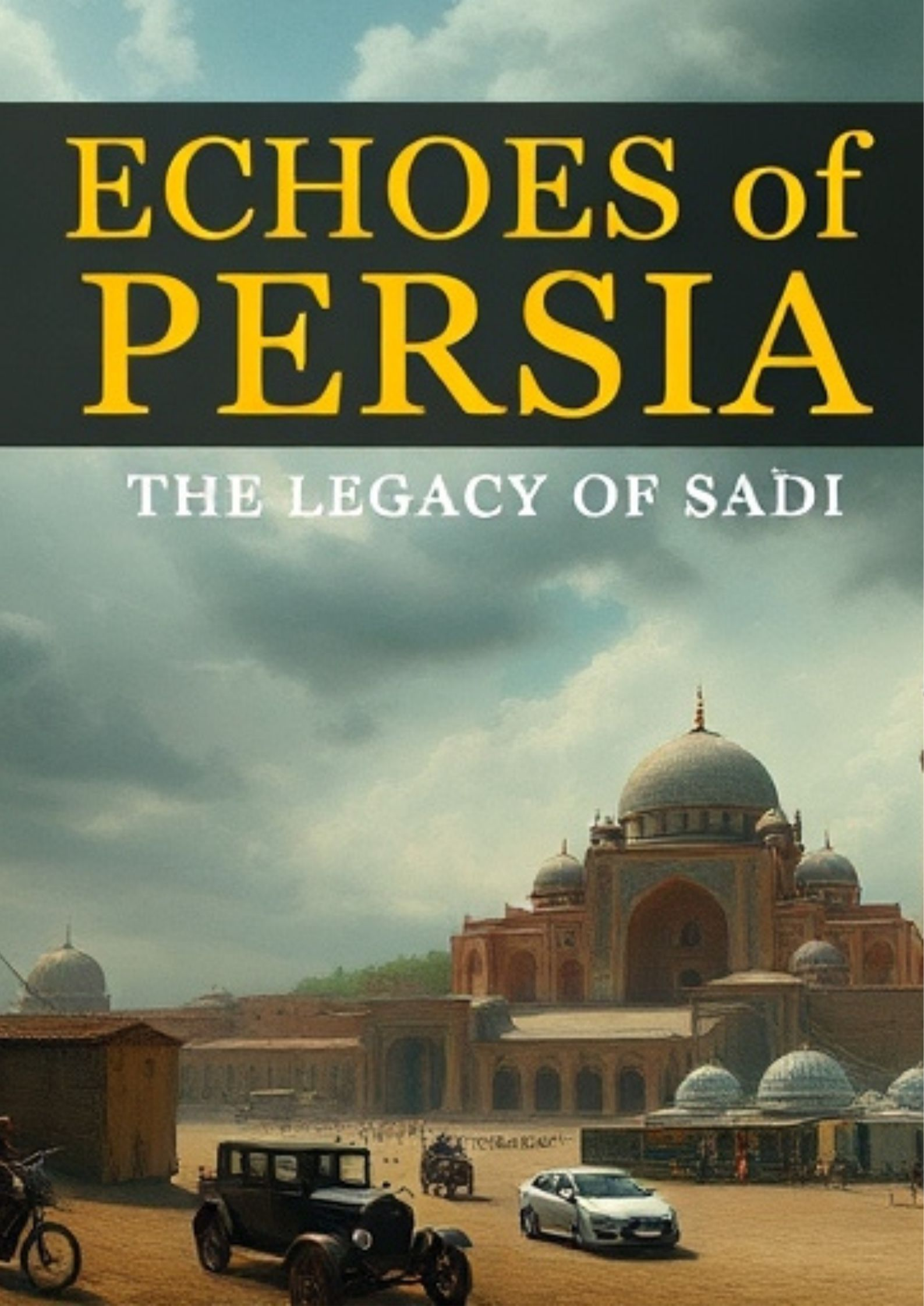
ECHOES of PERSIA

THE LEGACY OF SADI



It is remarkable how very little the average general reader knows regarding the great Persian poet Saádí and his writings. His name is perhaps more or less familiar to casual readers from its being appended to one or two of his aphorisms which are sometimes reproduced in odd corners of popular periodicals; but who he was, when he lived, and what he wrote, are questions which would probably puzzle not a few, even of those who consider themselves as "well read," to answer without first recurring to some encyclopædia. Yet Saádí was assuredly one of the most gifted men of genius the world has ever known: a man of large and comprehensive intellect; an original and profound thinker; an acute observer of men and manners; and his works remain the imperishable monument of his genius, learning, and industry. Maslahu 'd-Dín Shaykh Saádí was born, towards the close of the twelfth century, at Shíráz, the famous capital of Fars, concerning which city the Persians have the saying that "if Muhammed had tasted the pleasures of Shíráz, he would have begged Allah to make him immortal there." In accordance with the usual practice in Persia, he assumed as his takhallus, or poetical name, 1 Saádí, from his patron Atabag Saád bin Zingí, sovereign of Fars, who encouraged men of learning in his principality. Saádí is said to have lived upwards of a hundred years, thirty of which were passed in the acquisition of knowledge, thirty more in travelling through different countries, and the rest of his life he spent in retirement and acts of devotion. He died, in his native city, about the year. At one period of his life Saádí took part in the wars of the Saracens against the Crusaders in Palestine, and also in the wars for the faith in India. In the course of his wanderings he had the misfortune to be taken prisoner by the Franks, in Syria, and was ransomed by a friend, but only to fall into worse thraldom by marrying a shrewish wife. He has thus related the circumstances: "Weary of the society of my friends at Damascus, I fled to the barren wastes of Jerusalem, and associated with brutes, until I was made captive by the Franks, and forced to dig clay along with Jews in the fortress of Tripoli. One of the nobles of Aleppo, mine ancient friend, happened to pass that way and recollected me. He said: 'What a state is this to be in! How farest thou?' I answered: 'Seeing that I could place confidence in God alone, I retired to the mountains and wilds, to avoid the society of man; but judge what must be my situation, to be confined in a stall, in company with wretches who deserve not the name of men. "To be confined by the feet with friends is better than to walk in a garden with strangers."' He took compassion on my forlorn condition, ransomed me from the Franks for ten dínars, 2 and took me with him to Aleppo. "My friend had a daughter, to whom he married me, and he presented me with a hundred dínars as her dower. After some time my wife unveiled her disposition, which was ill-tempered, quarrelsome, obstinate, and abusive; so that the happiness of my life vanished. It has been well said: 'A bad woman in the house of a virtuous man is hell even in this world.' Take care how you connect yourself with a bad woman. Save us, O Lord, from the fiery trial! Once she reproached me, saying: 'Art thou not the creature whom my father ransomed from captivity amongst the Franks for ten dínars?' 'Yes,' I answered; 'he redeemed me for ten dínars, and enslaved me to thee for a hundred.' "I heard that a man once rescued a sheep from the mouth of a wolf, but at night drew his knife across its throat. The expiring sheep thus complained: 'You delivered me from the jaws of a wolf, but in the end I perceive you have yourself become a wolf to me.'" Sir Gore Ouseley, in his Biographical Notices of Persian Poets, states that Saádí in the latter part of his life retired to a cell near Shíráz, where he remained buried in contemplation of the Deity, except when visited, as was often the case, by princes, nobles, and learned men. It was the custom of his illustrious visitors to take with them all kinds of meats, of which, when Saádí and his company had partaken, the shaykh always put what remained in a basket suspended from his window, that the poor wood-cutters of Shíráz, who daily passed by his cell, might occasionally satisfy their hunger. The writings of Saádí, in prose as well as verse, are numerous; his best known works being the Gulistán, or Rose-Garden, and the Bustán, or Garden of Odours. Among his other compositions are: an essay on Reason and Love; Advice to Kings; Arabian and Persian idylls, and a book of elegies, besides a large collection of odes and sonnets. Saádí was an accomplished linguist, and composed several poems in the languages of many of the countries through which he travelled. "I have wandered to various regions of the world," he tells us, "and everywhere have I mixed freely with the inhabitants. I have gathered something in each corner; I have gleaned an ear from every harvest."

