

ARTICLE II.

THE HIMYARITIC LANGUAGE.

FORSTER'S PRETENDED DISCOVERY OF A KEY TO THE HIMYARITIC INSCRIPTIONS.

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ARAB historians and geographers inform us of an alphabetical character anciently in use in Yemen, which they call the Himyaritic, from the name of an ancient dynasty of southern Arabia. The first European who sought to verify this information by the discovery of existing monuments, was Carsten Niebuhr. His inquiries, however, though not altogether fruitless, brought no inscription to light. Forty years later, about the year 1810, Seetzen, following a hint of Niebuhr, had the good fortune to discover several inscriptions. But he made no attempt to decipher them, and the copies of some of them which he published in the *Fundgruben des Orients*, remained an unexplored mine.¹ About a quarter of a century after this, in the year 1834, the number of discovered inscriptions was greatly increased by researches, in connection with the coast-survey of the British along the southern shores of the Arabian peninsula; and the attention of some of the most distinguished philologists of Germany began to be directed to finding a key to the unknown character, which was now regarded as undoubtedly the Himyaritic of the Arab authors. In 1837 Roediger of Halle published some observations, preparatory to a deciphering of the inscriptions, in the *Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*.² Next appeared an essay by Gesenius in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* for July, 1841, which first gave results of deciphering, in certain readings. This was followed in the same year by a pamphlet from Roediger, entitled *Versuch über die Himjaritischen Schriftmonumente*; and in 1842 Roediger published a Himyaritic alphabet, with an *Excurs über die Himjaritischen Inschriften*, proposing interpretations of his own, as an appendix to a German translation of the travels of the first British discoverer of the inscriptions, Capt. Wellsted.³

¹ S. Fundgrub. d. Orients. II. 282. ² S. Z. für d. K. d. Morgenl. I. 333.

³ J. R. Wellsted's Reisen in Arabien. Deutsche Bearbeitung—von Dr. E. Rüdiger. Halle, 1842, 2 Bdd.

It is not our present design to discuss the merits of these German works. We propose to examine the ground taken by a British author, the Rev. Charles Forster, who has lately astonished his countrymen with an interpretation, quite original, of one of the longest inscriptions as yet found, which is not without plausibility, to a superficial observer, and has therefore deluded many, who either have not been competent, or have not taken the trouble, to investigate the matter. It forms the subject of an appendix to *The Historical Geography of Arabia* by the same author.⁴ The President of the Royal Geographical Society, Mr. Murchison, in his last annual address, speaks of "the discovery which Mr. Forster has made of the key to the unknown language in which the inscriptions found in Hadramaut and other parts of southern Arabia, are written," as a thing unquestionable; and a late number of the London Quarterly Review glories much in the privilege exclusively reserved, as it pretends, to British scholarship, to interpret these inscriptions, as well as to British enterprise to discover them. But if on examination, it appears, that Mr. Forster's claim to this discovery is unfounded, it will be allowed, that the sooner it is placed in its true light, and those are disabused who have been taken in by it, the better.⁵

The foundation of Mr. Forster's whole scheme is the supposition, that the inscription in question is identical with a certain fragment of Arabic poetry, published by Albert Schultens, from a Leyden-manuscript, in his *Monumenta Vetustiora Arabiæ*, which was found, as he says, "in Arabia Felice, super marmoribus arcium dirutarum in tractu littoris Hadramyteni propè emporium Aden."⁶ From this statement of Schultens Forster took the hint which he has so perseveringly followed out. It occurred to him that here might be an Arabic translation of a long inscription,

⁴ Published in London, 1844.

⁵ This critique was prepared and read before "The Philological Society," in New-Haven, in December, before it was known to the writer that Mr. Forster's attempt with the Himyaritic had been already exposed. It is proper to state the fact, because since that time an article, published in the Eclectic Magazine, from the Dublin University Magazine, has come to hand, which is in some points exceedingly similar to what is here written. The two criticisms have been made, however, entirely independently of one another, except that we have adopted a single suggestion of the Dublin reviewer, to be noticed in its place. We take this opportunity to commend to our reader the article in the Eclectic, which presents some views of Forster's pretensions, not here touched upon.

⁶ S. Monn. Vetust. Arabiæ ex manuscriptis codd. excerptis et ed. Alb. Schultens. Lugd. Batav. 1740, p. 67.

found by Wellsted engraved upon a rock on the coast of Yemen, which is called in the language of the country *حصن ضرب*, or *Raven-castle*, about 250 miles eastward of Aden; and he proceeded to confirm this conjecture, in the manner which is to be considered. Having verified it to his own satisfaction, and made out his Himyaritic alphabet, accordingly, Mr. Forster was led to seek additional support to his hypothesis, from a comparison of Wellsted's account of the locality of the Hissn Ghuráb inscription with the circumstances of place detailed in a narrative which accompanies the Arabic lines, in the manuscript from which Schulstern published them.

We will therefore begin by inquiring whether the localities indicated in these two narratives are coincident with each other. Not having the English edition of Wellsted's Travels, at hand, we translate from the German of Roediger, as follows: "On the morning of the 6th of May, 1834, we anchored in a little narrow channel, bordered on one side by a small low island of rock, on the other by a high black cliff, to which last our sailors gave the name of Hissn Ghuráb. As we had observed some ruins at the top of this cliff, I went soon after we came to land, to explore them. In order to avoid the current which set along the islands, and made violent breakers against the perpendicular side of the cliff, towards the sea, we sailed into a small bay on the north-east side, where the water was more quiet. Hissn Ghuráb is about 500 feet high; It must have been formerly an island, although it is now connected with the mainland by a low isthmus of sand, which has been blown together by the strong south-west winds, and is evidently of later formation. We clambered, therefore, over the ruins which had fallen from these towers and at length discovered traces of a path hewn, in order to facilitate the ascent, in zig-zag, along the face of the hill. Above, and below, the rock was cut down perpendicular, so that the latter formed a sort of terrace, upon which, however, even in the wider places, scarcely two men could go abreast. But our toil was richly rewarded by the discovery of some inscriptions on the smooth surface of the rock on our right, when we were about two-thirds of the way to the summit. The characters are $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and executed with much care and regularity. As we pursued our way from here, further towards the summit, we saw almost as many houses as below, walls and other defensive works at irregular distances, scattered over the flanks of the hill, and upon the edge

