

❁ Chapter 8 ❁

1859

The experiences that were to befall him during 1859 were to justify his scepticism. The one substantial gain he could register when it ended was the establishment of a regular contact with the Nawwab of Rampur which eased to some extent his financial distress. His correspondence with Rampur shows that he was already receiving occasional gifts before July 1859, and that as from that month the Nawwab granted him a regular monthly allowance of Rs. 100. But this was not enough for his needs, and he continued to seek for other means of supplementing it—without success. Until June, he had rising hopes of the restoration of his pension from the British, but these were dashed—at any rate temporarily—by an adverse report about him made by the Commissioner of Delhi, and the reception of *Dastambu* similarly failed to justify the hopes he had placed in it. He hoped also to receive something from Wajid Ali Shah, the ex-king of Oudh, whom the British had removed to Calcutta when they annexed his kingdom in 1856, but whose resources still permitted of the exercise of a measure of patronage. But here too his hopes were disappointed, and by the end of the year he had ceased to expect anything from that quarter.

Meanwhile, in Delhi, conditions continued far from normal, with British policies alternating unpredictably between leniency and severity. Not until August was the regulation withdrawn whereby entry into and exit from the city required a permit; and even then a residence permit was still needed for a stay of even one night in the city. It was November before Muslims were finally allowed to enter and take up permanent residence, more than two years after their original expulsion. The very face of Delhi was changing, and large scale demolition of historic buildings was making way for open expanses and new roads.

News from outside was also often bad enough. Ghalib's old friend Fazl i Haq was sentenced to transportation for life, and his appeal was rejected. His friends Husain Mirza and his family, for whom Ghalib held a sort of watching brief in Delhi, tried in vain to make some progress in their negotiations with the Delhi authorities over their extensive properties there, and by the end of the year were at a loss where to go and to whom to turn for help in securing their future.

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the letters for 1859 are often anxious, despondent, and occasionally written in great distress and bitterness, though even in the deepest dejection Ghalib's humour will unexpectedly assert

itself in a sudden flash. But with this short introduction the letters may be left to speak for themselves.

On January 3, 1859 he writes to Tufta:

'See here, sir. I don't like your ways. I write to you in 1858 and you reply in 1859; and if I speak to you about it you will reply that you answered my letter on the very next day. And the best of it is that both of us are right!'

The same day he writes to Bekhabar:

'Today is Monday, 3rd January 1859. It must be about nine in the morning. The sky is overcast, and a fine drizzle is falling. A cold wind is blowing. I have nothing to drink, so I have had to eat instead.

The clouds of spring are spread across the sky
But in my cup of clay there is no wine.

'I was sitting here feeling depressed and despondent when the postman came with your letter. I saw that it was addressed in your own hand, and felt very pleased. I read it, and found that it did not bring me the news I wanted; and again felt sad:

Oppression's force has driven us from home.
How should good tidings come from lands like ours?

And in this sadness I felt like talking to you. So although your letter did not call for a reply I began to write you one.

'So first let me tell you that your letter has been delivered to your friend; but he has twice written to me to say that he has already posted off a reply to the address given on the envelope, and now awaits a reply to his reply.

'You know that when despair reaches its lowest depths there is nothing left but to resign oneself to God's will. Well, what lower depths can there be than this that it is the hope of death that keeps me alive? And my resignation gains strength from day to day because I have only another two to two-and-a-half years to live; and somehow the time will pass. I know you will laugh and think to yourself I am talking nonsense. But call it divine revelation or call it superstition, I have had this verse kept by for the past twenty years:

Who am I to expect eternal life,
When Naziri has gone, and Talib died?
If they ask you the year of Ghalib's death
Simply tell them in answer, 'Ghalib died'.

[In the original 'Ghalib died' is '*Ghalib murd*', and is a chronogram.] It is now 1275, and "*Ghalib murd*" gives 1277. Let me experience whatever happiness may come to me in this short space; and then I shall be gone.'

The next day he again laments to Aram that he is called upon to write a work of Urdu prose.