A deep insight into the secret springs of human actions; an extensive knowledge of mankind; fervent piety, without a taint of bigotry; a poet's keen appreciation of the beauties of nature; together with a ready wit and a lively sense of humour, are among the characteristics of Saádí's masterly compositions. No writer, ancient or modern, European or Asiatic, has excelled, and few have equalled, Saádí in that rare faculty for condensing profound moral truths into short, pithy sentences. For example: "The remedy against want is to moderate your desires." "There is a difference between him who claspeth his mistress in his arms, and him whose eyes are fixed on the door expecting her." "Whoever recounts to you the faults of your neighbour will doubtless expose your defects to others." His humorous comparisons flash upon the reader's mind with curious effect, occurring, as they often do, in the midst of a grave discourse. Thus he says of a poor minstrel: "You would say that the sound of his bow would burst the arteries, and that his voice was more discordant than the lamentations of a man for the death of his father;" and of another bad singer: "No one with a mattock can so effectually scrape clay from the face of a hard stone as his discordant voice harrows up the soul." Talking of music reminds me of a remark of the learned Gentius, in one of his notes on the Gulistán of Saádí, that music was formerly in such consideration in Persia that it was a maxim of their sages that when a king was about to die, if he left for his successor a very young son, his aptitude for reigning should be proved by some agreeable songs; and if the child was pleasurably affected, then it was a sign of his capacity and genius, but if the contrary, he should be declared unfit.—It would appear that the old Persian musicians, like Timotheus, knew the secret art of swaying the passions. The celebrated philosopher Al-Farabí (who died about the middle of the tenth century), among his accomplishments, excelled in music, in proof of which a curious anecdote is told. Returning from the pilgrimage to Mecca, he introduced himself, though a stranger, at the court of Sayfú 'd-Dawla, sultan of Syria, when a party of musicians chanced to be performing, and he joined them. The prince admired his skill, and, desiring to hear something of his own, Al-Farabí unfolded a composition, and distributed the parts amongst the band. The first movement threw the prince and his courtiers into violent laughter, the next melted all into tears, and the last lulled even the performers to sleep. At the retaking of Baghdád by the Turks in, when the springing of a mine, whereby eight hundred jannisaries perished, was the signal for a general massacre, and thirty thousand Persians were put to the sword, a Persian musician named Sháh-Kúlí, who was brought before the sultan Murád, played and sang so sweetly, first a song of triumph, and then a dirge, that the sultan, moved to pity by the music, gave order to stop the slaughter. To resume, after this anecdotical digression. Saádí gives this whimsical piece of advice to a pugnacious fellow: "Be sure, either that thou art stronger than thine enemy, or that thou hast a swifter pair of heels." And he relates a droll story in illustration of the use and abuse of the phrase, "For the sake of God," which is so frequently in the mouths of Muslims: A harsh-voiced man was reading the Kurán in a loud tone. A pious man passed by him and said: "What is thy monthly salary?" The other replied: "Nothing." "Why, then, dost thou give thyself this trouble?" "I read for the sake of God," he rejoined. "Then," said the pious man, "for God's sake don't read." The most esteemed of Saádí's numerous and diversified works is the Gulistán, or Rose-Garden. The first English translation of this work was made by Francis Gladwin, and published in, and it is a very scarce book. Other translations have since been issued, but they are rather costly and the editions limited. It is strange that in these days of cheap reprints of rare and excellent works of genius no enterprising publisher should have thought it worth reproduction in a popular form. It is not one of those ponderous tomes of useless learning which not even an Act of Parliament could cause to be generally read, and which no publisher would be so blind to his own interests as to reprint. As regards its size, the Gulistán is but a small book, but intrinsically it is indeed a very great book, such as could only be produced by a great mind, and it comprises more wisdom and wit than a score of old English folios could together yield to the most devoted reader. Some querulous persons there are who affect to consider the present as a shallow age, because, forsooth, huge volumes of learning—each the labour of a lifetime—are not now produced. But the flood-gates of knowledge are now wide open, and, no longer confined within the old, narrow, if deep, channels, learning has spread abroad, like the Nile during the season of its over-flow. Shallow, it may be, but more widely beneficial, since its life-giving waters are within the reach of all.

Unlike most of our learned old English authors, Saádí did not cast upon the world all that came from the rich mine of his genius, dross as well as fine gold, clay as well as gems. It is because they have done so that many ponderous tomes of learning and industry stand neglected on the shelves of great libraries. Time is too precious now-a-days, whatever may have been the case of our forefathers, for it to be dissipated by diving into the muddy waters of voluminous authors in hopes of finding an occasional pearl of wisdom. And unless some intelligent and painstaking compiler set himself to the task of separating the gold from the rubbish in which it is imbedded in those graves of learning, and present the results of his labour in an attractive form, such works are virtually lost to the world. For in these high-pressure days, most of us, "like the dogs in Egypt for fear of the crocodiles, must drink of the waters of knowledge as we run, in dread of the old enemy Time." Saádí, however, in his Gulistán sets forth only his well-pondered thoughts in the most felicitous and expressive language. There is no need to form an abstract or epitome of a work in which nothing is superfluous, nothing valueless. But, as in a cabinet of gems some are more beautiful than others, or as in a garden some flowers are more attractive from their brilliant hues and fragrant odours, so a selection may be made of the more striking tales and aphorisms of the illustrious Persian philosopher. The preface to the Gulistán is one of the most pleasing portions of the whole book. Now prefaces are among those parts of books which are too frequently "skipped" by readers—they are "taken as read." Why this should be so, I confess I cannot understand. For my part, I make a point of reading a preface at least twice: first, because I would know what reasons my author had for writing his book, and again, having read his book, because the preface, if well written, may serve also as a sort of appendix. Authors are said to bestow particular pains on their prefaces. Cervantes, for instance, tells us that the preface to the first part of Don Quixote cost him more thought than the writing of the entire work. "It argues a deficiency of taste," says Isaac D'Israeli, "to turn over an elaborate preface unread; for it is the essence of the author's roses—every drop distilled at an immense cost." And, no doubt, it is a great slight to an author to skip his preface, though it cannot be denied that some prefaces are very tedious, because the writer "spins out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument," and none but the most hardy readers can persevere to the distant end. The Italians call a preface salsa del libro, the salt of the book. A preface may also be likened to the porch of a mansion, where it is not courteous to keep a visitor waiting long before you open the door and make him free of your house. But the reader who passes over the preface to the Gulistán unread loses not a little of the spice of that fascinating and instructive book. He who reads it, however, is rewarded by the charming account which the author gives of how he came to form his literary Rose-Garden: "It was the season of spring; the air was temperate and the rose in full bloom. The vestments of the trees resembled the festive garments of the fortunate. It was mid-spring, when the nightingales were chanting from their pulpits in the branches. The rose, decked with pearly dew, like blushes on the cheek of a chiding mistress. It happened once that I was benighted in a garden, in company with a friend. The spot was delightful: the trees intertwined; you would have said that the earth was bedecked with glass spangles, and that the knot of the Pleiades was suspended from the branch of the vine. A garden with a running stream, and trees whence birds were warbling melodious strains: that filled with tulips of various hues; these loaded with fruits of several kinds. Under the shade of its trees the zephyr had spread the variegated carpet. "In the morning, when the desire to return home overcame our inclination to remain, I saw in my friend's lap a collection of roses, odoriferous herbs, and hyacinths, which he intended to carry to town. I said: 'You are not ignorant that the flower of the garden soon fadeth, and that the enjoyment of the rose-bush is of short continuance; and the sages have declared that the heart ought not to be set upon anything that is transitory.' He asked: 'What course is then to be pursued?' I replied: 'I am able to form a book of roses, which will delight the beholders and gratify those who are present; whose leaves the tyrannic arm of autumnal blasts can never affect, or injure the blossoms of its spring. What benefit will you derive from a basket of flowers? Carry a leaf from my garden: a rose may continue in bloom five or six days, but this Rose-Garden will flourish for ever.' As soon as I had uttered these words, he flung the flowers from his lap, and, laying hold of the skirt of my garment, exclaimed: 'When the beneficent promise, they faithfully discharge their engagements.'

