaf from my Rose Garden; the rose from yonder bush lasts but a few days, but this Rose must bloom to all eternity."

Sa'di has been proved quite correct in this estimate of his own work. The book is indeed a sweet garden of unfading freshness. If we compare Sa'di with Hafiz, we find that both of them based their theory of life upon the same Sufic pantheism. Both of them were profoundly religious men. Like the strong and life-giving soil out of whose bosom sprang the rose-tree, wherein the nightingales sang, was the fixed religious confidence, which formed the support of each poet's mind, amid all the vagaries of fancy, and the luxuriant growth of fruit and flower which their genius gave to the world. Hafiz is the Persian Anacreon. As he raises his voice of thrilling and unvarying sweetness, his steps reel, he waves the thyrsus, and his flushed cheek shows the inspiration of the vine. To him the Supreme Being has much in common with the Indian or Thracian Dionysus, the god

of perennial youth, joyous revel, and exhilaration. Hafiz can never be the guide, though he may be the cheerer of mortals, adding more to the gayety than to the wisdom of life. But both in the western and in the eastern world Sa'di must always be looked upon as the guide and enlightener of those who taste life, and love poetry. It has been said by a wise man that poetry is the great instructor of mature minds. Many a man turning away in weariness from the controversies, the insincerities, and the pretentiousness of the intellectualists around him, has exclaimed, "Give me my Horace." But Horace with all his *bonhommie*, his common sense, and his acuteness, is but the representative of a narrow Roman coterie of the Augustan age. How thin, flimsy, and unspiritual does he appear in comparison with the marvellous depth, the spiritual insight, the tenderness and power of expression which characterized Sa'di.

Sa'di had begun his life as a student of the Koran and became early imbued with the quietism of Islam. The cheerfulness and exuberant joy which characterize the poems he wrote before he reached his fortieth year, had bubbled up under the repressions of severe discipline and austerity. But the religion of Mohammed was soon exchanged by him, under the guidance of a famous teacher, for the wider and more transcendental system of Sufism. Within the area of this magnificent scheme, the boldest ever formulated under the name of religion, he found the liberty which his soul desired. Early discipline had made him a morally sound man, and it is the goodness of Sa'di that lends such a warm and endearing charm to his works. The last finish was given to his intellectual training by the travels which he took after the Tartar invasion desolated Persia, in the thirteenth century. India, Arabia, Syria, were in turn visited. He found Damascus a congenial halting-place, and lived there for some time, with an increasing reputation as a sage and poet. He preached at Baalbec on the fugitiveness of human life, on faith, love, and rest in God. He wandered, like Jerome, in the wilderness about Jerusalem, and worked as a slave in Africa in the trenches of Tripoli: he travelled the length and breadth of Asia Minor. When he arrived back at Shiraz, he had passed the limit of three-score years and ten, and there he remained in his hermitage and his garden, to arrange the result of all his studies, his experiences, and his sufferings, in that consummate work which he has named the "Rose Garden," after the little cultivated plot in which he spent his declining days and drew his last

breath.

The "Gulistan" is divided into eight chapters, each dealing with a specific subject and partaking of the nature of an essay: although these chapters are composed of disjointed paragraphs, generally beginning with an aphorism or an anecdote and closing with an original poem of a few lines. Sometimes these paragraphs are altogether lyrical. We are struck, first of all, by the personal character of these paragraphs; many of them relate the experience of the poet in some part of his travels, expressing his comment upon what he had seen and heard. His comments generally take the form of practical wisdom, or religious suggestion. He gives us the impression that he knows life and the human heart thoroughly. It may be said of him, as Arnold said of Sophocles, he was one "who saw life steadily, and saw it whole." On the other hand, there is not the slightest trace of cynical acerbity in his writings. He has passed through the world in the independence of a self-possessed soul, and has found it all good, saving for the folly of fools and the wretchedness and degradation of the depraved. There is no bitter fountain in the "Rose Garden," and the old man's heart is as fresh as when he left Shiraz, thirty years before; the sprightliness of his poetry has only been ripened and tempered to a more exquisite flavor, by the increase of wisdom and the perfecting of art.