of the declivity a four-sided tower of massive construction, which once probably served both for a watch-tower and beacon, and can still be discerned many miles at sea. When I had explored all parts of the hill, I was forced to regard it as having been made both by nature and art, a place of extraordinary strength. While nature had left only one side of it accessible, this point had been so strongly fortified by art, that it must have been impossible for the most daring courage and the highest adroitness to scale it. But even apart from this advantage, . . . this place must have been invaluable on account of its natural insular character, since it formed a place of refuge difficult to be reached, and a safe store-house of commerce; and at all events, the two harbors, which are secure with any wind, must have been of much importance for commerce, especially as there is a deficiency of protected havens elsewhere on this coast. I will only, further, direct attention to the striking agreement of the position of these havens of Hissn Ghuráb, as it results from our measurement, with that of the haven of Cana Kanim (*Kanî*) which is, according to Arrian, 250 miles from Arabia Felix, or the present Aden."7 The narrative, in Arabic, of the Leyden manuscript is translated by Forster, thus: "And in that region are two castles, of the castles of Ad. And when Muawiyeh sent Abderrahman, the son of Al Hakem, into Yemen, as viceroy, he arrived, on the shore of Aden, (i. e. in a progress along the southern coast,) at two castles, of the castles of Ad. In that sea are treasures hidden and gold, for the space of a hundred parasangs (360 miles) along the shore of Aden, as far as to the neighborhood of Kesuin. He saw, also, the quality of the soil, whose saltness made the palms most fruitful. And he saw a castle built upon a rock, and two ports; and upon the ascent of the height, a great rock, partly washed away, on which was engraved a song." (Here follow in the Ms. the Arabic lines which Schultens published.)8 The corroboration of the theory proposed, to be derived from this passage, compared with Wellsted's narrative, is indicated in the following paragraph of Forster's work: "The first of the two castles, according to the official report of Abderrahman, was found seated upon the summit of a rocky headland, beneath which lay two ports; while the inscription was discovered on the steep ascent of the height between the castle and its harbors, carved upon the side of a great rain-worn rock. In every particular, this account tallies with Mr. Wellsted's description of the castle and inscriptions

7 S. Wellsted's *Reisen in Arabien*, II. 322—326.

8 S. *Histor. Geogr. of Arabia*, II. 450.

of Hissn Ghuráb—its “lofty black-looking cliff”—its “square tower, of massive masonry, on the verge of the precipice,”—“the circumstance of its possessing two harbors”—together with the discovery of some inscriptions, on the smooth face of the rock to the right (parts of which had been washed away by the rains) about one third the ascent from the top:” a group of corresponding features, which could thus be brought together by two so wholly unconnected painters of the same localities, only from their belonging to one and the same scene.”⁹

But the reader will be surprised to learn, that the coincidences here pointed out with so much confidence rest upon a mistranslation of the manuscript referred to. That this may be clearly seen, we will give what we suppose to be the correct translation which we are confident in saying, does not admit of a question, as to all the important points; and, in order that others may judge for themselves, and that the manner in which Forster has dealt with the passage, may be better understood, we will also introduce the original Arabic which, happily for us, though unfortunately for him, he has published. We read then: “And in it (i. e. Yemen) are the two castles of the castles of Ad; and after that Muawiyeh had sent Abdurrahman Ibn Al Hakem to Yemen as viceroy, it reached his ears (i. e. of the viceroy) that on the coast of Aden were two castles of the castles of Ad, and that in its sea was treasure; and he coveted it, and went, with a train of one hundred horsemen, to the coast of Aden, to the vicinity of the two castles; and he saw the country around consisting of tracts of salt-marsh in which were pits such as one digs to hide treasure in; and he saw a castle built of blocks of stone, and (plaster?), and over one of its gates was a great block upon which was written in characters half obliterated, as follows.” The original is:

وبها القصران من قصور عاد ولما بعث معاوية عبد الرحمن
بن الحكم الى اليمن وليا بلغة ان بساحل عدن قصران من
قصور عاد وان في بحرهما كنزا فطمع فيه وذهب في مائة
فارس الى ساحل عدن الى قرب القصرين فرأى ما حولها
من الارض سباخا بها ابار الابار ورأى قصرا مبنا بالصخر
والكلكين وعلى بعض انوابه صخرة عظيمة ينصا مكتوب
عليها — شعر.

⁹ B. Histor. Geogr. of Arabia, II. 453.

Such is the exact reading of the manuscript. Some corrections are indeed absolutely necessary, where the hand of a careless copyist is betrayed. No one at all conversant with the Arabic will hesitate to read, in the second line, بلغه for بلغه, and in the fifth line ابوابه for ابوابه, and عظيمة for عظيمة.¹⁰ The correction الكلس = *calx*, for الكلين in the fourth line may be questioned. These are the only alterations involved in our translation. We observe, then, with reference to the pretended coincidence with Wellsted's narrative: (1) That there is not the slightest allusion here to "a rocky headland," or even to the castle's being situated upon a rock. Mr. Forster has mistaken بالصخر which informs us of what the castle was built, for an indication of its position; (2) That nothing is said about "two ports." Forster reads, instead of الكلاء, الكلاان, الكلين, which means *navium statio*. Gol. The oblique case الكلايين must, however, in his view, be the proper reading; yet this is not the only change required, to justify Forster's translation. The article must be cut off, for قصرًا with which he couples the word rendered "two ports" is indefinite, and there has been no intimation of any two ports in what goes before. Indeed, Forster's rendering: "a castle and two ports," instead of: "a castle and *the* two ports," neglects the article. But if we connect the word الكلين with الصخر, it should have the article, as it must then indicate something of the material of which the castle was built; and we may suppose the reading الكلين to have originated, by a very easy slip of the pen, from الكلس, signifying *lime*, as is suggested by the reviewer of Forster in the *Dublin University Magazine*. To this is to be added, that the structure of the sentence seems, most naturally, to connect الكلين, والصخر rather than with قصرًا.

