VIII. Persian Poetry

To Baron von Hammer Purgstall, who died in Vienna in 1856, we owe our best knowledge of the Persians. He has translated into German, besides the “Divan”of Hafiz, specimens of two hundred poets who wrote during a period of five and a half centuries, from A.D. 1050 to 1600. The seven masters of the Persian Parnassus—Firdusi, Enweri, Nisami, Jelaleddin, Saadi, Hafiz, and Jami—have ceased to be empty names; and others, like Feri-deddin Attar and Omar Khayyam, promise to rise in Western estimation. That for which mainly books exist is communicated in these rich extracts. Many qualities go to make a good telescope,—as the largeness of the field, facility of sweeping the meridian, achromatic purity of lenses, and so forth; but the one eminent value is the space-penetrating power; and there are many virtues in books, but the essential value is the adding of knowledge to our stock by the record of new facts, and, better, by the record of intuitions which distribute facts, and are the formulas which supersede all histories.

Oriental life and society, especially in the Southern nations, stand in violent contrast with the multitudinous detail, the secular stability, and the vast average of comfort of the Western nations. Life in the East is fierce, short, hazardous, and in extremes. Its elements are few and simple, not exhibiting the long range and undulation of European existence, but rapidly reaching the best and the worst. The rich feed on fruits and game,—the poor, on a watermelon's peel. All or nothing is the genius of Oriental life. Favor of the Sultan, or his displeasure, is a question of Fate. A war is undertaken for an epigram or a distich, as in Europe for a duchy. The prolific sun and the sudden and rank plenty which his heat engenders, make subsistence easy. On the other side, the desert, the simoon, the mirage, the lion and the plague endanger it, and life hangs on the contingency of a skin of water more or less. The very geography of old Persia showed these contrasts. “My father's empire,” said Cyrus to Xenophon, “is so large that people perish with cold at one extremity whilst they are suffocated with heat at the other.” The temperament of the people agrees with this life in extremes. Religion and poetry are all their civilization. The religion teaches an inexorable Destiny. It distinguishes only two days in each man's history,—his birthday, called the *Day of the Lot*, and the Day of Judgment. Courage and absolute submission to what is appointed him are his virtues.

The favor of the climate, making subsistence easy and encouraging an outdoor life, allows to the Eastern nations a highly intellectual organization,—leaving out of view, at present, the genius of the Hindoos (more Oriental in every sense), whom no people have surpassed in the grandeur of their ethical statement. The Persians and the Arabs, with great leisure and few books, are exquisitely sensible to the pleasures of poetry. Layard has given some details of the effect which the *improvisatori* produced on the children of the desert. “When the bard improvised an amatory ditty, the young chief's excitement was almost beyond control. The other Bedouins were scarcely less moved by these rude measures, which have the same kind of effect on the wild tribes of the Persian mountains. Such verses, chanted by their self-taught poets or by the girls of their encampment, will drive warriors to the combat, fearless of death, or prove an ample reward on their return from the dangers of the *ghazon*, or the fight. The excitement they produce exceeds that of the grape. He who would understand the influence of the Homeric ballads in the heroic ages should witness the effect which similar compositions have upon the wild nomads of the East.” Elsewhere he adds, “Poetry and flowers are the wine and spirits of the Arab; a couplet is equal to a bottle, and a rose to a dram, without the evil effect of either.”