In the course of a few days two chapters were written in my note-book, in a style that may be useful to orators and improve the skill of letter-writers. In short, while the rose was still in bloom, the book called the Rose-Garden was finished.” has remarked that “there is scarcely any poet of eminence who has not left some testimony of his fondness for the flowers, the zephyrs, and the warblers of the spring.” This is pre-eminently the case of Oriental poets, from Solomon downwards: “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away,” exclaims the Hebrew poet in his Book of Canticles: “for lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone: the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds has come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green fruits, and the vines with the tender grapes give forth a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.” In a Persian poem written in the century the delights of the vernal season are thus described: “On every bush roses were blowing; on every branch the nightingale was plaintively warbling. The tall cypress was dancing in the garden; and the poplar never ceased clapping its hands with joy. With a loud voice from the top of every bough the turtle-dove was proclaiming the glad advent of spring. The diadem of the narcissus shone with such splendour that you would have said it was the crown of the Emperor of China. On this side the north wind, on that, the west wind, were, in token of affection, scattering dirhams at the feet of the rose. The earth was musk-scented, the air musk-laden.” But it would be difficult to adduce from the writings of any poet, European or Asiatic, anything to excel the charming ode on spring, by the Turkish poet Mesíhí, who flourished in the century, which has been rendered into graceful English verse, and in the measure of the original, by my friend in his dainty volume of Ottoman Poems, published in London a few years ago. These are some of the verses from that fine ode: Hark! the bulbul’s lay so joyous: “Now have come the days of spring!” Merry shows and crowds on every mead they spread, a maze of spring; There the almond-tree its silvery blossoms scatters, sprays of spring: Gaily live! for soon will vanish, biding not, the days of spring! Once again, with flow’rets decked themselves have mead and plain; Tents for pleasure have the blossoms raised in every rosy lane; Who can tell, when spring hath ended, who and what may whole remain? Gaily live! for soon will vanish, biding not, the days of spring! Sparkling dew-drops stud the lily’s leaf like sabre broad and keen; Bent on merry gipsy party, crowd they all the flow’ry green! List to me, if thou desirest, these beholding, joy to glean: Gaily live! for soon will vanish, biding not, the days of spring! Rose and tulip, like to maidens’ cheeks, all beauteous show, Whilst the dew-drops, like the jewels in their ears, resplendent glow; Do not think, thyself beguiling, things will aye continue so: Gaily live! for soon will vanish, biding not, the days of spring! Whilst each dawn the clouds are shedding jewels o’er the rosy land, And the breath of morning zephyr, fraught with Tátár musk, is bland; Whilst the world’s fair time is present, do not thou unheeding stand: Gaily live! for soon will vanish, biding not, the days of spring! With the fragrance of the garden, so imbued the musky air, Every dew-drop, ere it reaches earth, is turned to attar rare; O’er the parterre spread the incense-clouds a canopy right fair: Gaily live! for soon will vanish, Biding not, the days of spring! This Turkish poet’s maxim, it will be observed, was “enjoy the present day”— the carpe diem of Horace, the genial old pagan. On the same suggestive theme of Springtide a celebrated Turkish poetess, Fitnet Khánim (for the Ottoman Turks have poetesses of considerable genius as well as poets), has composed a pleasing ode, addressed to her lord, of which the following stanzas are also from collection: The fresh spring-clouds across all earth their glistening pearls profuse now sow; The flowers, too, all appearing, forth the radiance of their beauty show; Of mirth and joy ’tis now the time, the hour, to wander to and fro; The palm-tree o’er the fair ones’ pic-nic gay its grateful shade doth throw. O Liege, come forth! From end to end with verdure doth the whole earth glow; ’Tis springtide once again, once more the tulips and the roses blow! Behold the roses, how they shine, e’en like the cheeks of maids most fair; The fresh-sprung hyacinth shows like to beauties’ dark, sweet, musky hair; The loved one’s form behold, like cypress which the streamlet’s bank doth bear; In sooth, each side for soul and heart doth some delightful joy prepare. O Liege, come forth! From end to end with verdure doth the whole earth glow; ’Tis springtide once again, once more the tulips and the roses blow! The parterre’s flowers have all bloomed forth, the roses, sweetly smiling, shine; On every side lorn nightingales, in plaintive notes discerning, pine. How fair carnation and wallflower the borders of the garden line! The long-haired hyacinth and jasmine both around the cypress twine.

O Liege, come forth! From end to end with verdure doth the whole earth glow; 'Tis springtide once again, once more the tulips and the roses blow! I cannot resist the temptation to cite, in concluding this introductory paper, another fine eulogy of the delights of spring, by Amír Khusrú, of Delhi (century), from his Mihra-i-Iskandar, which has been thus rendered into rhythmical prose: "A day in spring, when all the world a pleasing picture seemed; the sun at early dawn with happy auspices arose. The earth was bathed in balmy dew; the beauties of the garden their charms displayed, the face of each with brilliancy adorned. The flowers in freshness bloomed; the lamp of the rose acquired lustre from the breeze; the tulip brought a cup from paradise; the rose-bower shed the sweets of Eden; beneath its folds the musky buds remained, like a musky amulet on the neck of Beauty. The violet bent its head; the fold of the bud was closer pressed; the opened rose in splendour glowed, and attracted every eye; the lovely flowers oppressed with dew in tremulous motion waved. The air o'er all the garden a silvery radiance threw, and o'er the flowers the breezes played; on every branch the birds attuned their notes, and every bower with warblings sweet was filled, so sweet, they stole the senses. The early nightingale poured forth its song, that gives a zest to those who quaff the morning goblet. From the turtle's soft cooings love seized each bird that skimmed the air." The Gulistán consists of short tales and anecdotes, to which are appended comments in prose and verse, and is divided into eight chapters, or sections: the Morals of Kings; the Morals of Dervishes; the Excellence of Contentment; the Advantages of Taciturnity; Love and Youth; Imbecility and Old Age; the Effects of Education; Rules for the Conduct of Life. In culling some of the choicest flowers of this perennial Garden, the particular order observed by Saádí need not be regarded here; it is preferable to pick here a flower and there a flower, as fancy may direct. It may happen, says our author, that the prudent counsel of an enlightened sage does not succeed; and it may chance that an unskilful boy inadvertently hits the mark with his arrow: A Persian king, while on a pleasure excursion with a number of his courtiers at Nassála Shíráz, appointed an archery competition for the amusement of himself and his friends. He caused a gold ring, set with a valuable gem, to be fixed on the dome of Asád, and it was announced that whosoever should send an arrow through the ring should obtain it as a reward of his skill. The four hundred skilled archers forming the royal body-guard each shot at the ring without success. It chanced that a boy on a neighbouring housetop was at the same time diverting himself with a little bow, when one of his arrows, shot at random, went through the ring. The boy, having obtained the prize, immediately burned his bow, shrewdly observing that he did so in order that the reputation of this feat should never be impaired. The advantage of abstinence, or rather, great moderation in eating and drinking, is thus curiously illustrated: Two dervishes travelled together; one was a robust man, who regularly ate three meals every day, the other was infirm of body, and accustomed to fast frequently for two days in succession. On their reaching the gate of a certain town, they were arrested on suspicion of being spies, and both lodged, without food, in the same prison, the door of which was then securely locked. Several days after, the unlucky dervishes were found to be quite innocent of the crime imputed to them, and on opening the door of the prison the strong man was discovered to be dead, and the infirm man still alive. At this circumstance the officers of justice marvelled; but a philosopher observed, that had the contrary happened it would have been more wonderful, since the one who died had been a great eater, and consequently was unable to endure the want of food, while the other, being accustomed to abstinence, had survived. Of Núshírván the Just (whom the Greeks called Chosroe), of the Sassanian dynasty of Persian kings—sixth century—Saádí relates that on one occasion, while at his hunting-seat, he was having some game dressed, and ordered a servant to procure some salt from a neighbouring village, at the same time charging him strictly to pay the full price for it, otherwise the exaction might become a custom. His courtiers were surprised at this order, and asked the king what possible harm could ensue from such a trifle. The good king replied: "Oppression was brought into the world from small beginnings, which every new comer increased, until it has reached the present degree of enormity." Upon this Saádí remarks: "If the monarch were to eat a single apple from the garden of a peasant, the servant would pull up the tree by the roots; and if the king order five eggs to be taken by force, his soldiers will spit a thousand fowls. The iniquitous tyrant remaineth not, but the curses of mankind rest on him for ever." Only those who have experienced danger can rightly appreciate the advantages of safety,