(3) That the clause "for the space of a hundred parasangs"

¹⁰ Mr. Dozy, assistant librarian of the Leyden University who transcribed for Mr. Forster this text with its accompanying Arabic stanzas, and some other passages, from the Ms. 512: كتاب آثار البلاد etc. says: "I have transcribed all the vowels and diacritical points, as they occur in the manuscript, though a great number of them are decidedly errors."

in Forster's version, designed, as we cannot avoid believing, to remove the difficulty of identifying a castle on the coast of Aden with Hissn Ghuráb which lies 250 miles distant from that port, is made out by a correction of the text, wholly supererogatory, and bringing with it the application of a wrong sense to a common Arabic participle. The word فارس is altered to فراسخ and في is rendered: "for the space of;" a signification not admissible.¹¹ (4) That the inscription spoken of in the Arabic manuscript was not found upon the face of a rock, on the ascent of an eminence, but on one of the gates of a ruined castle. If انوابه were a correct reading, the words على بعض انوابه could not signify "upon the ascent of the height." (5) That the inscription of Hissn Ghuráb is described by Wellsted as in very good preservation; while the characters of which the Arab author speaks, are said to have been "partly obliterated." Forster refers صخرة عظيمة ينضا which is nothing less than a tyro's blunder, and so finds allusion here to "a rain-worn rock," whereas it is a writing—مكتوب,—which is represented as partly worn away.

From all this is to be inferred, not that the inscription found by Abdurrahman of which the Arabic lines published by Schultens purport to be either a copy, or a translation,—for which they claim to be, does not appear,—is the same which was discovered by Wellsted at Hissn Ghuráb, but directly the contrary, that the one cannot be identical with the other, so far as the circumstances of locality asserted by the two authorities afford any means of determining.

We will now proceed to notice the incongruities which exist between the two documents, considered by themselves. Here we have, first, to observe that, if we assume Forster's translation of the inscription to represent it correctly, it does not accord entirely with the true sense of its supposed Arabic translation. A correspondence is for the most part made to appear, as might be expected, since Forster sets out with this, as the point to be proved. For the satisfaction of the reader we give a literal version

¹¹ If the reader will turn to Hist. Geogr. of Arabia, II. 449, he will find that Forster admits having made this correction, and justifies it on the assumption that the word as it stands, فارس, is an "abridgement by the Persian copyist!"

of each stanza of the Arabic, alternately with the same in the pretended original, as rendered by our author :

HIMYARITIC.

"We dwelt living long luxuriously in the Zenanas of this spacious mansion, our condition exempt from misfortune and adversity."

ARABIC.

"Content we ourselves awhile in the court of this castle,
With a life luxurious, not straitened, not poor."

HIMY.

"Rolled in through our channel the sea, swelling against our castle with angry surge; our fountains flowed with murmuring fall above the lofty palms."

ARAB.

"The sea floods in upon us with full tide,
And our rivers flow with water abounding,"—

HIMY.

"Whose Keepers planted dry dates in our valley date-grounds; they sowed the arid rice."

ARAB.

—"Amid tall palm-trees, their keepers
Which bestrew with ripening dates and dry dates, for store."

HIMY.

"We hunted the mountain goats and the young hares, with gins and snares; beguiling we drew forth the fishes."

ARAB.

"And we chase the wild animal of the land with noose and spear,
And sometimes we catch the fish from the depths of the sea."

HIMY.

"We walked with slow proud gait, in needle-worked, many colored silk vestments, in whole silks, in grass-green chequered robes."

ARAB.

"And we parade now in flowing robes of striped silk,
And now of silk and green-dyed wool."

HIMY.

"Over us presided kings far removed from baseness, and stern chastisers of probrate and wicked men."

ARAB.

"Princes rule over us, who are far from baseness,
Stern towards the people of deceit and treachery."

HIMY.

"They noted down for us according to the doctrine of Heber good judgments written in a book, to be kept; and we proclaimed our belief in miracles, in the resurrection, in the return into the nostrils of the breath of life."

ARAB.

"There are enacted for us laws, after the religion of Hûd, And we believe in the miracles, and the general assembling for judgment and the resurrection of the dead."

HIMY.

"Made an inroad robbers, and would do us violence; collectively we rode forth, we and our generous youth, with stiff, sharp-pointed spears."

ARAB.

"Whenever enemies lie in ambush against our home,
Forth we rush to view, in a body, with smooth, straightened spears."

HIMY.

"Rushing onward proud champions of our families and our wives; fighting valiantly, upon coursers with long necks, dun-colored, iron-grey, and bright bay."

ARAB.

"We guard our children and our women,
Upon dun-colored steeds, steeds with black mane and tail, long-necked,
and steeds of clear red hue."

HIMY.

"With our swords still wounding and piercing our adversaries; until charging home we conquered and crushed this refuse of mankind."

ARAB.

"Those who assail us with hostile intent we wound
With our swords, till they turn the back."

But while with due allowance for freedom of translation, the two documents appear, in general, to harmonize together, it is also true, that in two places there is a diversity of sense which cannot be accounted for by the license of a translator. The first of these is in the first stanza, the expression of the Himyaritic: "in the *Zenanas*," (explained by Forster from the Persian, to mean "in the women's apartments,") having to answer to: "in the court," of the Arabic. The word rendered *court* is *عراصة* = "*locus spatiosus in medio habitaculorum*." (Gol.) The Arabic

line alludes evidently to the oriental custom of lounging idly in that part of the castle open to the air, where, as is well known, the coffee-drinking, dice-playing, and story-telling of eastern countries is carried on. Would a translator speak of this, with an original before him, referring to the enjoyment of the pleasures of the Harem? The plea, that the translator failed to understand his original, is inadmissible, because any two documents, the most dissimilar, might by this be proved to correspond to one another, as translation and original; and besides, it is certainly quite as likely that an Arab of the seventh century would know the proper signification of a Persian word, as that this word should have become incorporated into the ancient Himyaritic language. The other case in which the meaning given to the Himyaritic is not justly represented by the Arabic, is the whole of the third stanza. We leave it to the reader to compare for himself; yet it may be well to remark, that Mr. Forster seems to have had in view, here, a Latin version of the Arabic, made by Schultens, rather than the Arabic itself. That version reads: "conserebant (custodes) dactylos maturos et siccos, omne genus," which appears to us not the true signification of the Arabic, as published by Schultens himself, who gives here, the following text:

خلال نخيل باسقات نواطرها || نقت بالقسب المجزع والتمر

Our rendering is equally supported by the Arabic, altered for the sake of the metre, *tauti*, thus:

خلال نخيل باسقات تواطرها || تنقون بالقسب المجزع
والتمر

But let us come to the more important inquiry, whether Forster has dealt fairly in making out for the inscription a signification which agrees, to so great an extent, with the sense of the Arabic lines supposed to be a translation of it. It may be shown: I. That in many cases he has not properly rendered the word which he finds in the inscription, by his own deciphering; and II. That the characters of most frequent occurrence in the inscription are incorrectly deciphered.¹³

¹³ The metre of the Arabic lines, requires other modifications of the text given by Schultens, who has only partially corrected his Ms.; yet they are not such as affect the sense, as may be seen by comparing our translation with his.

¹⁴ The reader will please to turn to the accompanying Plate, which presents

I It is important in commencing under this head to observe, that Forster professes to find, that the inscription is written in "pure Arabic words,"¹⁴ — an expression which, if it means anything, signifies that the roots of these words have a signification in pure Arabic from which the meaning of the words themselves may be legitimately derived. (1) Forster makes out of ذل (line 1.) a word signifying "condition;" for no other reason than that اذلال means, as he truly says, *a state, a condition*. But how erroneous is this true statement, on account of its not expressing the whole truth! The root ذل signifies *to be abject, vile, humble*; and the word اذلال, which is a plural form, means "condition" only in a humiliating sense, as in the phrases: *دعه على اذلاله* — "*leave him to his meanness,*" and *اذلال الناس* — "*the dregs of mankind.*" (2) He makes مر (line 1.) to mean: "*exempt from misfortune.*" But the root مر signifies: *to be bitter*, as every one knows. We can understand how Forster might derive the signification: "*adverse,*" or "*unfortunate,*" but it is inexplicable how he could satisfy himself that "*exemption from misfortune*" is here signified. He supposes no negation. (3) He renders شصاصا (line 1.): "*exempt from adversity.*" This is an instance in which he has written out "*the particular form demanded by the sense*" in his view, for he says: "*in representing the Himyaritic by corresponding words of the Arabic, I have confined myself either to the Arabic roots, or to the particular form of the word demanded by the sense;*"¹⁵ and he himself refers شصاصا to the root شصص. Now شصاصا is a

a fac-simile of the inscription, together with Forster's interlinear Arabic deciphering, as given in his work:—and also the whole Himyaritic alphabet according to his view, in parallel columns with the alphabets of Gesenius and Reediger, and the ancient and modern Ethiopic characters, copied from their writings on the Himyaritic already named. Two words of Forster's Arabic deciphering have been altered in our Plate: ذبا (l. 4) and شرر for سرر (l. 8)—to correspond to what his glossary shows he intended. Some other differences between the Arabic words interlined with the inscription and those of his glossary, not being of any consequence to us, we have left as we found them.

¹⁴ B. Hist. Geogr. of Arabia, II. 349.

¹⁵ B. *ibid.*

substantive, signifying: "*penury*," connected, then, with ذل, as Forster makes it, the meaning should be "a condition of penury." The root شص signifies: *adversis, peculiariter inopid anno-nae angusta et afflicta fuit* (vita). (Gol.) (4) He renders سعي (line 5): "to walk," and, being connected with the expression: "with slow, proud gait," it must have been supposed to signify slow, rather than fast motion. But this root is more especially used to denote celerity of progress, and all its subordinate significations are shown in the lexicons to depend upon this, as the radical idea. (5) In his glossary he gives to أو (line 6.) the signification "*imo*." The word is not recognized in his translation. It is certain, that if this meaning is given to it, it would make an irreparable rent in the clause where it occurs; and the inference is not remote, that it was voluntarily left out. Restoring it to its place, we read: "Kings took note of us, averse, yea rather, to base men." Nothing goes before, in Forster's own version, which أو, in the sense of *imo*, can be supposed to confirm and augment; and we know of no rendering which would at once be consistent with the words as deciphered by him, and answer the purpose of an original to the Arabic line regarded as a translation.

Instead of multiplying specific examples of errors in the translation of the Arabic into which Forster resolves the inscription, it will be sufficient, in addition to the preceding enumeration, to mention briefly several classes of errors which are to be met with. (1) There are cases in which the given signification must be referred to the ground of the analogy of the Arabic root, on the supposition that one and the same radical idea has branched out variously in two different dialects. These are errors, on Forster's principles, since he evidently pretends that the radical idea of every word of the inscription is an idea expressed by its root, as found in pure Arabic, though he would say of some words, that their roots are out of use, or little used in the Arabic. (2) We find not a few instances where the construction adopted by Forster is wholly inadmissible, according to the genius of the Shemitish languages. It is supposed, that a word may be nothing more than a root, and yet convey different shades of meaning appropriate to forms of language,—as is proved by the fact, which is

apparent that in various instances in which he writes a root, merely, in his interlinear deciphering of the inscription, nothing more could be made out from the original character, and yet that he does not render as if the root were without formative letters. It follows from this, that he has not proceeded entirely on the principle, already quoted in his own words, of *confining* himself, in his deciphering, to the Arabic root, or the particular form of the word demanded by the sense.