The Persian poetry rests on a mythology whose few legends are connected with the Jewish history and the anterior traditions of the Pentateuch. The principal figure in the allusions of Eastern poetry is Solomon. Solomon had three talismans: first, the signet-ring by which he commanded the spirits, on the stone of which was engraven the name of God; second, the glass in which he saw the secrets of his enemies and the causes of all things, figured; the third, the east-wind, which was his horse. His counsellor was Simorg, king of birds, the all-wise fowl who had lived ever since the beginning of the world, and now lives alone on the highest summit of Mount Kaf. No fowler has taken him, and none now living has seen him. By him Solomon was taught the language of birds, so that he heard secrets whenever he went into his gardens. When Solomon travelled, his throne was placed on a carpet of green silk, of a length and breadth sufficient for all his army to stand upon,—men placing themselves on his right hand, and the spirits on his left. When all were in order, the east-wind, at his command, took up the carpet and transported it with all that were upon it, whither he pleased,—the army of birds at the same time flying overhead and forming a canopy to shade them from the sun. It is related that when the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon, he had built, against her arrival, a palace, of which the floor or pavement was of glass, laid over running water, in which fish were swimming. The Queen of Sheba was deceived thereby, and raised her robes, thinking she was to pass through the water. On the occasion of Solomon's marriage, all the beasts, laden with presents, appeared before his throne. Behind them all came the ant, with a blade of grass: Solomon did not despise the gift of the ant. Asaph, the vizier, at a certain time, lost the seal of Solomon, which one of the Dews or evil spirits found, and, governing in the name of Solomon, deceived the people.

Firdusi, the Persian Homer, has written in the *Shah Nameh* the annals of the fabulous and heroic kings of the country: of Karun (the Persian Crœsus), the immeasurably rich gold-maker, who, with all his treasures, lies buried not far from the Pyramids, in the sea which bears his name; of Jamschid, the binder of demons, whose reign lasted seven hundred years; of Kai Kaus, in whose palace, built by demons on Alburz, gold and silver and precious stones were used so lavishly that in the brilliancy produced by their combined effect, night and day appeared the same; of Afrasiyab, strong as an elephant, whose shadow extended for miles, whose heart was bounteous as the ocean and his hands like the clouds when rain falls to gladden the earth. The crocodile in the rolling stream had no safety from Afrasiyab. Yet when he came to fight against the generals of Kaus, he was but an insect in the grasp of Rustem, who seized him by the girdle and dragged him from his horse. Rustem felt such anger at the arrogance of the King of Mazinderan that every hair on his body started up like a spear. The gripe of his hand cracked the sinews of an enemy.

These legends, with Chiser, the fountain of life, Tuba, the tree of life; the romances of the loves of Leila and Medschnun, of Chosru and Schirin, and those of the nightingale for the rose; pearl-diving, and the virtues of gems; the cohol, a cosmetic by which pearls and eyebrows are indelibly stained black, the bladder in which musk is brought, the down of the lip, the mole on the cheek, the eyelash; lilies, roses, tulips, and jasmines,—make the staple imagery of Persian odes.

The Persians have epics and tales, but, for the most part, they affect short poems and epigrams. Gnomic verses, rules of life conveyed in a lively image, especially in an image addressed to the eye and contained in a single stanza, were always current in the East; and if the poem is long, it is only a string of unconnected verses. They use an incon-secutiveness quite alarming to Western logic, and the connection between the stanzas of their longer odes is much like that between the refrain of our old English ballads,—

> “The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall,”

or

> “ “The rain it raineth every day,”—

and the main story.

Take, as specimens of these gnomic verses, the following:—

> “ “The secret that should not be blown
> Not one of thy nation must know;
> You may padlock the gate of a town,
> But never the mouth of a foe:”

or this of Omar Khayyam:—

> “ “On earth's wide thoroughfares below
> Two only men contented go:
> Who knows what's right and what's forbid,
> And he from whom is knowledge hid.”

Here is a poem on a melon, by Adsched of Meru:—

> “ “Color, taste, and smell, smaragdus, sugar, and musk,
> Amber for the tongue, for the eye a picture rare,
> If you cut the fruit in slices, every slice a crescent fair,
> If you leave it whole, the full harvest moon is there.”

Hafiz is the prince of Persian poets, and in his extraordinary gifts adds to some of the attributes of Pindar, Anacreon, Horace and Burns, the insight of a mystic, that sometimes affords a deeper glance at Nature than belongs to either of these bards. He accosts all topics with an easy audacity. “He only,” he says, “is fit for company, who knows how to prize earthly happiness at the value of a nightcap. Our father Adam sold Paradise for two kernels of wheat; then blame me not, if I hold it dear at one grapestone.” He says to the Shah, “Thou who rulest after words and thoughts which no ear has heard and no mind has thought, abide firm until thy young destiny tears off his blue coat from the old

graybeard of the sky.” He says,—

> “I batter the wheel of heaven
> When it rolls not rightly by;
> I am not one of the snivellers
> Who fall thereon and die.”