Above all, we find in Sa'di the science of life, as comprising morality and religion, set forth in a most suggestive and a most attractive form. In some way or other the "Rose Garden" may remind us of the "Essays" of Bacon, which were published in their complete form the year before the great English philosopher died. Both works cover a large area of thought and experience; but the Englishman is clear, cold, and sometimes cynical, while the Persian is more spiritual, though not less acute, and has the fervor of the poet which Bacon lacks, and the religious devotion which the "Essays" altogether miss. The "Rose Garden" has maxims which are not unworthy of being cherished amid the highest Christian civilization, while the serenity of mind, the poetic fire, the transparent sincerity of Sa'di, make his writings one of those books which men may safely take as the guide and inspirer of their inmost life. Sa'di died at Shiraz about the year 1292 at the reputed age of one hundred and ten.

E.W.

## CHAPTER I

Of the Customs of Kings

I

I have heard of a king who made the sign to put a captive to death. The poor wretch, in that state of desperation, began to abuse the king in the dialect which he spoke, and to revile him with asperity, as has been said; whoever shall wash his hands of life will utter whatever he may harbor in his heart:—" *When a man is desperate he will give a latitude to his tongue, like as a cat at bay will fly at a dog*"—"at the moment of compulsion when it is impossible to fly, the hand will grasp the sharp edge of a sword." The king asked, saying, "What does he say?" One of the Vizirs (or nobles in attendance), and a well-disposed man, made answer, "O my lord! he is expressing himself and saying, (*paradise is for such*) *as are restraining their anger and forgiving their fellow-creatures; and God will befriend the benevolent.*" The king felt compassion for him, and desisted from shedding his blood. Another nobleman, and the rival of that former, said, "It is indecorous for such peers, as we are, to use any language but that of truth in the presence of kings; this man abused his majesty, and spoke what was unworthy of him." The king turned away indignant at this remark, and replied, "I was better pleased with his falsehood than with this truth that you have told; for that bore the face of good policy, and this was founded in malignity; and the intelligent have said, 'A peace-mingling falsehood is preferable to a mischief-stirring truth':—Whatever prince may do that which he (his counsellor) will recommend, it must be a subject of regret if he shall advise aught but good."

They had written over the portico of King Feridún's palace:—"This world, O brother! abides with none. Set thy heart upon its maker, and let him suffice thee. Rest not thy pillow and support on a worldly domain which has fostered and slain many such as thou art. Since the precious soul must resolve on going, what matters it whether it departs from a throne or the ground."

## II

One of the kings of Khorasan saw, in a dream, Sultan Mahmud, the son of Saboktagin, an hundred years after his death, when his body was decayed and fallen into dust, all but his eyes, which as heretofore were moving in their sockets and looking about them. All the learned were at a stand for its interpretation, excepting one dervish, who made his obeisance, and said:—"He is still looking about him, because his kingdom and wealth are possessed by others!—Many are the heroes whom they have buried under ground, of whose existence above it not one vestige is left; and of that old carcase which they committed to the earth, the earth has so consumed it that not one bone is left. Though many ages are gone since Nushirowan was in being, yet in the remembrance of his munificence is his fair renown left. Be generous, O my friend! and avail thyself of life, before they proclaim it as an event that such a person is not left."

## III

I have heard of a king's son who was short and mean, and his other brothers were lofty in stature and handsome. On one occasion the king, his father, looked at him with disparagement and scorn. The son, in his sagacity, understood him and said, "O father! a short wise man is preferable to a tall blockhead; it is not everything that is mightier in stature that is superior in value:—*a sheep's flesh is wholesome, that of an elephant carrion.—Of the mountains of this earth Sinai is one of the least, yet is it most mighty before God in state and dignity.*—Heardst thou not what an intelligent lean man said one day to a sleek fat dolt? An Arab horse, notwithstanding his slim make, is more prized thus than a herd of asses."

The father smiled; the pillars of the state, or courtiers, nodded their assent, and the other brothers were mortified to the quick. Till a man has declared his mind, his virtue and vice may have lain hidden; do not conclude that the thicket is unoccupied, peradventure the tiger is gone asleep!

