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978-1-108-05578-9 - The Works of Sir William Jones: Volume 10

Edited by Lord Teignmouth

Excerpt

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THE
MOALLAKAT,
OR
SEVEN ARABIAN POEMS,
WHICH WERE SUSPENDED ON
THE TEMPLE AT MECCA;
WITH
A TRANSLATION AND ARGUMENTS.

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THE Discourse will comprise observations on the antiquity of the *Arabian* language and letters; on the dialects and characters of *Himyar* and *Koraish*, with accounts of some *Himyarick* poets; on the manners of the *Arabs* in the age immediately preceding that of *Mahomed*; on the temple at *Mecca*, and the *Moállakát*, or pieces of poetry *suspended* on its walls or gate; lastly, on the lives of the *Seven Poets*, with a critical history of their works, and the various copies or editions of them preserved in *Europe*, *Asia*, and *Africa*.

The Notes will contain authorities and reasons for the translation of controverted passages; will elucidate all the obscure couplets, and exhibit or propose amendments of the text; will direct the reader's attention to particular beauties, or point out remarkable defects; and will throw light on the images, figures, and allusions of the *Arabian* poets, by citations either from writers of their own country, or from

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such of our *European* travellers as best illustrate the ideas and customs of eastern nations. But the *Discourse* and *Notes* are ornamental only, not essential to the work; and, by sending it abroad in its present form, the translator may reap no small advantage, if the learned here or on the Continent will favour him in the course of the summer with their strictures and annotations, and will transmit them for that purpose to the publisher. It is hoped, that the war will raise no obstacle to this intercourse with the scholars of *Leyden*, *Paris*, and *Madrid*; for men of letters, as such, ought, in all places and at all times, to carry *flags of truce*.

A. D. 1783.

NOTE.

The *Genealogical Table* must be placed immediately before a translation, and the page in *Arabick*, before the originals: the second plate contains the 32d, 33d, and 34th verses of *Amriolkas*, with the comment of *Tabrizi*.

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THE
P O E M
OF
A M R I O L K A I S.

THE ARGUMENT.

THE poet, after the manner of his countrymen, supposes himself attended on a journey by a company of friends; and, as they pass near a place, where his mistress had lately dwelled, but from which her tribe was then removed, *he desires them to stop awhile*, that he might indulge the painful pleasure of weeping over the deserted remains of her tent. They comply with his request, but exhort him to show more strength of mind, and urge two topicks of consolation; namely, *that he had before been equally unhappy*, and *that he had enjoyed his full share of pleasures*: thus by the recollection of his passed delight his imagination is kindled, and his grief suspended.

He then gives his friends a lively account of his juvenile frolicks, to one of which they had alluded. It seems, he had been in love with a girl named *Onaiza*, and had in vain sought an occasion to declare his passion: one day, when her tribe had struck their tents, and were changing their station, the women, as usual, came behind the rest, with the servants and baggage, in carriages fixed on the backs of camels. *Amriolkais* advanced slowly at a distance, and,

when the men were out of sight, had the pleasure of seeing *Onaiza* retire with a party of damsels to a rivulet or pool, called *Daratjuljul*, where they undressed themselves, and were bathing, when the lover appeared, dismounted from his camel, and sat upon their clothes, proclaiming aloud, that *whoever would redeem her dress, must present herself naked before him*.

They adjured, entreated, expostulated ; but, when it grew late, they found themselves obliged to submit, and all of them recovered their clothes except *Onaiza*, who renewed her adjurations, and continued a long time in the water : at length she also performed the condition, and dressed herself. Some hours had passed, when the girls complained of cold and hunger : *Am-rialkais* therefore instantly *killed the young camel on which he had ridden*, and, having called the female attendants together, made a fire and roasted him. The afternoon was spent in gay conversation, not without a cheerful cup, for he was provided with wine in a leathern bottle ; but, when it was time to follow the tribe, the prince (for such was his rank) had neither camel nor horse ; and *Onaiza*, after much importunity, consented to take him *on her camel before the carriage*, while the other damsels divided among themselves the less agreeable burden of his arms, and the furniture of his beast.