'My friend, how can I write in Urdu? Is my standing so low that this should be expected of me? Still, it *is* expected of me. But where am I to turn, hunting for tales and stories? I haven't a book to my name. Let my pension be restored and I'll get the peace of mind to think of something.

Give me food and drink
Then see how I can think!

(It is interesting that this jingle which he quotes is in Panjabi.)

On January 26, 1859, he writes to Tufta: 'I got your letter . . . I am late in replying because I had gone by the mail to Meerut to see Mustafa Khan [Shefta]. I stayed three days, and came back yesterday.'

A letter of February 2, 1859 to Majruh gives more details:

'Now let me tell you what I have been doing. Nawwab Mustafa Khan Shefta had been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. Now he has been pardoned and released. So far that is all. No orders have yet been issued regarding his Jahangirabad estate or his properties in Delhi or his pension. So he is obliged to stay where he is in Meerut as the guest of a friend. As soon as I heard the news I took the mail and went to Meerut to see him. I stayed four days and then returned home, also by the mail. I can't remember the dates, but I went on a Saturday and returned on a Tuesday. Today is Wednesday, 2nd February, and I have been back nine days. I was waiting for a letter from you so that I could answer it when I wrote. Your letter came this morning, and I am writing this reply at midday.'

He goes on to describe conditions in Delhi:

'The city gets fresh orders every day—
But what is going on, no one can say.

When I got back from Meerut I saw how strict they are here. Not content with the guard of British soldiers, the police officer at Lahori Gate sits on a chair overlooking the street, seizes anyone who has slipped past the British sentries and sends him to the cells, where he receives five strokes of the cane by the Commissioner's orders or pays a fine of two rupees. After that he is kept in prison for eight days. Also, orders have been issued to all police stations to find out who in the city has a permit and who is living here without one. Lists are being drawn up at the police stations. An inspector from our district came to see me too about this. I told him, "My friend, don't enter my name on your list. Write a separate statement about my position, to the effect that the pensioner Asadullah Khan has been living since 1850 in the residence of the brother

of the Patiala hakim. He did not move during the days when the blacks held the city, nor did he leave it (nor was compelled to leave) when the whites came. His residence there was authorized by the verbal order of Colonel Brown Sahib Bahadur, and no one in authority has hitherto modified that order. Now it is for the authorities to decide." The day before yesterday the inspector forwarded this statement, with his list for the muhalla, to the office of the Chief of Police. Yesterday an order was issued stating that people were building themselves houses outside the city without authority. All such houses are to be demolished, and proclamation made that for the future such building is prohibited. It is also rumoured that five thousand permits have been printed; any Muslim who wishes to take up residence in the city will have to make a contribution according to his means—of which the Commissioner will be the judge—and will then receive a permit. In other words, "Pull your houses down and settle in the town."

'My blessings on the light of my eyes, Mir Sarfaraz Husain and my son Mir Nasir ud Din; and to his honour Miran Sahib, both my greeting and my blessing. He may choose whichever he likes.'

On January 30, 1859 he writes despondently to Bekhabar. The first part of the letter is in rhyming prose, but very simple and straightforward language:

'Respected sir, does it never occur to you that you have a friend named Ghalib? Do you never wonder whether he has the wherewithal to eat and drink, and how he maintains life? Twenty-one months have passed since his pension was stopped, and still in his simplicity he hopes for fresh largesse. The matter of the pension is in the hands of the Panjab authorities, but it seems to be their way neither to send money nor to answer letters, neither to bestow kindness nor to visit their wrath upon me. Well, leave that aside, and consider this: Since 1856 I have entertained the hope of a royal gift, for the Minister's letter gave me grounds to hope.¹ Were I guilty of any crime I would feel ashamed to press my request. But had I been guilty I would have been shot or hanged. . . . Whenever I have sent any communication to the Government in Calcutta I have always had a reply from the Chief Secretary. This time I sent two books²—one for the Government and one for presentation to the Queen; but I have heard neither of the acceptance of the one nor of the despatch of the other. Neither has his excellency William Muir Sahib Bahadur showed his kindness, for he too has not written to me.'