and according as a man has become acquainted with adversity does he recognise the value of prosperity—a sentiment which Saádí illustrates by the story of a boy who was in a vessel at sea for the first time, in which were also the king and his officers of state. The lad was in great fear of being drowned, and made a loud outcry, in spite of every effort of those around him to soothe him into tranquility. As his lamentations annoyed the king, a sage who was of the company offered to quiet the terrified youth, with his majesty's permission, which being granted, he caused the boy to be plunged several times in the sea and then drawn up into the ship, after which the youth retired to a corner and remained perfectly quiet. The king inquired why the lad had been subjected to such roughness, to which the sage replied: "At first he had never experienced the danger of being drowned, neither had he known the safety of a ship." One of our English moralists has remarked that the man who chiefly prides himself on his ancestry is like a potato-plant, whose best qualities are under ground. Saádí tells us of an old Arab who said to his son: "O my child, in the day of resurrection they will ask you what you have done in the world, and not from whom you are descended."—In the Akhlák-i-Jalaly, a work comprising the practical philosophy of the Muhammedans, written, in the century, in the Persian language, by Fakír Jání Muhammed Asaád, and translated into English, the Prophet's cousin, is reported to have said: My soul is my father, my title my worth; A Persian or Arab, there's little between: Give me him for a comrade, whatever his birth, Who shows what he is—not what others have been. An Arabian poet says: Be the son of whom thou wilt, try to acquire literature, The acquisition of which may make pedigree unnecessary to thee; Since a man of worth is he who can say, "I am so and so," Not he who can only say, "My father was so and so." And again: Ask not a man who his father was, but make trial Of his qualities, and then conciliate or reject him accordingly For it is no disgrace to new wine, if it only be sweet, As to its taste, that it was the juice [or daughter] of sour grapes. The often-quoted maxim of La Rochefoucauld, that there is something in the misfortunes of our friends which affords us a degree of secret pleasure, is well known to the Persians. Saádí tells us of a merchant who, having lost a thousand dínars, cautioned his son not to mention the matter to anyone, "in order," said he, "that we may not suffer two misfortunes—the loss of our money and the secret satisfaction of our neighbours." A generous disposition is thus eloquently recommended: They asked a wise man, which was preferable, fortitude or liberality, to which he replied: "He who possesses liberality has no need of fortitude. It is inscribed on the tomb of Bahram-i-Gúr that a liberal hand is preferable to a strong arm." "Hátim Taï," remarks Saádí, "no longer exists, but his exalted name will remain famous for virtue to eternity. 6 Distribute the tithe of your wealth in alms, for when the husbandman lops off the exuberant branches from the vine, it produces an increase of grapes." Prodigality, however, is as much to be condemned as judicious liberality is to be lauded. Saádí gives the following account of a Persian prodigal son, who was not so fortunate in the end as his biblical prototype: The son of a religious man, who succeeded to an immense fortune by the will of his uncle, became a dissipated and debauched profligate, in so much that he left no heinous crime unpractised, nor was there any intoxicating drug which he had not tasted. Once I admonished him, saying: "O my son, wealth is a running stream, and pleasure revolves like a millstone; or, in other words, profuse expense suits him only who has a certain income. When you have no certain income, be frugal in your expenses, because the sailors have a song, that if the rain does not fall in the mountains, the Tigris will become a dry bed of sand in the course of a year. Practise wisdom and virtue, and relinquish sensuality, for when your money is spent you will suffer distress and expose yourself to shame." The young man, seduced by music and wine, would not take my advice, but, in opposition to my arguments, said: "It is contrary to the wisdom of the sages to disturb our present enjoyments by the dread of futurity. Why should they who possess fortune suffer distress by anticipating sorrow? Go and be merry, O my enchanting friend! We ought not to be uneasy to-day for what may happen to-morrow. How would it become me, who am placed in the uppermost seat of liberality, so that the fame of my bounty is wide spread? When a man has acquired reputation by liberality and munificence, it does not become him to tie up his money-bags. When your good name has been spread through the street, you cannot shut your door against it." I perceived (continues Saádí) that he did not approve of my admonition, and that my warm breath did not affect his cold iron.

