Here it will be advisable to supplement what was said in my Foreword (p. xiii.) concerning the turpiloquium of The Nights. Readers who have perused the ten volumes will probably agree with me that the naïve indecencies of the text are rather gaudisserie than prurience; and, when delivered with mirth and humour, they are rather the "excrements of wit" than designed for debauching the mind. Crude and indecent with infantile plainness; even gross and, at times, "nasty" in their terrible frankness, they cannot be accused of corrupting suggestiveness or subtle insinuation of vicious sentiment. Theirs is a coarseness of language, not of idea; they are indecent, not depraved; and the pure and perfect naturalness of their nudity seems almost to purify it, showing that the matter is rather of manners than of morals. Such throughout the East is the language of every man, woman and child, from prince to peasant, from matron to prostitute: all are as the naïve French traveller said of the Japanese, "si grossiers qu'ils ne sçavent nommer les choses que par leur nom." This primitive stage of language sufficed to draw from Lane and Burckhardt strictures upon the "most immodest freedom of conversation in Egypt," where, as all the world over, there are three several stages for names of things and acts sensual. First we have the mot cru, the popular term, soon followed by the technical and scientific, and, lastly, the literary or figurative nomenclature, which is often much more immoral because more attractive, suggestive and seductive than the raw word. And let me observe that the highest civilisation is now returning to the language of nature. In La Glu of M. J. Richepin, a triumph of the realistic school, we find such "archaic" expressions as la petée, putain, foutue à la six-quatre-dix; un facétieuse pétarade; to t'es foutue de, etc. Eh vilain bougre! and so forth. {NOTE: The spectator (No. 119) complains of an "infamous piece of good breeding," because "men of the town, and particularly those who have been polished in France, make use of the most coarse and uncivilized words in our language and utter themselves often in such a manner as a clown would blush to bear."} To those critics who complain of these raw vulgarisms and puerile indecencies in The Nights I can reply only by quoting the words said to have been said by Dr. Johnson to the lady who complained of the naughty words in his dictionary -- "You must have been looking for them, Madam!"

But I repeat (p. xiv.) there is another element in The Nights and that is one of absolute obscenity utterly repugnant to English readers, even the least prudish. It is chiefly connected with what our neighbours call Le vice contre nature -- as if anything can be contrary to nature which includes all things. {NOTE: See the Novelle of Bandello the Bishop (Tome 1; Paris, Liseux, 1879, small in 18), where the dying fisherman replies to his confessor "Oh! Oh! your reverence, to amuse myself with boys was natural to me as for man to eat and drink; yet you asked me if I sinned against nature!" Amongst the wiser ancients sinning contra naturam was not marrying and begetting children.} Upon this subject I must offer details, as it does not enter into my plan to ignore any theme which is interesting to the Orientalist and the Anthropologist. And they, methinks, do abundant harm who, for shame or disgust, would suppress the very mention of such matters: in order to combat a great and growing evil deadly to the birth-rate -- the mainstay of national prosperity -- the
first requisite is careful study. As Albert Bollstoedt, Bishop of Ratisbon, rightly says: -- "Quia malum non evitatum nisi cognitum, ideo necesse est cognoscere immundiciem coitus et multa alia quæ docentur in isto libro." Equally true are Professor Mantegazza's words: {NOTE: Avis au Lecteur "L'Amour dans l'Humanité," par P. Mantegazza, traduit par Emilien Chesneau, Paris, Fetscherin et Chuit, 1886.} "Cacher les plaies du cœur humain au nom de la pudeur, ce n'est au contraire qu'hypocrisie ou peur." The late Mr. Grote had reason to lament that when describing such institutions as the far-famed ἱερὸς λόχος of Thebes, the Sacred Band annihilated at Chaeroneia, he was compelled to a reticence which permitted him to touch only the surface of the subject. This was inevitable under the present rule of Cant {NOTE: See "H. B." (Henry Beyle, French Consul at Civita Vecchia) par un des Quarante (Prosper Mérimée), Elutheropolis, An mdcclxiv. De l'Imposture du Nazaréen.} in a book intended for the public: but the same does not apply to my version of The Nights, and now I proceed to discuss the matter sérieusement, honnêtement, historiquement; to show it in decent nudity not in suggestive fig-leaf or feuille de vigne.