I have heard that about that time a formidable antagonist appeared against the king. Now that an army was levied in each side, the first

person that mounted his horse and sallied upon the plain was that son, and he exclaimed: "I cannot be that man whose back thou mayest see on the day of battle, but am him thou mayest descry amidst the thick of it, with my head covered with dust and blood; for he that engages in the contest sports with his own blood, but he who flees from it sports with the blood of an army on the day of fight." He so spoke, assaulting the enemy's cavalry, and overthrew some renowned warriors. When he came before the king he kissed the earth of obeisance, and said, "O thou, who didst view my body with scorn, whilst not aware of valor's rough exterior, it is the lean steed that will prove of service, and not the fatted ox, on the day of battle."

They have reported that the enemy's cavalry was immense, and those of the king few in number; a body of them was inclined to fly, when the youth called aloud, and said, "Be resolute, my brave men, that you may not have to wear the apparel of women!" The troops were more courageous on this speech, and attacked altogether. I have heard that on that day they obtained a complete victory over the enemy. The king kissed his face and eyes, and folded him in his arms, and became daily more attached to him, till he declared him heir-apparent to the throne. The brothers bore him a grudge, and put poison into his food. His sister saw this from a window, and closed the shutter; and the boy understood the sign, and withdrew his hand from the dish, and said, "It is hard that the virtuous should perish and that the vicious should occupy their places." Were the homayi, or phoenix, to be extinct in the world, none would take refuge under the shadow of an owl. They informed the father of this event; he sent for the brothers and rebuked them, as they deserved. Then he made a division of his domains, and gave a suitable portion to each, that discontent might cease; but the ferment was increased, as they have said: Ten dervishes can sleep on one rug, but two kings cannot be accommodated in a whole kingdom. When a man after God's heart can eat the moiety of his loaf, the other moiety he will give in alms to the poor. A king may acquire the sovereignty of one climate or empire; and he will in like manner covet the possession of another.

#### IV

A horde of Arab robbers had possessed themselves of the fastness of a mountain, and waylaid the track of the caravan. The yeomanry of

the villages were frightened at their stratagems, and the king's troops alarmed, inasmuch as they had secured an impregnable fortress on the summit of the mountain, and made this stronghold their retreat and dwelling.

The superintendents of the adjacent districts consulted together about obviating their mischief, saying: If they are in this way left to improve their fortune, any opposition to them may prove impracticable. The tree that has just taken root, the strength of one man may be able to extract; but leave it to remain thus for a time, and the machinery of a purchase may fail to eradicate it: the leak at the dam-head might have been stopped with a plug, while, now it has a vent, we cannot ford its current on an elephant.

Finally it was determined that they should set a spy over them, and watch an opportunity when they had made a sally upon another tribe, and left their citadel unguarded. Some companies of able warriors and experienced troops were sent, that they might conceal themselves in the recesses of the mountain. At night, when the robbers were returned, jaded with their march and laden with spoil, and had stripped themselves of their armor, and deposited their plunder, the foremost enemy they had to encounter was sleep. Now that the first watch of night was gone:—"the disc of the sun was withdrawn into a shade, and Jonas had stepped into the fish's mouth"—the bold-hearted warriors sprang from their ambush and secured the robbers by pinioning them one after another.

In the morning they presented them at the royal tribunal, and the king gave an order to put the whole to death. There happened to be among them a stripling, the fruit of whose early spring was ripening in its bloom, and the flower-garden of his cheek shooting into blossom. One of the vizirs kissed the foot of the imperial throne, and laid the face of intercession on the ground, and said, "This boy has not yet tasted the fruit of the garden of life, nor enjoyed the fragrance of the flowers of youth: such is my confidence in the generous disposition of his Majesty that it will favor a devoted servant by sparing his blood." The king turned his face away from this speech; as it did not accord with his lofty way of thinking, he replied:—"The rays of the virtuous cannot illuminate such as are radically vicious; to give education to the worthless is like throwing walnuts upon a dome:—it were wiser to



eradicate the tree of their wickedness, and annihilate their tribe; for to put out a fire and leave the embers, and to kill a viper and foster its young, would not be the acts of rational beings. Though the clouds pour down the water of vegetation, thou canst never gather fruit from a willow twig. Exalt not the fortune of the abject, for thou canst never extract sugar from a mat or common cane."