I ceased advising, and, quitting his society, returned into the corner of safety, in conformity with the saying of the philosophers: “Admonish and exhort as your charity requires; if they mind not, it does not concern you. Although thou knowest that they will not listen, nevertheless speak whatever you know is advisable. It will soon come to pass that you will see the silly fellow with his feet in the stocks, smiting his hands and exclaiming, ‘Alas, that I did not listen to the wise man’s advice!’” After some time, that which I had predicted from his dissolute conduct I saw verified. He was clothed in rags, and begging a morsel of food. I was distressed at his wretched condition, and did not think it consistent with humanity to scratch his wound with reproach. But I said in my heart: Profligate men, when intoxicated with pleasure, reflect not on the day of poverty. The tree which in the summer has a profusion of fruit is consequently without leaves in winter. The incapacity of some youths to receive instruction is always a source of vexation to the pedagogue. Saádí tells us of a vazír who sent his stupid son to a learned man, requesting him to impart some of his knowledge to the lad, hoping that his mind would be improved. After attempting to instruct him for some time without effect, he sent this message to his father: “Your son has no capacity, and has almost distracted me. When nature has given capacity instruction will make impressions; but if iron is not of the proper temper, no polishing will make it good. Wash not a dog in the seven seas, for when he is wetted he will only be the dirtier. If the ass that carried Jesus Christ were to be taken to Mecca, at his return he would still be an ass.” One of the greatest sages of antiquity is reported to have said that all the knowledge he had acquired merely taught him how little he did know; and indeed it is only smatterers who are vain of their supposed knowledge. A sensible young man, says Saádí, who had made considerable progress in learning and virtue, was at the same time so discreet that he would sit in the company of learned men without uttering a word. Once his father said to him: “My son, why do you not also say something you know?” He replied: “I fear lest they should question me about something of which I am ignorant, whereby I should suffer shame.” The advantages of education are thus set forth by a philosopher who was exhorting his children: “Acquire knowledge, for in worldly riches and possessions no reliance can be placed. 8 Rank will be of no use out of your own country; and on a journey money is in danger of being lost, for either the thief may carry it off all at once, or the possessor may consume it by degrees. But knowledge is a perennial spring of wealth, and if a man of education cease to be opulent, yet he need not be sorrowful, for knowledge of itself is riches. 9 A man of learning, wheresoever he goes, is treated with respect, and sits in the uppermost seat, whilst the ignorant man gets only scanty fare and encounters distress.” There once happened (adds Saádí) an insurrection in Damascus, where every one deserted his habitation. The wise sons of a peasant became the king’s ministers, and the stupid sons of the vazír were reduced to ask charity in the villages. If you want a paternal inheritance, acquire from your father knowledge, for wealth may be spent in ten days. In the following charming little tale Saádí recounts an interesting incident in his own life: I remember that in my youth, as I was passing through a street, I cast my eyes on a beautiful girl. It was in the autumn, when the heat dried up all moisture from the mouth, and the sultry wind made the marrow boil in the bones, so that, being unable to support the sun’s powerful rays, I was obliged to take shelter under the shade of a wall, in hopes that some one would relieve me from the distressing heat, and quench my thirst with a draught of water. Suddenly from the portico of a house I beheld a female form whose beauty it is impossible for the tongue of eloquence to describe, insomuch that it seemed as if the dawn was rising in the obscurity of night, or as if the Water of Immortality was issuing from the Land of Darkness. She held in her hand a cup of snowwater, into which she had sprinkled sugar and mixed with it the juice of the grape. I know not whether what I perceived was the fragrance of rose-water, or that she had infused into it a few drops from the blossom of her cheek. In short, I received the cup from her beauteous hand, and, drinking the contents, found myself restored to new life. The thirst of my soul is not such that it can be allayed with a drop of pure water—the streams of whole rivers would not satisfy it. How happy is that fortunate one whose eyes every morning may behold such a countenance! He who is intoxicated with wine will be sober again in the course of the night;

but he who is intoxicated by the cup-bearer will never recover his senses till the day of judgment. Alas, poor Saádí! The lovely cup-bearer, who made such a lasting impression on the heart of the young poet, was not destined for his bride. His was indeed a sad matrimonial fate; and who can doubt but that the beauteous form of the stranger maiden would often rise before his mental view after he was married to the Xantippe who rendered some portion of his life unhappy! Among the tales under the heading of "Imbecility and Old Age" we have one of "oldé January that wedded was to freshé May," which points its moral now as it did six hundred years ago: When I married a young virgin, said an old man, I bedecked a chamber with flowers, sat with her alone, and had fixed my eyes and heart solely upon her. Many long nights I passed without sleep, repeating jests and pleasantries, to remove shyness, and make her familiar. On one of these nights I said: "Fortune has been propitious to you, in that you have fallen into the society of an old man, of mature judgment, who has seen the world, and experienced various situations of good and bad fortune, who knows the rights of society, and has performed the duties of friendship;—one who is affectionate, affable, cheerful, and conversable. I will exert my utmost endeavours to gain your affection, and if you should treat me unkindly I will not be offended; or if, like the parrot, your food should be sugar, I will devote my sweet life to your support. You have not met with a youth of a rude disposition, with a weak understanding, headstrong, a gadder, who would be constantly changing his situations and inclinations, sleeping every night in a new place, and every day forming some new intimacy. Young men may be lively and handsome, but they are inconstant in their attachments. Look not thou for fidelity from those who, with the eyes of the nightingale, are every instant singing upon a different rose- bush. But old men pass their time in wisdom and good manners, not in the ignorance and frivolity of youth. Seek one better than yourself, and having found him, consider yourself fortunate. With one like yourself you would pass your life without improvement." I spoke a great deal after this manner (continued the old man), and thought that I had made a conquest of her heart, when suddenly she heaved a cold sigh from the bottom of her heart, and replied: "All the fine speeches that you have been uttering have not so much weight in the scale of my reason as one single sentence I have heard from my nurse, that if you plant an arrow in the side of a young woman it is not so painful as the society of an old man." In short (continued he), it was impossible to agree, and our differences ended in a separation. After the time prescribed by law, she married a young man of an impetuous temper, ill-natured, and in indigent circumstances, so that she suffered the injuries of violence, with the evils of penury. Nevertheless she returned thanks for her lot, and said: "God be praised that I escaped from infernal torment, and have obtained this permanent blessing. Amidst all your violence and impetuosity of temper, I will put up with your airs, because you are handsome. It is better to burn with you in hell than to be in paradise with the other. The scent of onions from a beautiful mouth is more fragrant than the odour of the rose from the hand of one who is ugly." It must be allowed that this old man put his own case to his young wife with very considerable address: yet, such is woman-nature, she chose to be "a young man's slave rather than an old man's darling." And, apropos, Saádí has another story which may be added to the foregoing: An old man was asked why he did not marry. He answered: "I should not like an old woman." "Then marry a young one, since you have property." Quoth he: "Since I, who am an old man, should not be pleased with an old woman, how can I expect that a young one would be attached to me?" "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown," says our great dramatist, in proof of which take this story: A certain king, when arrived at the end of his days, having no heir, directed in his will that the morning after his death the first person who entered the gate of the city they should place on his head the crown of royalty, and commit to his charge the government of the kingdom. It happened that the first to enter the city was a dervish, who all his life had collected victuals from the charitable and sewed patch on patch. The ministers of state and the nobles of the court carried out the king's will, bestowing on him the kingdom and the treasure. For some time the dervish governed the kingdom, until part of the nobility swerved their necks from obedience to him, and all the neighbouring monarchs, engaging in hostile confederacies, attacked him with their armies. In short, the troops and peasantry were thrown into confusion, and he lost the possession of some territories.