The rapidity of his turns is always surprising us:—

> “See how the roses burn!
> Bring wine to quench the fire!
> Alas! the flames come up with us,
> We perish with desire.”

After the manner of his nation, he abounds in pregnant sentences which might be engraved on a sword-blade and almost on a ring.

> “In honor dies he to whom the great seems ever wonderful.”
> “Here is the sum, that, when one door opens, another shuts.”
> “On every side is an ambush laid by the robber-troops of circumstance; hence it is that the horseman of life urges on his courser at headlong speed.”
> “The earth is a host who murders his guests.”
> “Good is what goes on the road of Nature. On the straight way the traveller never misses.”

> “Alas! till now I had not known
> My guide and Fortune's guide are one.”
>
> “The understanding's copper coin
> Counts not with the gold of love.”
>
> “'Tis writ on Paradise's gate,
> ‘Woe to the dupe that yields to Fate!’”
>
> “The world is a bride superbly dressed;—
> Who weds her for dowry must pay his soul.”

> “Loose the knots of the heart; never think on thy fate:
> No Euclid has yet disentangled that snarl.”
>
> “There resides in the grievingA poison to kill;
> Beware to go near them'T is pestilent still.”

Harems and wine-shops only give him a new ground of observation, whence to draw sometimes a deeper moral than regulated sober life affords, and this is foreseen:—

> “ “I will be drunk and down with wine;
> Treasures we find in a ruined house.”

Riot, he thinks, can snatch from the deeply hidden lot the veil that covers it:—

> “ “To be wise the dull brain so earnestly throbs,
> Bring bands of wine for the stupid head.”
>
> “The Builder of heavenHath sundered the earth,So that no footway
> Leads out of it forth."
>
> “On turnpikes of wonderWine leads the mind forth,“Straight, sidewise, and upward,
> West, southward, and north."
>
> “Stands the vault adamantineUntil the Doomsday;
> The wine-cup shall ferryThee o'er it away.”

That hardihood and self-equality of every sound nature, which result from the feeling that the spirit in him is entire and as good as the world, which entitle the poet to speak with authority, and make him an object of interest and his every phrase and syllable significant, are in Hafiz, and abundantly fortify and ennoble his tone.

His was the fluent mind in which every thought and feeling came readily to the lips. “Loose the knots of the heart,” he says. We absorb elements enough, but have not leaves and lungs for healthy perspiration and growth. An air of sterility, of incompetence to their proper aims, belongs to many who have both experience and wisdom. But a large utterance, a river that makes its own shores, quick perception and corresponding expression, a constitution to which every morrow is a new day, which is equal to the needs of life, at once tender and bold, with great arteries,—this generosity of ebb and flow satisfies, and we should be willing to die when our time comes, having had our swing and gratification. The difference is not so much in the quality of men's thoughts as in the power of uttering them. What is pent and smouldered in the dumb actor, is not pent in the poet, but passes over into new form, at

once relief and creation.

The other merit of Hafiz is his intellectual liberty, which is a certificate of profound thought. We accept the religions and politics into which we fall, and it is only a few delicate spirits who are sufficient to see that the whole web of convention is the imbecility of those whom it entangles,—that the mind suffers no religion and no empire but its own. It indicates this respect to absolute truth by the use it makes of the symbols that are most stable and reverend, and therefore is always provoking the accusation of irreligion.

Hypocrisy is the perpetual butt of his arrows:

> “Let us draw the cowl through the brook of wine.”

He tells his mistress that not the dervish, or the monk, but the lover, has in his heart the spirit which makes the ascetic and the saint; and certainly not their cowls and mummeries but her glances can impart to him the fire and virtue needful for such self-denial. Wrong shall not be wrong to Hafiz for the name's sake. A law or statute is to him what a fence is to a nimble school-boy,—a temptation for a jump. “We would do nothing but good, else would shame come to us on the day when the soul must hie hence; and should they then deny us Paradise, the Houris themselves would forsake that and come out to us.”