From all that has been said thus far it is already apparent, that the probability is very slight of an identity between the Himyaritic inscription and the Arabic lines in question, as pretended by Forster; especially considering what it is but justice to ourselves to add, that we have not perceived, that Forster might have done better than he has, in any point which has come under our criticism, in seeking to establish his conjecture. We have now to show :

II. That Forster has incorrectly deciphered about half of the letters of this inscription. In proof of this, we will in the first place, suppose that his division of the words is correct, and take note of certain not very rare cases in which he has gratuitously added to the inscription radical letters, in the roots which he puts down as representing the Himyaritic; or has either altered, omitted or inverted radical letters occurring in the inscription, without the least show of reason, except his own choice to do so. Every case has been carefully passed by, where the radical letter, being supposed to be one of the weak class, (either و , or ي , or أ), may have been lost in the formation of the word, and yet be properly represented in giving the root; and no case of omission is to be regarded, in which the letter omitted may be set aside as a formative. We will also allow him all he can claim as "interchange, or indifferent use, of similar letters." As examples to the point, we notice :

(1) He has doubled the character H in the word IHSH (line 1.) to make the root شص . It cannot be that this word exemplifies the ancient mode of writing a consonant but once, although its pronunciation is double, for the principle of that orthography requires that the consonant to be doubly enunciated should come between two vowels; whereas in the form supposed to occur here, شصص , a long vowel intervenes, so that the character H , standing for ص , not to speak of its being a و in his alpha-

bet, should have been repeated in the inscription, if شص is the root. (2) He alters 𐩦, which he takes to be a م, in the word: 𐩦𐩨𐩣 (line 2.) to 𐩨, in order to make the root بز from which he derives this word, in the sense of "fountains." (3) He inverts the first two characters of the word: 𐩦𐩨𐩣 (line 4.) to make its root زب. We do not hesitate to affirm, without entering here into the subject, that Forster's notion of an anagram in the Arabic is entirely groundless. (4) He doubles the character 𐩦 which he makes to be a ب in the word: 𐩦𐩦 (line 4.) in order to obtain a root بب, though a vowel intervenes between the ب and its repetition, in the form supposed to occur in this place, ببب, as in example (1). It is also worthy of notice, that the second ب here, is considered as absorbed in a following 𐩦, after a long vowel. (5) He puts the final character first, and the initial last in the word: 𐩦𐩨 (line 5.) to obtain for its root, قر. (6) He alters the character 𐩦, which he supposes to be ح, to a 𐩦, in the word: 𐩦𐩦𐩦 (line 5.), so as to obtain the root وشى. (7) He omits the third character in the word: 𐩦𐩦𐩦𐩦 (line 6.) leaving three others out of which he makes the root سطر,—though he had no reason to regard the omitted character as a formative letter;—or else, on another view of the proceeding in this instance, he has omitted the first character, as a formative, which it might be allowed to be, and has then inverted the two characters next following. But this inversion would be inadmissible. (8) He leaves off the first character in the word: 𐩦𐩦𐩦 (line 6.) to make the root نطخ. (9) He doubles the character, which is a س in his alphabet, but is supposed to stand for a ص in the word 𐩦𐩦𐩦 (line 7.) under the same circumstances as in the examples (1) and (4) for the form which he finds here is قصص. (10) He adds after the characters 𐩦𐩦 (line 7.) a letter 𐩦, to make out the root شرك. We cannot, as he may have done, consider this to be a case of assimilation to a following letter خ, which rendered the presence of the

assimilated letter in the inscription unnecessary; for, when we examine Forster's identification of letters, it will appear that the letter which he here makes to be خ is not of the guttural, but of the dental class. (11) He passes over an inconvenient second ٧, which he calls a *resh*, in the word: 𐤀𐤏𐤏𐤏 (line 7.) to obtain the root شرى. The final radical also, here, can have been made out only on the supposition of assimilation to a following guttural خ,—the same letter which, as has been said, will be shown not to be a guttural. (12) He throws off the final character of the word: 𐤀𐤏𐤏𐤏 (line 8.) to make out that its root is شرى. (13) He inserts a letter ٥, between his ش and his ب, in the word: 𐤀𐤏𐤏𐤏𐤏 (line 9.) to make the root شهب. (14) He adds a letter ٦ after the characters: 𐤀𐤏𐤏 (line 10.) in order to have the root مشرن.

Having thus made it evident that Forster has altered, and mutilated as well as added to the inscriptions, at his pleasure, for the sake of referring words to certain roots of which the signification seemed to serve his purpose; we will next consider his neglect of letters, which from their position in the words, as he himself divides them off, and decipheres them, he must have taken to be formatives. He acknowledges that he has not, in general, regarded the formative-letters of the inscription, assigning as his reason, that he was incompetent to "cast the words into the finished mould of Arabian poetry."¹⁶ It would seem, then, as if he really supposed the forms of the inscription to be purely Arabic; for if not, what propriety could there be in pleading, that he was not sufficiently versed in the forms which might be used in poetry, agreeably to the genius of the Arabic language, in excuse for not having presented roots, supposed to be purely Arabic, in the form required by the sense.¹⁷ Accordingly the letters and syllables which Forster has left to be considered, as formatives might be tested by the laws of Arabic forms; and the result

¹⁶ S. Hist. Geogr. of Arab. II. 360.

¹⁷ He says indeed: "From particles and prepositions my attention was next directed to prefixes and suffixes, those inherent augmentatives, common to all the Semitic idioms. Here, also, the Hamyaritic of the Hissn Gborâb inscription exhibited the same principles with all its kindred dialects; *m* being the prefix used to convert verbs or participles into substantives, and *an*, or *as* the

would be, the opening of another wide field of argument against his interpretation of the inscription. Passing this, however, we cannot but wonder, that he should have ventured to make any translation from a text presenting grammatical forms which he was generally unable either to identify, or to analyse independently. In venturing to do this, he could not proceed on any other principle, than to model the signification, so far as dependent upon the forms of words, according to his own pleasure; determining, for example, without reference to the text itself, whether a certain word was a verb or an adjective; whether a certain supposed substantive was in the nominative, or the accusative, and whether a supposed verb was in the third person sing. or first person plur., etc. Examples to this point are almost as numerous as the words of the inscription, and need not therefore be specified. What confidence is to be placed in an interpretation on such a plan as this?