The vizir listened to this speech; willingly or not he approved of it, and applauded the good sense of the king, and said:—"What his majesty, whose dominion is eternal, is pleased to remark is the mirror of probity and essence of good policy, for had he been brought up in the society of those vagabonds, and confined to their service, he would have followed their vicious courses. Your servant, however, trusts that he may be instructed to associate with the virtuous, and take to the habits of the prudent; for he is still a child, and the lawless and refractory principles of that gang cannot have yet tainted his mind; and it is in tradition that—*Whatever child is born, and he is verily born after the right way of orthodoxy, namely Islamism, afterwards his father and his mother bring him up as a Jew, Christian, or Guebre.*—The wife of Lot associated with the wicked, and her posterity failed in the gift of prophecy; the dog of the seven sleepers (at Ephesus) for some time took the path of the righteous, and became a rational being."

He said this, and a body of the courtiers joined him in intercession, till the king acceded to the youth's pardon, and answered: "I gave him up, though I saw not the good of it.—Knowest thou what Zal said to the heroic Rustem: 'Thou must not consider thy foe as abject and helpless. I have often found a small stream at the fountain-head, which, when followed up, carried away the camel and its load.'"

In short, the vizir took the boy home, and educated him with kindness and liberality. And he appointed him masters and tutors, who taught him the graces of logic and rhetoric, and all manner of courtier accomplishments, so that he met general approbation. On one occasion the vizir was detailing some instances of his proficiency and talents in the royal presence, and saying: "The instruction of the wise has made an impression upon him, and his former savageness is obliterated from his mind." The king smiled at this speech, and replied:—"The whelp of a wolf must prove a wolf at last,

notwithstanding he may be brought up by a man."

Two years after this a gang of city vagabonds got about him, and joined in league, till on an opportunity he murdered the vizir and his two sons; and, carrying off an immense booty, he took up the station of his father in the den of thieves, and became a hardened villain. The king was apprised of this event; and, seizing the hand of amazement with the teeth of regret, said:—"How can any person manufacture a tempered sabre from base iron; nor can a base-born man, O wiseacre, be made a gentleman by any education! Rain, in the purity of whose nature there is no anomaly, cherishes the tulip in the garden and common weed in the salt-marsh. Waste not thy labor in scattered seed upon a briny soil, for it can never be made to yield spikenard; to confer a favor on the wicked is of a like import, as if thou didst an injury to the good."

## V

At the gate of Oghlamish Patan, King of Delhi, I (namely Sa'di) saw an officer's son, who, in his wit and learning, wisdom and understanding, surpassed all manner of encomium. In the prime of youth, he at the same time bore on his forehead the traces of ripe age, and exhibited on his cheek the features of good fortune:—"Above his head, from his prudent conduct, the star of superiority shone conspicuous."

In short, it was noticed with approbation by the king that he possessed bodily accomplishments and mental endowments. And sages have remarked that worth rests not on riches, but on talents; and the discretion of age, not in years, but on good sense. His comrades envied his good fortune, charged him with disaffection, and vainly attempted to have him put to death:—"but what can the rival effect so long as the charmer is our friend?"

The king asked, saying, "Why do they show such a disinclination to do you justice?" He replied: "Under the shadow of his majesty's good fortune I have pleased everybody, excepting the envious man, who is not to be satisfied but with a decline of my success; and let the prosperity and dominion of my lord the king be perpetual!" I can so manage as to give umbrage to no man's heart; but what can I do with

the envious man, who harbors within himself the cause of his own chagrin? Die, O ye envious, that ye may get a deliverance; for this is such an evil that you can get rid of it only by death. Men soured by misfortune anxiously desire that the state and fortune of the prosperous may decline; if the eye of the bat is not suited for seeing by day, how can the fountain of the sun be to blame? Dost thou require the truth? It were better a thousand such eyes should suffer, rather than that the light of the sun were obscured.