His complete intellectual emancipation he communicates to the reader. There is no example of such facility of allusion, such use of all materials. Nothing is too high, nothing too low for his occasion. He fears nothing, he stops for nothing. Love is a leveller, and Allah becomes a groom, and heaven a closet, in his daring hymns to his mistress or to his cupbearer. This boundless charter is the right of genius.

We do not wish to strew sugar on bottled spiders, or try to make mystical divinity out of the Song of Solomon, much less out of the erotic and bacchanalian songs of Hafiz. Hafiz himself is determined to defy all such hypocritical interpretation, and tears off his turban and throws it at the head of the meddling dervish, and throws his glass after the turban. But the love or the wine of Hafiz is not to be confounded with vulgar debauch. It is the spirit in which the song is written that imports, and not the topics. Hafiz praises wine, roses, maidens, boys, birds, mornings, and music, to give vent to his immense hilarity and sympathy with every form of beauty and joy; and lays the emphasis on these to mark his scorn of sanctimony and base prudence. These are the natural topics and language of his wit and perception. But it is the play of wit and the joy of song that he loves; and if you mistake him for a low rioter, he turns short on you with verses which express the poverty of sensual joys, and to ejaculate with equal fire the most unpalatable affirmations of heroic sentiment and contempt for the world. Sometimes it is a glance from the height of thought, as thus:—

“Bring wine; for in the audience-hall of the soul's independence, what is sentinel or Sultan? what is the wise man or the intoxicated?”

And sometimes his feast, feasters, and world are only one pebble more in the eternal vortex and revolution of Fate:—

> “I am: what I am
> My dust will be again.”

A saint might lend an ear to the riotous fun of Falstaff; for it is not created to excite the animal appetites, but to vent the joy of a supernal intelligence. In all poetry, Pindar's rule holds,—????????? ?????, it speaks to the intelligent; and Hafiz is a poet for poets, whether he write, as sometimes, with a parrot's, or, as at other times, with an eagle's quill.

Every song of Hafiz affords new proof of the unimportance of your subject to success, provided only the treatment be cordial. In general what is more tedious than dedications or panegyrics addressed to grandees? Yet in the “Divan” you would not skip them, since his muse seldom supports him better:

> “What lovelier forms things wear,
> Now that the Shah comes back!”

And again:—

> “Thy foes to hunt, thy enviers to strike down,
> Poises Arcturus aloft morning and evening his spear.”

It is told of Hafiz, that, when he had written a compliment to a handsome youth,—

> “Take my heart in thy hand, O beautiful boy of Shiraz!
> I would give for the mole on thy cheek Samarcand and Bu-chara!”—

the verses came to the ears of Timour in his palace. Timour taxed Hafiz with treating disrespectfully his two cities, to raise and adorn which he had conquered nations. Hafiz replied, “Alas, my lord, if I had not been so prodigal, I had not been so poor!”

The Persians had a mode of establishing copyright the most secure of any contrivance with which we are acquainted. The law of the *ghaselle*, or shorter ode, requires that the poet insert his name in the last stanza. Almost every one of several hundreds of poems of Hafiz contains his name thus interwoven more or less closely with the subject of the piece. It is itself a test of skill, as this self-naming is not quite easy. We remember but two or three examples in English poetry: that of Chaucer, in the “House of Fame;” Jonson's epitaph on his son,—

> “Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry;”

and Cowley's,—

> “The melancholy Cowley lay.”

But it is easy to Hafiz. It gives him the opportunity of the most playful self-assertion, always gracefully, sometimes almost in the fun of Falstaff, sometimes with feminine delicacy. He tells us, “The angels in heaven were lately learning his last pieces.” He says, “The fishes shed their pearls, out of desire and longing as soon as the ship of Hafiz swims the deep.”

> “Out of the East, and out of the West, no man understands me;
> O, the happier I, who confide to none but the wind!
> This morning heard I how the lyre of the stars resounded,
> ‘Sweeter tones have we heard from Hafiz!’”

Again,—

> “I heard the harp of the planet Venus, and it said in the early morning, ‘I am the disciple of the sweet voiced Hafiz!’”

