

RHYME AND RHYTHM IN THE KORAN.

BY DANIEL J. RANKIN.

THE following attempts to translate from the original Arabic a few chapters of the Koran were jotted down by the writer after perusing the interesting article by Professor Warren in last November's impression of *The Open Court*.

The music of the Arabs, as perhaps of most other conservative peoples, appears to be characterised, or greatly influenced, by the physiography of their several countries, to be, indeed, the rhythmic expression of the physical environment of the singer.

As the Highland celt on his pipes is influenced in his music by the swelling or fitful gusts of the wild Westerly gales or the low, wailing sigh of the wind across the bleak moors, so the Arab depicts in rhythm the abrupt, jagged precipices of his sterile deserts or the weary, wavy monotone of his arid plains, now on a needle-like pinnacle of sound, then hurtling down to the abysmal depths of the scale, now here, now there, like the desert gazelle in its bounds and flying leaps from boulder to crag.

To an ear accustomed only to the European system the effect is as chaotic and jarring, or as wearisome and monotonous, as the mountains and deserts of the Arab land its birth-place.

Thus it seems to the writer that the difficulties of translating so typical a work as the Koran into another tongue for the effective appreciation of peoples having essentially different concepts of musical cadence, are insuperable, and can only end in failure.

In translating a work which has claimed for it a supernatural origin, the text should be scrupulously adhered to, and the utmost endeavor made to obviate additions or change of reading, and where these appear necessary they should be notified. This I have done in italics; but for the reasons given above I have made no attempt to imitate the rhythmic cadence of the original.

THE OPEN COURT.

SURA I.

*In the name of the Merciful,
God, the Pitiful.*

Praise be to God, to the Lord of the Worlds.
The Merciful, Pitiful One,
King of the Day on which all men are judged,
We worship Thee, asking for aid.
Lead us in th' path of those guided aright,
The path of those pleasing to Thee.
Not in the path of those causing Thee wrath,
Nor those who are wand'ring astray.

SURA CX.

*In the name of the Merciful,
God, the Pitiful.*

When the help of God shall come,
And the Victory be won.
And mankind in troops ye see
Unto God's religion flee.
Then extol thy Lord in praise.
His forgiveness ask *always*,
He, His pardon never stays.

SURA CXI.

*In the name of the Merciful,
God, the Pitiful.*

Shall perish his hands. *Yea*, perish himself,
Abu Laheb, *calléd Father of Flames*.
Nor profit his wealth, nor profit his pelf.
He shall be burned in a Furnace of Flames.
His wife too shall carry the wood *on her arm*,
Bound round her neck with a rope from the palm.

SURA CXII.

*In the name of the Merciful,
God, the Pitiful.*

Say, God, He is One.
God is Eternal.
He neither begets, nor was begotten.
Nor is there with Him any to liken.

SURA CXIII.

*In the name of the Merciful,
God, the Pitiful.*

Say, To the Lord of Dawning Day, for refuge do I flee,
From evil that hath been created *and may fall on me*.
And from the harm of dark'ning night when *I o'ershadowed be*

And from the ill of women blowing on the magic knot,
And from the hurt of envier when envying *my lot*.

SURA CXIV.

*In the name of the Merciful,
God, the Pitiful.*

Say, To the Lord of all mankind, for refuge do I fly.
The King of Men,
The God of Men.
From that withdrawing whisperer, who in mens' hearts doth lie
From Jinn and Men.