He goes on to ask for accurate information regarding recent transfers and appointments of high British officials and concludes:

'I have given up all hope and resigned myself to lamenting my evil fate, but I want full and accurate information of the true situation to comfort my soul

¹ Cf. p. 130 above.

² I.e. copies of *Dastambu*.

and set my mind at ease. And if you will put yourself to the trouble of answering my questions—not in general, but in detail; not later, but now—you will, so to speak, make me your slave. . . .'

Tufta had apparently sent a letter containing a message for Raja Umid Singh asking him to send him his full address. Ghalib replies on February 19, 1859:

'My friend, you are a man of intuition, and your knowledge of the unseen is accurate. I was expecting a letter from you so that I could reply when I next wrote, and yesterday evening I got one. I am replying this morning.

'The point is that a letter addressed to anyone who is well-known doesn't require to be addressed to any muhalla. I am only a poor man, yet letters addressed in Persian and in English reach me safely. Some of the Persian letters do not give the name of the muhalla, and the English letters carry no address at all other than "Delhi". I have had three or four letters from England. Do you think anyone there knows or cares what "Ballimaron Muhalla" is? And he [Raja Umid Singh] is a much more important man than I am. He gets hundreds of letters in English every day. But, in short, I again sent a man to him to show him your letter to me. He told my servant, "Give the Nawwab Sahib [Ghalib] my respects and ask him if he would himself kindly send the necessary information". Well, I've told you the position about this, but in accordance with your wish I now inform you that his house is in Dason ka kucha, muhalla Ballimaron.

'The position about *Dastambu* is that on one occasion I sent him [Aram] a draft for seven rupees, ordering twelve copies and an almanac. Then I sent a stamp for eighteen annas asking him to despatch two copies direct to Lucknow. And then I again sent an eighteen-anna stamp and asked him to despatch two more copies direct to Sardhana. I write all this because I want you to know that after the first fifty copies I have had a further sixteen from him, but I paid cash. I have never ordered them on credit. Once I paid by draft, and twice in stamps. Now, by my life, you are to write to him and ask him by the way how many copies Ghalib has ordered, and did he pay cash or take them on credit? Write and tell me what he says in reply.'

Ghalib obviously felt strongly about this matter, for his next (undated) letter to Tufta is again mainly devoted to it:

'I was pleased to get your letter. It seemed from what you had written that you had got it into your head that I had ordered the books from Agra without sending the money for them. This is presumably what you meant when you wrote about "the author's rights". My friend, do you think I'd lie to you? And even if Shiv Narayan [Aram] didn't say anything about my sending the money, neither did he say that I'd ordered the books without sending the money. Now by my head and by my life I adjure you, just ask Shiv Narayan how many

copies Ghalib has ordered after the first fifty and whether he sent the money with his order or whether he still has to collect it. See, I have bound you by oath; you are to do exactly as I say.

'Raja Umid Singh Sahib is still here. I haven't met him during these last few days, so the question of his mentioning your letter doesn't arise. But I am certain it must have reached him. You say that if it didn't reach Dason ka kucha it would be delivered to me. Well, it hasn't been. My friend, what are you worrying about? He is a noble and a celebrity. *Of course* letters addressed to him reach him.'

His next letter, dated February 27, 1859, is short and to the point:

'What is this, Mirza Tufta? Our friend Munshi Nabi Bakhsh Sahib is asking anxiously after you. Why have you stopped writing to him? He writes to me that if I have any news of you I am to be sure to write to him.'