And again,—

> “When Hafiz sings, the angels hearken, and Anaitis, the leader of the starry host, calls even the Messiah in heaven out to the dance.”
> “No one has unvailed thoughts like Hafiz, since the locks of the World-bride were first curled.”
> “Only he despises the verse of Hafiz who is not himself by nature noble.”

But we must try to give some of these poetic flourishes the metrical form which they seem to require:—

> “Fit for the Pleiads' azure chord
> The songs I sung, the pearls I bored.”

Another:—

> “I have no hoarded treasure,
> Yet have I rich content;
> The first from Allah to the Shah,
> The last to Hafiz went.”

Another:—

> “High heart, O Hafiz! though not thine
> Fine gold and silver ore;
> More worth to thee the gift of song,
> And the clear insight more.”

Again:—

> “O Hafiz! speak not of thy need;
> Are not these verses thine?
> Then all the poets are agreed,
> No man can less repine.”

He asserts his dignity as bard and inspired man of his people. To the vizier returning from Mecca he says,—

> “Boast not rashly, prince of pilgrims, of thy fortune. Thou hast indeed seen the temple; but I, the Lord of the temple. Nor has any man inhaled from the musk-bladder of the merchant or from the musky morning-wind that sweet air which I am permitted to breathe every hour of the day.”

And with still more vigor in the following lines:—

> “Oft have I said, I say it once more,
> I, a wanderer, do not stray from myself.
> I am a kind of parrot; the mirror is holden to me;
> What the Eternal says, I stammering say again.
> Give me what you will; I eat thistles as roses,
> And according to my food I grow and I give.
> Scorn me not, but know I have the pearl,
> And am only seeking one to receive it.”

And his claim has been admitted from the first. The muleteers and camel-drivers, on their way through the desert, sing snatches of his songs, not so much for the thought as for their joyful temper and tone; and the cultivated Persians know his poems by heart. Yet Hafiz does not appear to have set any great value on his songs, since his scholars collected them for the first time after his death.

In the following poem the soul is figured as the Phœnix alighting on Tuba, the Tree of Life:—

> “My phœnix long ago secured
> His nest in the sky-vault's cope;
> In the body's cage immured,
> He was weary of life's hope.
>
> “Round and round this heap of ashes
> Now flies the bird amain,
> But in that odorous niche of heaven
> Nestles the bird again.
>
> “Once flies he upward, he will perch
> On Tuba's golden bough;
> His home is on that fruited arch
> Which cools the blest below.
>
> “If over this world of ours
> His wings my phœnix spread,
> How gracious falls on land and sea
> The soul-refreshing shade!
>
> “Either world inhabits he,
> Sees oft below him planets roll;
> His body is all of air compact,
> Of Allah's love his soul.”

Here is an ode which is said to be a favorite with all educated Persians:—

> “Come!—the palace of heaven rests on aery pillars,—
> Come, and bring me wine; our days are wind.
> I declare myself the slave of that masculine soul
> Which ties and alliance on earth once forever renounces.
> Told I thee yester-morn how the Iris of heaven
> Brought to me in my cup a gospel of joy?
> O high-flying falcon! the Tree of Life is thy perch;
> This nook of grief fits thee ill for a nest.
> Hearken! they call to thee down from the ramparts of heaven;
> I cannot divine what holds thee here in a net.
> I, too, have a counsel for thee; O, mark it and keep it,
> Since I received the same from the Master above:
> Seek not for faith or for truth in a world of light-minded girls;
> A thousand suitors reckons this dangerous bride.
> Cumber thee not for the world, and this my precept forget not,
> 'Tis but a toy that a vagabond sweetheart has left us.
> Accept whatever befalls; uncover thy brow from thy locks;
> Never to me nor to thee was option imparted;
> Neither endurance nor truth belongs to the laugh of the rose.
> The loving nightingale mourns;—cause enow for mourning;—
> Why envies the bird the streaming verses of Hafiz?
> Know that a god bestowed on him eloquent speech.”

The cedar, the cypress, the palm, the olive and fig-tree, the birds that inhabit them, and the garden flowers, are never wanting in these musky verses, and are always named with effect. “The willows,” he says, “bow themselves to every wind out of shame for their unfruitfulness.” We may open anywhere on a floral catalogue.