## VI

They tell a story of a Persian king who had stretched forth the arm of oppression over the subjects' property, and commenced a system of violence and rapacity to such a degree that the people emigrated to avoid the vexatiousness of his tyranny, and took the road of exile to escape the annoyance of his extortions. Now that the population was diminished and the resources of the state had failed, the treasury remained empty, and enemies gathered strength on all sides. Whoever may expect a comforter on the day of adversity, say, let him practise humanity during the season of prosperity; if not treated cordially, thy devoted slave will forsake thee; show him kindness and affection, and the stranger may become the slave of thy devotion.

One day they were reading, in his presence, from the Sháh Náme, of the tyrant Zohák's declining dominion and the succession of Feridún. The vizir asked the king, saying: "Can you so far comprehend that Feridún had no revenue, domain, or army, and how the kingdom came to be confirmed with him?" He answered: "As you have heard, a body of people collected about him from attachment, and gave their assistance till he acquired a kingdom." The vizir said: "Since, O sire, a gathering of the people is the means of forming a kingdom, how come you in fact to cause their dispersion unless it be that you covet not a sovereignty? So far were good that thou wouldst patronize the army with all thy heart, for a king with an army constitutes a principality." The king asked: "What are the best means of collecting an army and yeomanry?" He replied: "Munificence is the duty of a king, that the people may assemble around him, and clemency, that they may rest secure under the asylum of his dominion and fortune, neither of which you have. A tyrant cannot govern a kingdom, for the duty of a shepherd is not expected from the

wolf. A king that can anyhow be accessory to tyranny will undermine the wall of his own sovereignty."

The advice of the prudent minister did not accord with the disposition of the king. He ordered him to be confined, and immured him in a dungeon. It soon came to pass that the sons of the king's uncle rose in opposition, levied an army in support of their pretensions, and claimed the sovereignty of their father. A host of the people, who had cruelly suffered under the arm of his extortion and were dispersed, gathered around and succored them till they dispossessed him of his kingdom and established them in his stead. That king who can approve of tyrannizing over the weak will find his friend a bitter foe in the day of hardship. Deal fairly with thy subjects, and rest easy about the warfare of thine enemies, for with an upright prince his yeomanry is an army.

\* \* \* \* \*

## VIII

They asked Hormuz, son of Nushirowan, "What fault did you find with your father's ministers that you ordered them into confinement?" He replied: "I saw no fault that might deserve imprisonment; yet I perceived that any reverence for me makes a slight impression on their minds, and that they put no implicit reliance on my promise. I feared lest from an apprehension of their own safety they might conspire my ruin; therefore, put in practice that maxim of philosophers who have told us: 'Stand in awe, O wise man, of him who stands in awe of thee, notwithstanding thou canst cope with a hundred such as he. Therefore will the snake bite the herdsman's foot, because it fears that he will bruise its head with a stone. Seest thou not that now that the cat is desperate it will tear out the tiger's eyes with its claws.'"

## IX

In his old age an Arab king was grievously sick, and had no hopes of recovery, when, lo! a messenger on horseback presented himself at the palace-gate, and joyfully announced, saying: "Under his majesty's good fortune we have taken such a stronghold, made the enemy

prisoners of war, and reduced all the landholders and vassals of that quarter to obedience as subjects." On hearing this news the king fetched a cold sigh, and answered: "These glad tidings are not intended for me but for my rivals, namely, the heirs of the sovereignty. My precious life has, alas! been wasted in the hope that what my heart chiefly coveted might enter at my gate. My bounden hope was gratified; yet what do I benefit by that? There is no hope that my passed life can return. The hand of death beats the drum of departure. Yes, my two eyes, you must bid adieu to my head. Yes, palm of my hand, wrist, and arm, all of you say farewell, and each take leave of the other. Death has overtaken me to the gratification of my foes; and you, O my friends, must at last be going. My days were blazed away in folly; what I did not do let you take warning (and do)."