Thus far, Mr. Forster's separation of the words from one another has been assumed as correct. It may now be shown, that he adds some letters, and omits others, throughout the whole inscription, from having adopted an erroneous view of the punctuation. He considers the mark (I) as a *vav*, whereas Arab writers expressly inform us, that the Himyaritic words were separated each from its neighbor, by a perpendicular line, while inscriptions in the ancient Ethiopic, to which the Himyaritic is closely allied, as is obvious to the eye, and as Arab tradition certifies, have the very same mark to separate each single word. On these grounds, Gesenius and Roediger have agreed to regard the perpendicular (I) as a mere punctuation.¹⁸ The real use of this mark, of course, occasions its very frequent recurrence; just as frequently, then, has Forster, from not recognizing its true character, added letters to the inscription. He makes a *radical* letter of it in nine instances. It is very often interpreted as a copulative, or as a part of other connecting particles. A misapprehension of the system of punctuation likewise occasioned the leaving out of actual letters, for the characters (•) and (••) are erroneously regarded as stops. Here Mr. Forster has apparently been led astray by

suffix employed to denote the plural number," meaning the first pers. plur. But further than this we find no attempt, in his work, to explain the grammatical forms of the inscription.

¹⁸ S. Zeitschr. für d. K. d. Morgenl. I. 334; and Allgem. Lit., Zeit. 1841. p. 363.

Gesenius, who, after speaking of the acknowledged mark of punctuation, (I) says: "Wozu hier nur noch kommt, dass hinter dem Striche häufig noch ein oder mehrere Punkte stehen, auch wohl der Strich mit mehreren Punkten umgeben ist. Es zeigte sich bald, dass die letztere Weise ein etwas stärkeres Unterscheidungszeichen für minder eng verbundene Worte oder zu Ende eines kleinen Satzes sey, dergleichen auch Aethiopische Codd. haben, aber hier so wenig als in jenen mit Consequenz gehandhabt, wie schon Ludolf klagt, etc." But that the characters referred to are not marks of punctuation, either independently, or subsidiarily, appears from: (1) The improbability of there being so complicated a system of punctuation, as that supposed by Gesenius, in any monumental inscription, especially one like this Himyaritic, in which the mode of writing has every appearance of simplicity,—as, for instance, in the absence of all vowel points, and diacritical marks, and other guides to pronunciation. This has already been urged by Roediger.¹⁹ (2) The absence of all such punctuations in the Ethiopic as our commas, colons, and semicolons. Gesenius quotes the authority of Ludolf inconsiderately, in referring to the Ethiopic writing for a parallel to the complication of punctuation-marks supposed to be discoverable in the Himyaritic. Roediger has used this argument, also, against the opinion of Gesenius.²⁰ (3) The absurdities to which we are reduced by assuming that the characters in question are punctuations, even on the simpler hypothesis of Forster, who regards them not as subsidiary to the perpendicular stroke, but as the only marks of punctuation. They occur either singly, thus: (•) (↔), or in combination, thus: (↔•); we must, therefore, on Mr. Forster's theory, suppose that they indicate three grades of pause. But this admits of no reasonable application; for we find the single (•) separating what Forster makes to be two distinct clauses, while (↔) separates prepositions, inseparable in sense, from their complements; also a noun separated from its verb, by (↔) and even by (↔•); a single (•) in the midst of a word; a verb separated from its direct object by (↔•); a preposition separated from its complement by (↔); an initiative particle, for ex. *until*, separated from the verb with which it is construed, by (↔); and other similar inconsistencies. (4) The obvious relationship of each of these two characters, (•)

¹⁹ S. his Versuch, etc. Vorwort XI.²⁰ S. Ibid.

and (··), to a letter of the Shemitish alphabets. The (◊) is the original Phœnician *Ain*, (○), which may be traced, with slight modifications, in the coins of the Maccabees, and in the Samaritan, ancient Syriac, and ancient and modern Ethiopic writing, and in certain alphabets purporting to be Himyaritic, which have been found in manuscripts of the Berlin Royal Library, with an explanation of each letter by the corresponding Arabic. The other character (◊◊) is equivalent to the Ethiopic *vav*, (⓪) from which, on a comparison with the old Phœnician forms, it appears to be derived.²¹ Of the characters thus proved to be letters, which Forster considers as punctuation-marks, (◊) occurs twelve times in the inscription, and (··) no less than sixty times; in so many cases, therefore, have letters been left out. It will be readily perceived, also, that Forster's interpretation must be for the most part erroneous, if only on account of his misconception of the limits of single words, proved by what has been said under this head; for the words of the inscription, as he reads it, are nearly all separated from each other by one or the other of the three supposed punctuations.

The last point to be considered under the head of mistakes in deciphering is, that Forster's identification of a large number of the characters of the inscription, which are actual letters, and are viewed as such by him, has no palaeographical authority. For example: (1) He makes an *ain* of ⓪ . "It occurred to me" he writes "as a point of the last importance to detect if possible, that vital element of all the Semitic idioms, the *ain*. After some fruitless essays it struck me, from the position of that character in several of the words, that the *ain* might possibly be represented by a ⓪ (or a reversed sigma)," and in a note he observes: "Prof. Roediger, misled by the form of this letter, has given it the power of the Greek Σ ; this one mistake was fatal to his alphabet."²² What, then, does Forster's own conjecture amount to? He was led to call the sign ⓪ an *ain*, because he then could, as he fancied, make out words which would serve to establish the identity of the sense of the inscription with that of the pretended Arabic translation of it. We will follow him, for a moment, on his own ground, without insisting upon its untenableness. The first word upon which he thus experimented is at the

²¹ S. Gesenius, *Schrift. Linguaeque Phœnic. Monn. Pars I.* 27, and the fourth column of our Plate, which shows in the Himyaritic itself, a *vav* identical with the Ethiopic.