> “By breath of beds of roses drawn,
> I found the grove in the morning pure,
> In the concert of the nightingales
> My drunken brain to cure.
>
> “With unrelated glance
> I looked the rose in the eye:
> The rose in the hour of gloaming
> Flamed like a lamp hard-by
>
> “She was of her beauty proud,
> And prouder of her youth,
> The while unto her flaming heart
> The bulbul gave his truth.

> “The sweet narcissus closed
> Its eye, with passion pressed;
> The tulips out of envy burned
> Moles in their scarlet breast.
>
> “The lilies white prolonged
> Their sworded tongue to the smell;
> The clustering anemones
> Their pretty secrets tell.'

Presently we have,—

> “All day the rain
> Bathed the dark hyacinths in vain,
> The flood may pour from morn till night
> Nor wash the pretty Indians white.”

And so onward, through many a page.

This picture of the first days of Spring, from Enweri, seems to belong to Hafiz:—

> “O'er the garden water goes the wind alone
> To rasp and to polish the cheek of the wave;
> The fire is quenched on the dear hearthstone,
> But it burns again on the tulips brave.”

Friendship is a favorite topic of the Eastern poets, and they have matched on this head the absoluteness of Montaigne.

Hafiz says,—

> “Thou learnest no secret until thou knowest friendship, since to the unsound no heavenly knowledge enters.”

Ibn Jemin writes thus:—

> “Whilst I disdain the populace,
> I find no peer in higher place.
> Friend is a word of royal tone,
> Friend is a poem all alone.
> Wisdom is like the elephant,
> Lofty and rare inhabitant:
> He dwells in deserts or in courts;
> With hucksters he has no resorts.”

Jami says,—

> “ “A friend is he, who, hunted as a foe,
> So much the kindlier shows him than before;
> Throw stones at him, or ruder javelins throw,
> He builds with stone and steel a firmer floor.”

Of the amatory poetry of Hafiz we must be very sparing in our citations, though it forms the staple of the “Divan.” He has run through the whole gamut of passion,—from the sacred to the borders, and over the borders, of the profane. The same confusion of high and low, the celerity of flight and allusion which our colder muses forbid, is habitual to him. From the plain text,—

> “ “The chemist of love
> Will this perishing mould,
> Were it made out of mire,
> Transmute into gold,”—

he proceeds to the celebration of his passion; and nothing in his religious or in his scientific traditions is too sacred or too remote to afford a token of his mistress. The Moon thought she knew her own orbit well enough; but when she saw the curve on Zuleika's cheek, she was at a loss:—

> “ “And since round lines are drawn
> My darling's lips about,
> The very Moon looks puzzled on,
> And hesitates in doubt
> If the sweet curve that rounds thy mouth
> Be not her true way to the South.”

His ingenuity never sleeps:—

> “Ah, could I hide me in my song,
> To kiss thy lips from which it flows!”

and plays in a thousand pretty courtesies:—

> “ “Fair fall thy soft heart!
> A good work wilt thou do?
> O, pray for the dead
> Whom thine eyelashes slew!”

And what a nest has he found for his bonny bird, to take up her abode in!—

> “ “They strew in the path of kings and czars
> Jewels and gems of price:
> But for thy head I will pluck down stars,
> And pave thy way with eyes.
>
> “I have sought for thee a costlier dome
> Than Mahmoud's palace high,
> And thou, returning, find thy home
> In the apple of Love's eye.”

Then we have all degrees of passionate abandonment:—

> “ “I know this perilous love-lane
> No whither the traveller leads,
> Yet my fancy the sweet scent of
> Thy tangled tresses feeds.

> “ “In the midnight of thy locks,
> I renounce the day;
> In the ring of thy rose-lips,
> My heart forgets to pray.”

And sometimes his love rises to a religious sentiment:—

> “Plunge in you angry waves,
> Renouncing doubt and care;
> The flowing of the seven broad seas
> Shall never wet thy hair.
>
> “Is Allah's face on thee
> Bending with love benign,
> And thou not less on Allah's eye
> O fairest! turnest thine.”