## X

At the metropolitan mosque of Damascus I was one year fervent in prayer over the tomb of Yahiya, or John the Baptist and prophet, on whom be God's blessing, when one of the Arab princes, who was notorious for his injustice, chanced to arrive on a pilgrimage, and he put up his supplication, asked a benediction, and craved his wants.—The rich and poor are equally the devoted slaves of this shrine, and the richer they are the more they stand in need of succor. Then he spoke to me, saying: "In conformity with the generous resolution of dervishes and their sincere zeal, you will, I trust, unite with me in prayer, for I have much to fear from a powerful enemy." I answered him, "Have compassion on your own weak subjects, that you may not see disquiet from a strong foe. With a mighty arm and heavy hand it is dastardly to wrench the wrists of poor and helpless. Is he not afraid who is hardhearted with the fallen that if he slip his foot nobody will take him by the hand?—Whoever sowed the seed of vice and expected a virtuous produce, pampered a vain brain and encouraged an idle whim. Take the cotton from thy ear and do mankind justice, for if thou refusest them justice there is a day of retribution. The sons of Adam are members one of another, for in their creation they have a common origin. If the vicissitudes of fortune involve one member in pain, all the other members will feel a sympathy. Thou, who art indifferent to other men's affliction, if they call thee a man art unworthy of the name."

## XI

A dervish, whose prayers had a ready acceptance (with God), made his appearance at Bagdad. Hojaj Yusuf (a great tyrant) sent for him and said: "Put up a good prayer for me." He prayed, "O God! take from him his life!" Hojaj said, "For God's sake, what manner of prayer is this?" He answered: "It is a salutary prayer for you, and for the whole sect of Mussulmans.—O mighty sir, thou oppressor of the feeble, how long can this violence remain marketable? For what purpose came the sovereignty to thee? Thy death were preferable to thy tyrannizing over mankind."

## XII

An unjust king asked a holy man, saying, "What is more excellent than prayers?" He answered: "For you to remain asleep till mid-day, that for this one interval you might not afflict mankind."—I saw a tyrant lying dormant at noon, and said, "This is mischief, and is best lulled to sleep. It were better that such a reprobate were dead whose state of sleep is preferable to his being awake."

## XIII

I have heard of a king who had turned night into day in the midst of conviviality, and in the gayety of intoxication was exclaiming—"I never was in this life happier than at this present moment, for I have no thought of evil or good, and care for nobody!"—A naked dervish, who had taken up his rest in the cold outside, answered—"O thou, who in good fortune hast not thy equal in the world, I admit that thou hast no cause of care for thyself, but hast thou none for us?"—The king was pleased at this speech. He put a purse of a thousand dinars out at the window, and said: "O dervish! hold up your skirt." He replied, "Where can I find a skirt, who have not a garment." The king was still more touched at the hardship of his condition, and adding an honorary dress to that donation, sent them out to him.

The dervish squandered all that ready cash within a few days, and falling again into distress, returned.—"Money makes no stay in the hand of a religious independent; neither does patience in a lover's heart, nor water in a sieve."—At a time when the king had no thought

about him, they obtruded his case, and he took offence and turned away his face. And it is on such an occasion that men of prudence and experience have remarked that it behooves us to guard against the wrath and fury of kings, whose noble thoughts are chiefly occupied with important affairs of state, and cannot endure the importunate clamors of the vulgar.—The bounty of the sovereign is forbid to him who does not watch a proper opportunity. Till thou canst perceive a convenient time for obtruding an opinion, undermine not thy consequence by idle talk.—The king said, "Let this impudent beggar and spendthrift be beaten and driven away, who in a short time dissipated such a sum of money, for the treasury of the Beat-al-mal, or charity fund, is intended to afford mouthfuls to the poor, and not bellyfuls to the imps of the devil.—That fool who can illuminate the day with a camphorated taper must soon feel a want of oil for his lamp at night."

One of his discreet ministers said: "O king, it were expedient to supply such people with their means of subsistence by instalments, that they may not squander their absolute necessaries; but, with respect to what your majesty commanded as to coercion and prohibition, though it be correct, a party might impute it to parsimony. Nor does it moreover accord with the principles of the generous to encourage a man to hope for kindness and then overwhelm him with heartbreaking distrust:—Thou must not open upon thyself the door of covetousness; and when opened, thou must not shut it with harshness.—Nobody will see the thirsty pilgrims crowding towards the shore of the briny ocean; but men, birds, and reptiles will flock together wherever they can meet a fresh water fountain."