²² S. *Hist. Geogr. of A.* II. 339, 339.

beginning of the fifth line of the inscription, where he required a word signifying motion with a stately gait; accordingly, he makes the character \aleph here, an *ain*, after a letter *sin*, and manages to obtain the root سعى , which, as we have seen, imports more especially, *celerity of motion*. The next subject of his experimenting is the second word of the inscription, which must signify *laz*, or the like, to express with a verb *to live*, the idea of an easy, careless life. He makes it وسع , the final character being \aleph , and this word serves his purpose. But the first character of the word thus read is not a *vav*, in the inscription—it is a perpendicular punctuation mark; so that after all he does not obtain the word he requires. These are the only cases of the occurrence of \aleph specified by Forster as having persuaded him that this character is an *ain*; and we cannot therefore subject his reasoning on this point to any further examination into particulars. It is plain, however, that the sort of evidence upon which Forster here relies is of no worth in comparison with the form of the letter itself, as established in the Shemitish alphabets. The evidence of kindred alphabets, we have seen to point to quite a different character as the *ain* of the Himyaritic; while \aleph is manifestly equivalent to the Phoenician sibilant \aleph , or \aleph which appears throughout the entire range of the Shemitish forms of writing, with the same power, only excepting that its grade, as a sibilant, is somewhat varied. (2) He makes a *sin* of \aleph , which is shown to be a *kaph*, by its close resemblance to this letter in the ancient Ethiopic, and its analogies in other Shemitish alphabets, extensively, reaching back to the Phoenician. (3) He makes an *aleph* of \aleph . For this he pretends no other authority than a *report* of Roediger's deciphering of the first word of the inscription, which was in fact incorrect as to this point. But considered palaeographically, \aleph is seen to be a *yod*. The Phoenician itself shows examples in which the fingers of its original *yod* \aleph , are reduced from three to one;²⁸ in \aleph we see the process of abbreviation continued, so that only a compressed fist remains to indicate the origin of the character. The ancient Ethiopic has the same form of *yod* which we give to the Himyaritic. One of the words in which \aleph occurs is that read هو by Forster; and it is deserving of notice, in this connection, that, whether this character is supposed to be an *aleph*, or a *yod*, he

²⁸ S. Schrift. Linguaeque Phoenic. Monn. I. 31.

has chosen to alter it into a *hé*, besides that the *vav* of the word **هوود** is altogether interpolated. We may, therefore, safely decide, that the name of *Húd* does not occur in the inscription. (4) He makes a *kha* of **X**. But that this character is a *tau* is so conclusively shown by the analogy of the whole range of the Shemitish alphabets, that it seems strange, it could have been mistaken. Were it not for this, it might be supposed to be derived from one form of the Phoenician *chet*, **ח**, which, has been transferred to *hé* in that alphabet; yet on account of what we are led to believe beforehand, by Arab tradition, respecting the analogy of the Himyaritic to the Ethiopic characters, it is certainly preferable to give the power of *kha* to another character, **Ⲫ**, which connects itself as well with the Ethiopic *kha*, **Ⲫ**, as with the proper Phoenician *chet*, while **X** has no affinity with any Ethiopic guttural. (5) He calls **Ⲫ** a *beth*, whereas another character, **Ⲫ**, is proved to be *beth*, by its relation to the Phoenician, **ב**, in common with the Ethiopic, **Ⲫ**; and **Ⲫ** has no affinity with the *beth*, either of the Ethiopic, or of any other Shemitish alphabet. To this may be added, that there is a manifest affinity between **Ⲫ** of the Himyaritic, and the proper Phoenician *hé*, in the form, **ה** or **ה**. The coins of the Maccabees, and the Samaritan alphabet exemplify a lengthening of the upper, or middle branch of the original letter, **ה** on which principle may be derived from it, the Ethiopic form of *chet*, **Ⲫ**, in the same manner as Phoen. **ה** is derived from **ה**. The inverted position of the Himyaritic **Ⲫ** as compared with the Ethiopic **Ⲫ** admits of a plausible explanation on the ground of a certain peculiarity in appearance which Arab tradition ascribes to the Himyaritic alphabet, in the appellation **المسند** i. e. *the sustained*. The application of this term has been much disputed; De Sacy supposed it to denote, that the letters "s'appuyoient et se soutenoient les unes les autres," which does not accord with the aspect of the inscriptions now brought under our observation. Another suggestion was made by Adler, that the term describes an alphabet "gralis incedens, vel fulcris innixa;" and this agrees so well with the appearance of several Himyaritic letters, compared with letters of other Shemitish alphabets, that we are disposed to adopt it.²⁴ It

²⁴ S. Adler's *Descriptio codd. quorund. Cufic. Altonae*, 1780, p. 6.

certainly serves to account for the characteristic open part of the letter now in question being turned upwards, so that the prolonged stem becomes a fulcrum,—in which respect this letter, supposing it to be *chet*, differs from its equivalent in the other Shemitish alphabets. Another form of his *beth* is evidently a *hé*. (6) He makes A to be *shin*, and several similar characters, which he unreasonably distinguishes from one another, either *shin*, or *tau* and *tet*. But A is obviously identical with the Ethiopic *aleph*, A , nor is it difficult to connect this letter with the Phoenician *aleph*. One form of the Phoenician is X from which, according to Gesenius, comes the ancient Hebrew, of the Maccabee-coins, W the parent of the Samaritan *aleph*, V . If now we suppose (Y) to be the characteristic part of A , how readily do we discover in the Himyaritic, as well as in the Ethiopic, *aleph*, a further simplification which makes one continued line of the letter, resembling our Z. In this view, the lower part of A must be considered as a pair of stilts by which the letter becomes Z . (7) He makes a *daleth* of Z . It has been already intimated that this is the Ethiopic d and that it may be identified with the proper Phoenician *chet*. To establish this identity we have only to suppose a process of abbreviation, reducing the Phoenician *chet* H , to an outline h , to which was afterwards added from the original model, a horizontal stroke, thus: h and that this last form became Z by rapidity of hand. We have thus shown, that eight letters of Mr. Forster's Himyaritic alphabet are not what he makes them to be; of these, the *ain* occurs eight times, in the inscription; the *sin*, fifteen times; the *aleph*, twenty-eight times; the *kha*, sixteen times; the two forms of *beth*, thirty times; the *shin* and *tau*, or *tet*, which are really the same, seventeen times; and the *daleth*, four times;—making one hundred and eighteen letters of the inscription, which are proved to be erroneously deciphered. If to this number we add the number of times that (*) and (**) occur, which Forster does not allow to be any letters, though in fact they are such, as we have seen, we come to the conclusion, that one hundred and ninety of the alphabetical characters are incorrectly read by Forster, or nearly one half the whole inscription, exclusive of the perpendicular punctuation-marks; for it contains only three hundred and ninety-four letters.