He next relates his courtship of *Fathima*, and his more dangerous amour with a girl of a tribe at

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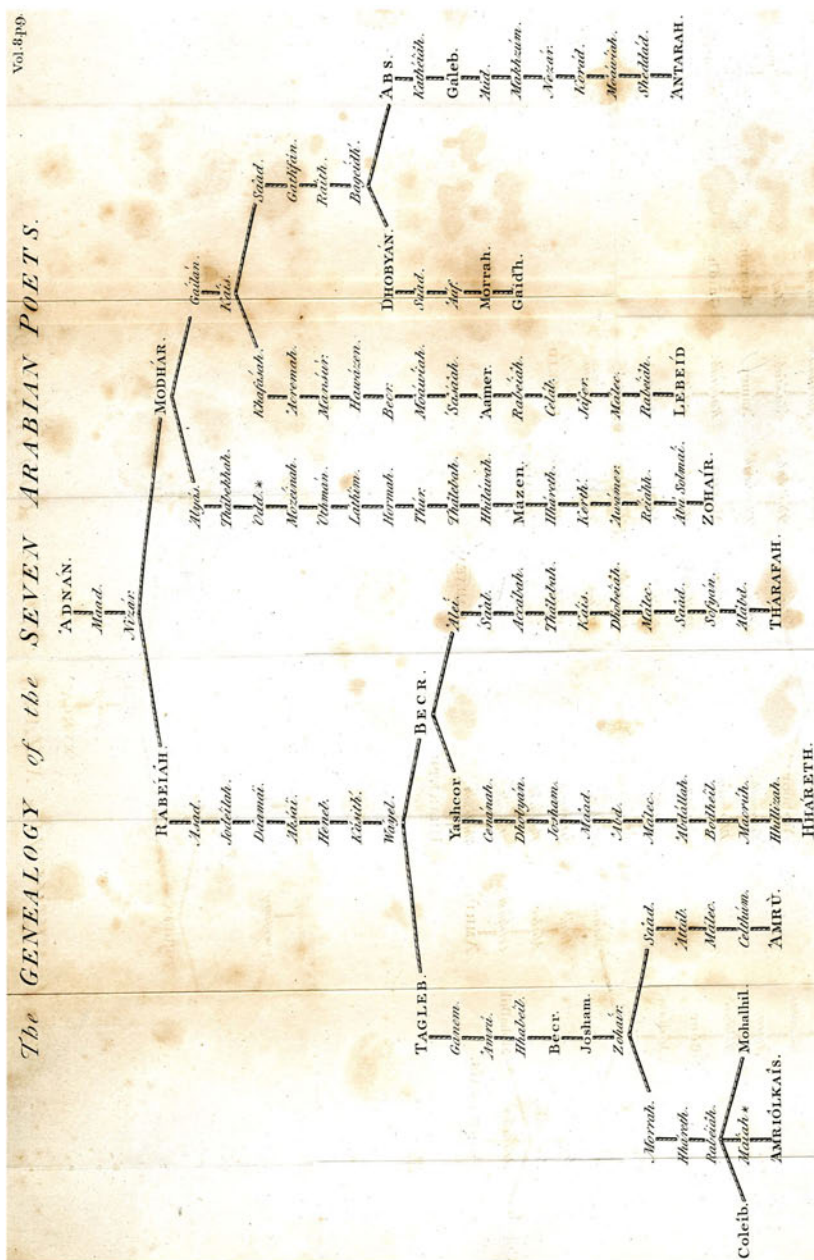
war with his own, *whose beauties he very minutely and luxuriantly delineates*. From these love-tales he proceeds to the commendation of his own fortitude, when he was passing a desert in the darkest night; and the mention of the morning, which succeeded, leads him to *a long description of his hunter, and of a chase in the forest*, followed by a feast on the game, which had been pierced by his javelins.

Here his narrative seems to be interrupted by *a storm of lightning and violent rain*: he nobly describes the shower and the torrent, which it produced down all the adjacent mountains, and, his companions retiring to avoid the storm, the drama (for the poem has the form of a dramatick pastoral) ends abruptly.

The metre is of the *first* species, called *long verse*, and consists of the *bacchius*, or *amphibrachys*, followed by the first *epitrite*; or, in the *fourth* and *eighth* places, of the distich, by the *double iambus*, the last syllable being considered as a long one: the regular form, taken from the second chapter of *Commentaries on Asiatick Poetry*, is this;

“ Amator | puellarum | miser sæ | pe fallitur

“ Ocellis | nigris, labris | odoris, | nigris comis.



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