#### **XIV**

One of the ancient kings was easy with the yeomanry in collecting his revenue, but hard on the soldiery in his issue of pay; and when a formidable enemy showed its face, these all turned their backs.—Whenever the king is remiss in paying his troops, the troops will relax in handling their arms. What bravery can he display in the ranks of battle whose hand is destitute of the means of living?

One of those who had excused themselves was in some sort my intimate. I reproached him and said, "He is base and ungrateful,

mean and disreputable who, on a trifling change of circumstances, can desert his old master and forget his obligation of many years' employment." He replied: "Were I to speak out, I swear by generosity you would excuse me. Peradventure, my horse was without corn, and the housings of his saddle in pawn.—And the prince who, through parsimony, withholds his army's pay cannot expect it to enter heartily upon his service."—Give money to the gallant soldier that he may be zealous in thy cause, for if he is stinted of his due he will go abroad for service.—*So long as a warrior is replenished with food he will fight valiantly, and when his belly is empty he will run away sturdily.*

## XV

One of the vizirs was displaced, and withdrew into a fraternity of dervishes, whose blessed society made its impression upon him and afforded consolation to his mind. The king was again favorably disposed towards him, and offered his reinstatement in office; but he consented not, and said, "With the wise it is deemed preferable to be out of office than to remain in place.—Such as sat within the cell of retirement blunted the teeth of dogs, and shut the mouths of mankind; they destroyed their writings, and broke their writing reeds, and escaped the lash and venom of the critics."—The king answered: "At all events I require a prudent and able man, who is capable of managing the state affairs of my kingdom." The ex-minister said: "The criterion, O sire, of a wise and competent man is that he will not meddle with such like matters.—The homayi, or phoenix, is honored above all other birds because it feeds on bones, and injures no living creature."

A Tamsil, or application in point.—They asked a Siyah-gosh, or lion-provider, "Why do you choose the service of the lion?" He answered: "Because I subsist on the leavings of his prey, and am secure from the ill-will of my enemies under the asylum of his valor." They said: "Now you have got within the shadow of his protection and admit a grateful sense of his bounty, why do you not approach more closely, that he may include you within the circle of select courtiers and number you among his chosen servants?" He replied, "I should not thus be safe from his violence."—Though a Guebre may keep his fire alight for a hundred years, if he fall once within its flame it will burn him.—*Procul à Jove, procul à fulmine.* It on one occasion may



chance that the courtier of the king's presence shall pick up a purse of gold, and the next that he shall lie shorter by the head. And philosophers have remarked, saying, "It is incumbent on us to be constantly aware of the fickle dispositions of kings, who will one moment take offence at a salutation, and at another make an honorary dress the return for an act of rudeness; and they have said, That to be over much facetious is the accomplishment of courtiers and blemish of the wise.—Be wary, and preserve the state of thine own character, and leave sport and buffoonery to jesters and courtiers."

## XVI

One of my associates brought me a complaint of his perverse fortune, saying, "I have small means and a large family, and cannot bear up with my load of poverty. Often has a thought crossed my mind, suggesting, Let me remove into another country, that in whatever way I can manage a livelihood none may be informed of my good or bad luck."—(Often he went asleep hungry, and nobody was aware, saying, "Who is he?" Often did his life hang upon his lip, and none lamented over him.)—"On the other hand, I reflect on the exultation of my rivals, saying, They will scoffingly sneer behind my back, and impute my zeal in behalf of my family to a want of humanity.—Do but behold that graceless vagabond who can never witness the face of good fortune. He will consult the ease of his own person and abandon to distress his wife and children.—And, as is known, I have some small skill in the science of accounts. If, through your respected interest, any office can be obtained that may be the means of quieting my mind, I shall not, during the remainder of life, be able to express my sense of its gratitude."

I replied, "O brother, the service of kings offers a twofold prospect—a hope of maintenance and a fear for existence; and it accords not with the counsel of the wise, under that expectation, to incur this risk.—No tax-gatherer will enter the dervish's abode, saying, Pay me the rent of a field and orchard; either put up with trouble and chagrin, or give thy heartstrings to the crows to pluck."

He said, "This speech is not made as applicable to my case, nor have you given me a categorical answer. Have you not heard what has

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