The dervish was distressed at these events, when an old friend, who had been his companion in the days of poverty, returned from a journey, and, finding him in such an exalted state, said: “Praised be the God of excellence and glory, that your high fortune has aided you and prosperity been your guide, so that a rose has issued from the brier, and the thorn has been extracted from your foot, and you have arrived at this dignity. Of a truth, joy succeeds sorrow; the bud does sometimes blossom and sometimes wither; the tree is sometimes naked and sometimes clothed.” He replied: “O brother, condole with me, for this is not a time for congratulation. When you saw me last, I was only anxious how to obtain bread; but now I have all the cares of the world to encounter. If the times are adverse, I am in pain; and if they are prosperous, I am captivated with worldly enjoyments. There is no calamity greater than worldly affairs, because they distress the heart in prosperity as well as in adversity. If you want riches, seek only for contentment, which is inestimable wealth. If the rich man would throw money into your lap, consider not yourself obliged to him, for I have often heard that the patience of the poor is preferable to the liberality of the rich.” Muezzins, who call the faithful to prayer at the prescribed hours from the minarets of the mosques, are generally blind men, as a man with his eyesight might spy into the domestic privacy of the citizens, who sleep on the flat roofs of their houses in the hot season, and are selected for their sweetness of voice. Saádí, however, tells us of a man who performed gratuitously the office of muezzin, and had such a voice as disgusted all who heard it. The intendant of the mosque, a good, humane man, being unwilling to offend him, said one day: “My friend, this mosque has muezzins of long standing, each of whom has a monthly stipend of ten dínars. Now I will give you ten dínars to go to another place.” The man agreed to this and went away. Some time after he came to the intendant and said: “O, my lord, you injured me in sending me away from this station for ten dínars; for where I went they will give me twenty dínars to remove to another place, to which I have not consented.” The intendant laughed, and said: “Take care—don’t accept of the offer, for they may be willing to give you fifty.” To those who have “music in their souls,” and are “moved by concord of sweet sounds,” the tones of a harsh voice are excruciating; and if among our statesmen and other public speakers “silver tongues” are rare, they are much more so among our preachers. The Church of Rome does not admit into the priesthood men who have any bodily shortcoming or defect; it would also be well if all candidates for holy orders in the English and Scottish Churches whose voices are not at least tolerable were rejected, as unfit to preach! Saádí seems to have had a great horror of braying orators, and relates a number of anecdotes about them, such as this: A preacher who had a detestable voice, but thought he had a very sweet one, bawled out to no purpose. You would say the croaking of the crow in the desert was the burden of his song, and that this verse of the Kurán was intended for him, “Verily the most detestable of sounds is the braying of an ass.” When this ass of a preacher brayed, it made Persepolis tremble. The people of the town, on account of the respectability of his office, submitted to the calamity, and did not think it advisable to molest him, until one of the neighbouring preachers, who was secretly ill-disposed towards him, came once to see him, and said: “I have had a dream—may it prove good!” “What did you dream?” “I thought you had a sweet voice, and that the people were enjoying tranquility from your discourse.” The preacher, after reflecting a little, replied: “What a happy dream is this that you have had, which has discovered to me my defect, in that I have an unpleasant voice, and that the people are distressed at my preaching. I am resolved that in future I will read only in a low tone. The company of friends was disadvantageous to me, because they look on my bad manners as excellent: my defects appear to them skill and perfection, and my thorn as the rose and the jasmin.” Our author, as we have seen, enlivens his moral discourses occasionally with humorous stories, and one or two more of these may fittingly close the present section: One of the slaves of Amrúlais having run away, a person was sent in pursuit of him and brought him back. The vazír, being inimical to him, commanded him to be put to death in order to deter other slaves from committing the like offence. The slave prostrated himself before Amrúlais and said: “Whatever may happen to me with your approbation is lawful—what plea can the slave offer against the sentence of his lord? But, seeing that I have been brought up under the bounties of your house, I do not wish that at the resurrection you shall be charged with my blood.

If you are resolved to kill your slave, do so comformably to the interpretation of the law, in order that at the resurrection you may not suffer reproach." The king asked: "After what manner shall I expound it?" The slave replied: "Give me leave to kill the vazír, and then, in retaliation for him, order me to be put to death, that you may kill me justly." The king laughed, and asked the vazír what was his advice in this matter. Quoth the vazír: "O my lord, as an offering to the tomb of your father, liberate this rogue, in order that I may not also fall into this calamity. The crime is on my side, for not having observed the words of the sages, who say, 'When you combat with one who flings clods of earth, you break your own head by your folly: when you shoot at the face of your enemy, be careful that you sit out of his aim.'"—And not a little wit, too, did the kází exhibit when detected by the king in an intrigue with a farrier's daughter, and his Majesty gave order that he should be flung from the top of the castle, "as an example for others"; to which the kází replied: "O monarch of the universe, I have been fostered in your family, and am not singular in the commission of such crimes; therefore, I ask you to precipitate some one else, in order that I may benefit by the example." The king laughed at his wit, and spared his life.—Nor is this tale without a spice of humour: An astrologer entered his house and finding a stranger in company with his wife abused him, and called him such opprobrious names that a quarrel and strife ensued. A shrewd man, being informed of this, said to the astrologer: "What do you know of the heavenly bodies, when you cannot tell what goes on in your own house?" —Last, and perhaps best of all, is this one: I was hesitating about concluding a bargain for a house, when a Jew said: "I am an old householder in that quarter; inquire of me the description of the house, and buy it, for it has no fault." I replied: "Excepting that you are one of the neighbours!" Besides the maxims comprised in the concluding chapter of the Gulistán, under the heading of "Rules for the Conduct of Life," many others, of great pith and moment, are interspersed with the tales and anecdotes which Saádí recounts in the preceding chapters, a selection of which can hardly fail to prove both instructive and interesting. It is related that at the court of Núshírván, king of Persia, a number of wise men were discussing a difficult question; and Buzurjmihr (his famous prime minister), being silent, was asked why he did not take part in the debate. He answered: "Ministers are like physicians, and the physician gives medicine to the sick only. Therefore, when I see your opinions are judicious, it would not be consistent with wisdom for me to obtrude my sentiments. When a matter can be managed without my interference it is not proper for me to speak on the subject. But if I see a blind man in the way of a well, should I keep silence it were a crime." On another occasion, when some Indian sages were discoursing on his virtue, they could discover in him only this fault, that he hesitated in his speech, so that his hearers were kept a long time in suspense before he delivered his sentiments. Buzurjmihr overheard their conversation and observed: "It is better to deliberate before I speak than to repent of what I have said." A parallel to this last saying of the Persian vazír is found in a "notable sentence" of a wise Greek, in this passage from the Dictes, or Sayings of Philosophers, printed by Caxton (I have modernised the spelling): "There came before a certain king three wise men, a Greek, a Jew, and a Saracen, of whom the said king desired that each of them would utter some good and notable sentence. Then the Greek said: 'I may well correct and amend my thoughts, but not my words.' The Jew said: 'I marvel of them that say things prejudicial, when silence were more profitable.' The Saracen said: 'I am master of my words ere they are pronounced; but when they are spoken I am servant thereto.' And it was asked one of them: 'Who might be called a king?' And he answered: 'He that is not subject to his own will.'" The Dictes, or Sayings of Philosophers, of which, I believe, but one perfect copy is extant, was translated from the French by Earl Rivers, and printed by Caxton, at Westminister, in the year, as we learn from the colophon. I am not aware that any one has taken the trouble to trace to their sources all the sayings comprised in this collection, but I think the original of the above is to be found in the following, from the preface to the Arabian version (from the Pahlaví, the ancient language of Persia) of the celebrated Fables of Bidpaï, entitled Kalíla wa Dimna, made in the year: "The four kings of China, India, Persia, and Greece, being together, agreed each of them to deliver a saying which might be recorded to their honour in after ages.

