

# THE BRIDE'S MIRROR

IN THE NAME OF GOD THE COMPASSIONATE THE MERCIFUL

## PREFACE

THANKSGIVING to the bountiful Lord by the widest range of my eloquence could never be rendered. To essay the requital of His lovingkindness and a thousand times ten thousand benefits—

'Little mouth, big words!'

Eulogy of our master the Prophet by all the strength of my feeble will could never be expressed. To pretend to any recompense for his tenderesses and fervencies of heart—

'*This mite of a creature, a yard of tongue!*'

After praise (of the Most High) and commemoration (of His apostle), be it known that :

Although it is not the custom in this land to teach reading and writing to the secluded sex, still, in the big cities there are a few good families of which the women, as a rule, do keep up the practice of reading among themselves the translation of the glorious Qur-án and the vernacular treatises on the precepts and doctrines of religion. Of such a family, belonging to Dehli, I thank God that I am a member.

In accordance with the family custom, my daughters also were taught by the elder ladies of the house to read such small vernacular tracts as 'The Holy Qur-án and its Teaching,' 'A Letter on the Last Day,' 'The Way of Salvation,' etc. It was a house

in which reading and writing formed a constant topic of conversation at all times. I noticed that even my little daughters, taking their cue from us men, had quite a longing of their own for the acquisition of knowledge. At the same time, however, I became convinced that purely religious subjects of study are not suited to the capacities of children, and that the literature to which my children's attention was restricted had the effect of depressing their spirits, of checking their natural instincts, and of blunting their intelligence.

I then tried to find some kind of book—well stored, of course, with moral instruction, and which should improve their ideas and correct their habits in respect of those affairs which a woman encounters in her daily life, and in which, by reason of their romantic notions, or through ignorance or perversity, so many women are overtaken by disaster and sorrow, and yet which should be in a form sufficiently attractive to prevent their being discouraged or dismayed by its perusal. But though I searched and searched for such a book through a whole library of volumes, not a trace of one could I find.

It was then that I formed the design of the present tale. The story of Akbari was put into shape three years ago, when I was at Jhansi. My daughters made it their daily task to read it, and they began pestering me every day to complete the book, until, a year and a half later, the story of Asghari also was written.<sup>1</sup> By degrees the book came to be talked of in the mohulla. A few women came in to listen when it was being read, and all who listened were charmed with it. The manuscript was borrowed for perusal in some great houses. Applications were made for permission to take copies of it. In the meanwhile, my eldest daughter's marriage took place. I included the manuscript in her dower, as a jewel of great price, and it achieved no less a reputation in her new home.

Having satisfied myself that the book was really very useful for women, and that they took the greatest interest in reading it or hearing it read, I then submitted it, through the Director of

<sup>1</sup> Apparently the first instalment of the book concluded with what is Chapter VII. in the translation.

Public Instruction, North-West Provinces, to the Government of the Provinces. The generous appreciation of the Government has raised my own estimation, as well as the value of the book, more than I dare to express. My wishes have been realized, and my labour rewarded to my heart's content.

Besides the time originally spent in the composition of this work, I have devoted many hours to its revision, in my desire to attain simplicity of diction, as well as purity of sentiment, and to prevent the intrusion into any passage of what is far-fetched or unnatural. Since the book is of a character entirely new, it is not unlikely that some blemishes may still have been overlooked. These I beg my readers to excuse, on the ground that this is absolutely the first original work *of its kind* in the language.

The servant of God,

NAZIR AHMAD.

*(May God dispose him to make provision for the morrow !)*