With this we leave the reader to judge whether Mr. Forster has

"discovered the key" to the Himyaritic alphabet by the hypothesis, that the inscription of Hissn Ghuráb is the original of the Arabic lines with which he has attempted to identify it. The full extent to which his theory involves errors in palaeography it has not been necessary to our purpose to exhibit. It might be shown, that his alphabet embraces errors besides those here noticed, into which he was led by the supposition which has been proved to be false. Yet we would not imply, that Forster's alphabet of the Himyaritic is wholly erroneous. In some points he has simply followed Roediger, according to his own declaration;⁹⁵ and in certain others he happens to agree with Gesenius, or Roediger, or with both. So far as these coincide with each other we do not hesitate to say, that he differs from them to his disadvantage; in cases where they disagree, his uncritical judgment can be allowed to have no weight to turn the scale. Most of the instances in which he differs, where they agree, and some in which he differs from both, where they are at variance with each other, have come under consideration in the course of the preceding criticism.

We cannot conclude without alluding to Mr. Forster's pretence of antiquity for the inscription before us. He speaks of it as "perhaps the most ancient monument in the world," and again, as "belonging to the primitive period of the world,"⁹⁶ and this he does without hinting, so far as we have discovered, any other reason for the bold assertion than that, as he would have it, the name of Aws or Uz, is found in a small inscription engraved upon the rock, below that which we have been considering, and referring to it, according to his opinion;—thus presenting a coincidence with the narrative respecting the discovery by Muawiyeh's viceroy of an inscription on the walls of "a castle of Ad," on the supposition, (which has, however, been proved to be erroneous,) that the inscription said to have been seen by Abdurrahman is the same which Wellsted found at Hissn Ghuráb. This reasoning is to persuade us, it would seem, that we have here "a monument whose antiquity bids defiance to criticism," reaching back to "within 500 years of the flood,"⁹⁷ in spite of Wellsted's information indicating the present good state of preservation of the characters, though engraved on the exposed face of a sea-bound cliff, and notwithstanding a very natural skepticism with regard to the *historical* accuracy of the Mohammedan genealogy: "Ad, the

⁹⁵ S. Hist. Geogr. of A. II. 335.

⁹⁶ S. Ibid. II. 348, 404.

⁹⁷ S. Ibid. II. 364.

son of Aws, the son of Aram, the son of Shem, the son of Noah." Here is truly a large demand upon our credulity! But the foundation of the whole is a fiction light as air; for the name of Aws does not so much as occur in the small inscription, as is sufficiently proved by the fact, that one of the perpendicular punctuation-marks is taken by Forster as the *middle* element of the word

which he there reads *أوس*.²⁶ Presuming, however, upon a sufficiency of credulity and blindness in his reader, Forster summons him, upon this, to observe that the name Hâd cannot be a Mohammedan corruption of the patriarchal name Heber, as some have supposed, inasmuch as we find it in this "monument of the primitive period of the world." The real opinion of the learned respecting this name is, that Mohammed borrowed it from the Jews, among whom traces of it first appear at a comparatively modern period. Now supposing with Forster that it occurs in the inscription of Hissn Ghurâb, though we have seen that this is not the case, would it not be rather an argument for the post-Mohammedan date of the inscription, since to say the least, it is more probable that this name came into use among the Arabs, after the time of Mohammed, than that the inscription in which it is believed to occur, is so ancient as supposed, on the ground just stated? Another application made by Forster of the assumed antiquity of this monument is intimated in the following passages, taken from the Dedication of his work to the Archbishop of Canterbury: "But it is not the antiquity of these monuments which constitutes their true value; it is the precious central truths of revealed religion which they record, and which they have handed down from the first ages of the post-diluvian world, that raise them above all price. Viewed in this aspect they strike at the

²⁶ The language of Forster on the discovery, as he believed, of the name of Aws on the rock of Hissn Ghurâb, cannot fail to excite the merriment of the reader who has fairly examined his scheme. "This latter line" he says "revealed at once the awful antiquity of the whole of these inscriptions, Aws (after the name of their forefather, Aws, or Uz, the grandson of Shem, and great-grandson of Noah) being the primitive patronymic of the famous lost tribe of Ad! It is equally impossible to express or forget the feelings of awful interest, and solemn emotion, with which I now found myself penetrating into the 'cunabula gentium;' conversing, as it were, with the immediate descendants of Shem and Noah, not through the doubtful medium of ancient history, or the dim light of oriental tradition, but in their own records of their own annals, 'graven with an iron pen, and lead, in the rock for ever!'" *Hist. Geogr. of Arab.* ii. 372.

very root of skepticism, and leave not even his own hollow ground beneath the feet of the unbeliever." "We now may know, in their own hand writing, what the earliest post-diluvian men and nations thought and felt and believed, not merely about this life, but about God, about religion, about "miracles, the resurrection and the life to come."²⁹ He refers to the latter half of the seventh line of the inscription, which he reads: "And we proclaimed our belief in miracles, in the resurrection, in the return into the nostrils of the breath of life." But the three points of faith here specified are neither an iota more nor less than the cardinal points of Mohammedan doctrine; and who, not being prepossessed with a certain opinion, would hesitate whether to refer an inscription, found in Arabia, and supposed to contain such a specification of religious belief, to an age subsequent to Mohammed, or to derive from it, on the ground alleged in favor of its primitive antiquity, a "contemporary" evidence "of patriarchal faith, and primeval revelation?"³⁰

For ourselves, we will not venture to express any opinion, as yet, respecting the age of the Himyaritic inscriptions, though we believe that something may be inferred, on this point, from the relation to each other of the Himyaritic and Ethiopic alphabets, even if no date should be discovered in any of the inscriptions.

ARTICLE III.

A SKETCH OF GERMAN PHILOSOPHY.

[On the basis of an Article in the Halle "*Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*," October, 1843, Nos. 182, 183, 184.]

By Rev. Henry B. Smith, West Amesbury, Mass.

INTRODUCTION.

[The following Article is rather a paraphrase than a translation of the original. Much matter also from other sources which seemed necessary to the elucidation of some of the positions has been incorporated into it. The paragraphs upon some of the re-

²⁹ S. Hist. Geogr. of Arab. I. Dedic. XI.

³⁰ S. Ibid. ibid. XV.