The king of China said: 'I have more power over that which I have not spoken than I have to recall what has once passed my lips.' The king of India: 'I have been often struck with the risk of speaking; for if a man be heard in his own praise it is unprofitable boasting, and what he says to his own discredit is injurious in its consequences.' The king of Persia: 'I am the slave of what I have spoken, but the master of what I conceal.' The king of Greece: 'I have never regretted the silence which I had imposed upon myself; though I have often repented of the words I have uttered; for silence is attended with advantage, whereas loquacity is often followed by incurable evils.'" The Persian poet Jámí—the last of the brilliant galaxy of genius who enriched the literature of their country, and who flourished two centuries after Saádí had passed to his rest—reproduces these sayings of the four kings in his work entitled Baháristán, or Abode of Spring, which is similar in design to the Gulistán. Among the sayings of other wise men (whose names, however, Saádí does not mention) are the following: A devotee, who had quitted his monastery and become a member of a college, being asked what difference there is between a learned man and a religious man to induce him thus to change his associates, answered: "The devotee saves his own blanket out of the waves, and the learned man endeavours to save others from drowning."—A young man complained to his spiritual guide of his studies being frequently interrupted by idle and impudent visitors, and desired to know by what means he might rid himself of the annoyance. The sage replied: "To such as are poor lend money, and of such as are rich ask money, and, depend upon it, you will never see one of them again." Saádí's own aphorisms are not less striking and instructive. They are indeed calculated to stimulate the faltering to manly exertion, and to counsel the inexperienced. It is to youthful minds, however, that the "words of the wise" are more especially addressed; for it is during the spring-time of life that the seeds of good and evil take root; and so we find the sage Hebrew king frequently addressing his maxims to the young: "My son," is his formula, "my son, attend to my words, and bow thine ear to my understanding; that thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge." And the "good and notable sentences" of Saádí are well worthy of being treasured by the young man on the threshold of life. For example: "Life is snow, and the summer advanceth; only a small portion remaineth: art thou still slothful?" This warning has been reiterated by moralists in all ages and countries;—the Great Teacher says: "Work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work." And Saádí, in one of his sermons (which is found in another of his books), recounts this beautiful fable, in illustration of the fortunes of the slothful and the industrious: It is related that in a certain garden a Nightingale had built his nest on the bough of a rose-bush. It so happened that a poor little Ant had fixed her dwelling at the root of this same bush, and managed as best she could to store her wretched hut of care with winter provision. Day and night was the Nightingale fluttering round the rose-bower, and tuning the barbut of his soul-deluding melody; indeed, whilst the Ant was night and day industriously occupied, the thousandsonged bird seemed fascinated with his own sweet voice, echoing amidst the trees. The Nightingale was whispering his secret to the Rose, and that, fullblown by the zephyr of the dawn, would ogle him in return. The poor Ant could not help admiring the coquettish airs of the Rose, and the gay blandishments of the Nightingale, and incontinently remarking: "Time alone can disclose what may be the end of this frivolity and talk!" After the flowery season of summer was gone, and the black time of winter was come, thorns took the station of the Rose, and the raven the perch of the Nightingale. The storms of autumn raged in fury, and the foliage of the grove was shed upon the ground. The cheek of the leaf was turned yellow, and the breath of the wind was chill and blasting. The gathering cloud poured down hailstones, like pearls, and flakes of snow floated like camphor on the bosom of the air. Suddenly the Nightingale returned into the garden, but he met neither the bloom of the Rose nor fragrance of the spikenard; notwithstanding his thousand-songed tongue, he stood stupified and mute, for he could discover no flower whose form he might admire, nor any verdure whose freshness he might enjoy. The Thorn turned round to him and said: "How long, silly bird, wouldst thou be courting the society of the Rose? Now is the season that in the absence of thy charmer thou must put up with the heart-rending bramble of separation." The Nightingale cast his eye upon the scene around him, but saw nothing fit to eat. Destitute of food, his strength and fortitude failed him, and in his abject helplessness he was unable to earn himself a little livelihood.

He called to his mind and said: “Surely the Ant had in former days his dwelling underneath this tree, and was busy in hoarding a store of provision: now I will lay my wants before her, and, in the name of good neighbourship, and with an appeal to her generosity, beg some small relief. Peradventure she may pity my distress and bestow her charity upon me.” Like a poor suppliant, the halffamished Nightingale presented himself at the Ant’s door, and said: “Generosity is the harbinger of prosperity, and the capital stock of good luck. I was wasting my precious life in idleness whilst thou wast toiling hard and laying up a hoard. How considerate and good it were of thee wouldst thou spare me a portion of it.” The Ant replied: “Thou wast day and night occupied in idle talk, and I in attending to the needful: one moment thou wast taken up with the fresh blandishment of the Rose, and the next busy in admiring the blossoming spring. Wast thou not aware that every summer has its fall and every road an end?” These are a few more of Saádí’s aphorisms: Riches are for the comfort of life, and not life for the accumulation of riches. The eye of the avaricious man cannot be satisfied with wealth, any more than a well can be filled with dew. A wicked rich man is a clod of earth gilded. The liberal man who eats and bestows is better than the religious man who fasts and hoards. Publish not men’s secret faults, for by disgracing them you make yourself of no repute. He who gives advice to a self-conceited man stands himself in need of counsel from another. The vicious cannot endure the sight of the virtuous, in the same manner as the curs of the market howl at a hunting-dog, but dare not approach him. When a mean wretch cannot vie with any man in virtue, out of his wickedness he begins to slander him. The abject, envious wretch will slander the virtuous man when absent, but when brought face to face his loquacious tongue becomes dumb. O thou, who hast satisfied thy hunger, to thee a barley loaf is beneath notice;—that seems loveliness to me which in thy sight appears deformity. The ringlets of fair maids are chains for the feet of reason, and snares for the bird of wisdom. When you have anything to communicate that will distress the heart of the person whom it concerns, be silent, in order that he may hear it from some one else. O nightingale, bring thou the glad tidings of the spring, and leave bad news to the owl! It often happens that the imprudent is honoured and the wise despised. The alchemist died of poverty and distress, while the blockhead found a treasure under a ruin. Covetousness sews up the eyes of cunning, and brings both bird and fish into the net. Although, in the estimation of the wise, silence is commendable, yet at a proper season speech is preferable. Two things indicate an obscure understanding: to be silent when we should converse, and to speak when we should be silent. Put not yourself so much in the power of your friend that, if he should become your enemy, he may be able to injure you. Our English poet Young has this observation in his Night Thoughts: Thought, in the mine, may come forth gold or dross; When coined in word, we know its real worth. He had been thus anticipated by Saádí: “To what shall be likened the tongue in a man’s mouth? It is the key of the treasury of wisdom. When the door is shut, who can discover whether he deals in jewels or small-wares?” The poet Thomson, in his Seasons, has these lines, which have long been hackneyed: Loveliness Needs not the aid of foreign ornament, But is when unadorned adorned the most. Saádí had anticipated him also: “The face of the beloved,” he says, “requireth not the art of the tire-woman. The finger of a beautiful woman and the tip of her ear are handsome without an ear-jewel or a turquoise ring.” But Saádí, in his turn, was forestalled by the Arabian poet-hero Antar, in his famous Mu’allaka, or prize-poem, which is at least thirteen hundred years old, where he says: “Many a consort of a fair one, whose beauty required no ornaments, have I laid prostrate on the field.” Yet one Persian poet, at least, namely, Nakhshabí, held a different opinion: “Beauty,” he says, “adorned with ornaments, portends disastrous events to our hearts. An amiable form, ornamented with diamonds and gold, is like a melodious voice accompanied by the rabáb.” Again, he says: “Ornaments are the universal ravishers of hearts, and an upper garment for the shoulder is like a cluster of gems. If dress, however,” he concedes, “may have been at any time the assistant of beauty, beauty is always the animator of dress.” It is remarkable that homely-featured women dress more gaudily than their handsome sisters generally, thus unconsciously bringing their lack of beauty (not to put too fine a point on it) into greater prominence. In common with other moralists, Saádí reiterates the maxim that learning and virtue, precept and practice, should ever go hand in hand. “Two persons,” says he, “took trouble in vain: he who acquired wealth without using it, and he who taught wisdom without practising it.”