We add to these fragments of Hafiz a few specimens from other poets.

NISAMI

> “While roses bloomed along the plain,
> The nightingale to the falcon said,
> ‘Why, of all birds, must thou be dumb?
> With closed mouth thou utterest,
> Though dying, no last word to man.
> Yet sitt'st thou on the hand of princes,
> And feedest on the grouse's breast,
> Whilst I, who hundred thousand jewels
> Squander in a single tone,
> Lo! I feed myself with worms,
> And my dwelling is the thorn.'—
> The falcon answered, ‘Be all ear:
> I, experienced in affairs,
> See fifty things, say never one;
> But thee the people prizes not,
> Who, doing nothing, say'st a thousand.
> To me, appointed to the chase,
> The king's hand gives the grouse's breast;
> Whilst a chatterer like thee
> Must gnaw worms in the thorn. Farewell!’”

The following passages exhibit the strong tendency of the Persian poets to contemplative and religious poetry and to allegory.

ENWERI
Body and Soul

>

> “A painter in China once painted a hall;—
> Such a web never hung on an emperor's wall;—
> One half from his brush with rich colors did run,
> The other he touched with a beam of the sun,
> So that all which delighted the eye in one side,
> The same, point for point, in the other replied.
> In thee, friend, that Tyrian chamber is found;
> Thine the star-pointing-roof, and the base on the ground:
> Is one half depicted with colors less bright?
> Beware that the counterpart blazes with light!”

IBN JEMIN

> “I read on the porch of a palace bold
> In a purple tablet letters cast,—
> ‘A house though a million winters old,
> A house of earth comes down at last;
> Then quarry thy stones from the crystal All,
> And build the dome that shall not fall.”’
>
> “What need,” cries the mystic Feisi, “of palaces and tapestry? What need even of a bed?
> “The eternal Watcher, who doth wake
> All night in the body's earthen chest,
> Will of thine arms a pillow make,
> And a bolster of thy breast.”

Ferideddin Attar wrote the “Bird Conversations,” a mystical tale, in which the birds, coming together to choose their king, resolve on a pilgrimage to Mount Kaf, to pay their homage to the Simorg. From this poem, written five hundred years ago, we cite the following passage, as a proof of the identity of mysticism in all periods. The tone is quite modern. In the fable, the birds were soon weary of the length and difficulties of the way, and at last almost all gave out. Three only persevered, and arrived before the throne of the Simorg.

> “The bird-soul was ashamed;
> Their body was quite annihilated;
> They had cleaned themselves from the dust,
> And were by the light ensouled.
> What was, and was not,—the Past,—
> Was wiped out from their breast.
> The sun from near-by beamed
> Clearest light into their soul;
> The resplendence of the Simorg beamed

As one back from all three.
They knew not, amazed, if they
Were either this or that.
They saw themselves all as Simorg,
Themselves in the eternal Simorg.
When to the Simorg up they looked,
They beheld him among themselves;
And when they looked on each other,
They saw themselves in the Simorg.
A single look grouped the two parties,
The Simorg emerged, the Simorg vanished,
This in that and that in this,
As the world has never heard.
So remained they, sunk in wonder,
Thoughtless in deepest thinking,
And quite unconscious of themselves.
Speechless prayed they to the Highest
To open this secret,
And to unlock *Thou* and *We*.
There came an answer without tongue.—
'The Highest is a sun-mirror;
Who comes to Him sees himself therein,
Sees body and soul, and soul and body;
When you came to the Simorg,
Three therein appeared to you,
And, had fifty of you come,
So had you seen yourselves as many.
Him has none of us yet seen.
Ants see not the Pleiades.
Can the gnat grasp with his teeth
The body of the elephant?
What you see is He not;
What you hear is He not.
The valleys which you traverse,
The actions which you perform,
They lie under our treatment
And among our properties.
You as three birds are amazed,
Impatient, heartless, confused:
Far over you am I raised,
Since I am in act Simorg.
Ye blot out my highest being,
That ye may find yourselves on my throne;
Forever ye blot out yourselves,
As shadows in the sun. Farewell!'"

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