Again: “He who has acquired knowledge and does not practise it, is like unto him that ploughed but did not sow.” And again: “How much soever you may study science, when you do not act wisely, you are ignorant. The beast that they load with books is not profoundly wise and learned: what knoweth his empty skull whether he carrieth fire-wood or books?” And yet again: “A learned man without temperance is like a blind man carrying a lamp: he showeth the way to others, but does not guide himself.” Ingratitude is denounced by all moralists as the lowest of vices. Thus Saádí says: “Man is beyond dispute the most excellent of created beings, and the vilest animal is the dog; but the sages agree that a grateful dog is better than an ungrateful man. A dog never forgets a morsel, though you pelt him a hundred times with stones. But if you cherish a mean wretch for an age, he will fight with you for a mere trifle.” In language still more forcible does a Hindú poet denounce this basest of vices: “To cut off the teats of a cow; to occasion a pregnant woman to miscarry; to injure a Bráhman—are sins of the most aggravated nature; but more atrocious than these is ingratitude.” The sentiment so tersely expressed in the Chinese proverb, “He who never reveals a secret keeps it best,” is thus finely amplified by Saádí: “The matter which you wish to preserve as a secret impart not to every one, although he may be worthy of confidence; for no one will be so true to your secret as yourself. It is safer to be silent than to reveal a secret to any one, and tell him not to mention it. O wise man! stop the water at the spring-head, for when it is in full stream you cannot arrest it.” The imperative duty of active benevolence is thus inculcated: “Bestow thy gold and thy wealth while they are thine; for when thou art gone they will be no longer in thy power. Distribute thy treasure readily to-day, for to-morrow the key may be no longer in thy hand. Exert thyself to cast a covering over the poor, that God’s own veil may be a covering to thee.” In the following passage the man of learning and virtue is contrasted with the stupid and ignorant blockhead: “If a wise man, falling into company with mean people, does not get credit for his discourse, be not surprised, for the sound of the harp cannot overpower the noise of the drum, and the fragrance of ambergris is overcome by fetid garlic. The ignorant fellow was proud of his loud voice, because he had impudently confounded the man of understanding. If a jewel falls in the mud it is still the same precious stone, 20 and if dust flies up to the sky it retains its original baseness. A capacity without education is deplorable, and education without capacity is thrown away. Sugar obtains not its value from the cane, but from its innate quality. Musk has fragrance of itself, and not from being called a perfume by the druggist. The wise man is like the druggist’s chest, silent, but full of virtues; while the blockhead resembles the warrior’s drum, noisy, but an empty prattler. A wise man in the company of those who are ignorant has been compared by the sages to a beautiful girl in the company of blind men, and to the Kurán in the house of an infidel.”—The old proverb that “an evil bird has an evil egg” finds expression by Saádí thus: “No one whose origin is bad ever catches the reflection of the good.” Again, he says: “How can we make a good sword out of bad iron? A worthless person cannot by education become a person of any worth.” And yet again: “Evil habits which have taken root in one’s nature will only be got rid of at the hour of death.” Firdausí, the Homer of Persia (eleventh century), has the following remarks in his scathing satire on the sultan Mahmúd, of Ghazní (Atkinson’s rendering): Alas! from vice can goodness ever spring? Is mercy hoped for in a tyrant king? Can water wash the Ethiopian white? Can we remove the darkness from the night? The tree to which a bitter fruit is given Would still be bitter in the bowers of heaven; And a bad heart keeps on its vicious course, Or, if it changes, changes for the worse; Whilst streams of milk where Eden’s flow’rets blow Acquire more honied sweetness as they flow. The striking words of the Great Teacher, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” find an interesting analogue in this passage by Saádí: “There is a saying of the Prophet, ‘To the poor death is a state of rest.’ The ass that carries the lightest burden travels easiest. In like manner, the good man who bears the burden of poverty will enter the gate of death lightly loaded, while he who lives in affluence, with ease and comfort, will, doubtless, on that very account find death very terrible. And in any view, the captive who is released from confinement is happier than the noble who is taken prisoner.” A singular anecdote is told of another celebrated Persian poet,

which may serve as a kind of commentary on this last-cited passage: Faridú 'd-Dín 'Attár, who died in the year, when over a hundred years old, was considered the most perfect Súfí philosopher of the time in which he lived. His father was an eminent druggist in Nishapúr, and for a time Faridú 'd-Dín followed the same profession, and his shop was the delight of all who passed by it, from the neatness of its arrangements and the fragrant odours of drugs and essences. 'Attár, which means druggist, or perfumer, Faridú 'd-Dín adopted for his poetical title. One day, while sitting at his door with a friend, an aged dervish drew near, and, after looking anxiously and closely into the well-furnished shop, he sighed heavily and shed tears, as he reflected on the transitory nature of all earthly things. 'Attár, mistaking the sentiment uppermost in the mind of the venerable devotee, ordered him to be gone, to which he meekly rejoined: "Yes, I have nothing to prevent me from leaving thy door, or, indeed, from quitting this world at once, as my sole possession is this threadbare garment. But O 'Attár, I grieve for thee: for how canst thou ever bring thyself to think of death—to leave all these goods behind thee?" 'Attár replied that he hoped and believed that he should die as contentedly as any dervish; upon which the aged devotee, saying, "We shall see," placed his wooden bowl upon the ground, laid his head upon it, and, calling on the name of God, immediately resigned his soul. Deeply impressed with this incident, 'Attár at once gave up his shop, and devoted himself to the study of Súfí philosophy. The death of Cardinal Mazarin furnishes another remarkable illustration of Saádí's sentiment. A day or two before he died, the cardinal caused his servant to carry him into his magnificent art gallery, where, gazing upon his collection of pictures and sculpture, he cried in anguish, "And must I leave all these?" Dr. Johnson may have had Mazarin's words in mind when he said to Garrick, while being shown over the famous actor's splendid mansion: "Ah, Davie, Davie, these are the things that make a death-bed terrible!" Few passages of Shakspeare are more admired than these lines: And this our life, exempt from public haunts, Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, Sermons in stones, and good in everything. Saádí had thus expressed the same sentiment before him: "The foliage of a newly-clothed tree, to the eye of a discerning man, displays a whole volume of the wondrous works of the Creator." Another Persian poet, Jámí, in his beautiful mystical poem of Yúsuf wa Zulaykhá, says: "Every leaf is a tongue uttering praises, like one who keepeth crying, 'In the name of God.'" And the Afghan poet Abdu 'r-Rahman says: "Every tree, every shrub, stands ready to bend before him; every herb and blade of grass is a tongue to mutter his praises." And Horace Smith, that most pleasing but unpretentious writer, both of verse and prose, has thus finely amplified the idea of "tongues in trees": Your voiceless lips, O Flowers, are living preachers, Each cup a pulpit, every leaf a book, Supplying to my fancy numerous teachers, From loneliest nook. 'Neath cloistered boughs, each floral bell that swingeth, And tolls its perfume on the passing air, Makes Sabbath in the fields, and ever ringeth A call to prayer;— Not to the domes where crumbling arch and column Attest the feebleness of mortal hand, But to that fane, most catholic and solemn, Which God hath planned: To that cathedral, boundless as our wonder, Whose quenchless lamps the sun and moon supply; Its choir, the winds and waves, its organ, thunder, Its dome, the sky. There, amid solitude and shade, I wander Through the green aisles, and, stretched upon the sod, Awed by the silence, reverently ponder The ways of God. When Saádí composed his Gulistán, in, he was between eighty and ninety years of age, with his great mind still vigorous as ever; and he lived many years after, beloved and revered by the poor, whose necessities he relieved, and honoured and esteemed by the noble and the learned, who frequently visited the venerable solitary, to gather and treasure up the pearls of wisdom which dropped from his eloquent tongue. Like other poets of lofty genius, he possessed a firm assurance of the immortality of his fame. "A rose," says he, "may continue to bloom for five or six days, but this Rose-Garden will flourish for ever"; and again: "These verses and recitals of mine will endure after every particle of my dust has been dispersed." Six centuries have passed away since the gifted sage penned his Gulistán, and his fame has not only continued in his own land and throughout the East generally, but has spread into all European countries, and across the Atlantic, where long after the days of Saádí "still stood the forests primeval." MAN A LAUGHING ANIMAL—ANTIQUITY OF POPULAR JESTS—"NIGHT AND DAY"—THE PLAIN-FEATURED BRIDE—THE HOUSE OF CONDOLENCE—THE BLIND MAN'S WIFE—TWO WITTY PERSIAN LADIES—WOMAN'S COUNSEL—THE TURKISH JESTER: IN THE PULPIT; THE CAULDRON; THE BEGGAR; THE DRUNKEN GOVERNOR; THE ROBBER; THE HOT BROTH— MUSLIM PREACHERS AND MUSLIM MISERS. Certain philosophers have described man as a cooking animal, others as a toolmaking animal, others, again, as a laughing animal.