In the same month—the letter does not bear the precise date—he had written to Majruh:

'Why are you surprised that Yusuf Mirza has not written to you? He is all right where he is. He calls upon the authorities and is looking for employment. Husain Mirza is there too, and is in contact with the authorities there. He is making application for a pension. I get one or two letters a week from both of them, to which I reply.¹ My friend, Lucknow enjoys a peace and security such as never existed either under Indian administration or under British administration before these disorders. The nobility and gentry meet the authorities and are received with the honours and deference appropriate to their rank. The issue of pensions is general, and there is no order preventing people returning to their homes. On the contrary, they are being re-settled with every kindness and consideration. And listen to this: The Commissioner there observed that his staff consisted entirely of Hindus and that there were no Muslims. So he posted them off to other districts and appointed Muslims in their place. It is Delhi alone that has suffered this catastrophe. Not only in Lucknow, but in all the other cities too the administration is again what it was before the mutiny. Now they have printed permits here. I've seen them myself. The wording is in Persian, and runs, "Permit to reside in the city of Delhi, on condition of the payment of a fine." The amount of the fine is in the discretion of the Commissioner. To date, five thousand permits have been printed. Tomorrow, being Sunday, is a holiday. On Monday we shall see how they are issued.

'But this is the position in the city in general. Now let me tell you my position in particular. The day before yesterday, after twenty-two months, the Chief of Police called for a written statement of the position of the pensioner Asa-

¹ Cf. p. 206-8 below.

dullah Khan, stating whether he has means or is destitute. In accordance with regulation, he has required me to produce four witnesses. So tomorrow four witnesses will present themselves at his verandah and testify to my lack of means. Don't get the idea that once my poverty is proven I shall get the arrears of my pension, and henceforth receive it regularly. No sir, there's no question of that. After my poverty is established I shall be put down as entitled to receive a sum corresponding to six months', or perhaps a year's payments. . . .

'Give my blessing to Mir Sarfaraz Husain, and give him a hug and a kiss for me. And give my blessing to Mir Nasir ud Din and my congratulations to Miran Sahib.'

The next letter continues the story:

'My dearest friend, may God grant you a hundred and twenty years of life! Old age is upon you; there are white hairs in your beard; but understanding has not yet come to you. You're all confused about the pension—and what confusion! You know that in Delhi no pensioner has received his pension since May 1857. This is February 1859—twenty-two months later. Out of the twenty-two months' arrears, a few people have been given twelve months' arrears as a grant in aid. No instructions have been issued regarding either the rest of the arrears or the regular monthly re-issue of the pension henceforth. And now recall your question and tell me whether or not it has anything to do with these facts? . . .'

He then quotes a number of actual cases which exemplify the general position he has described, beginning with that of his wife's brother, Ali Bakhsh Khan, and goes on to give news of his own position to date.

'No grant in aid was made to me. Successive letters at length brought an instruction from the Commissioner that the applicant was to be given Rs. 100 as a grant in aid. I did not claim it, and again wrote to the Commissioner that my pension had been Rs. 62 As. 8 a month, and that this worked out at Rs. 750 a year; in all other cases a full year's arrears had been granted; how was it that I was granted only Rs. 100? Like the others, I too should be granted a full year's arrears. So far I have had no reply to this.

'As for re-settlement, the position is that Mr Edgerton [the Delhi Magistrate], having had public proclamation made and permits printed, has gone off by the mail to Calcutta, leaving all the people who are hanging on outside the city gaping like idiots. Perhaps people will be allowed to re-settle after his return—or perhaps there will be some fresh development.'

His next letters are full of optimism. In an undated letter written early in March he writes:

'My dearest friend, listen to my story. The Sahib Commissioner Bahadur of

Delhi, i.e. . . . Mr Saunders . . . sent for me. On Thursday 24th February I went to see him, but he was mounted and ready to go out hunting, so I had to return without seeing him. I went again on Friday, 25th February, and this time I saw him. He gave me a seat, and after enquiring after my health, picked up a four-page letter in English, which he read. When he had finished reading it, he said, "This letter is from Macleod Sahib [Financial Commissioner of the Panjab]. He writes that I am to enquire into your circumstances and send him a written report. So first tell me about this request to Her Majesty for a robe of honour." I told him the position. I had brought with me a letter I had received from England, and this was read to him. Then he asked, "What is this book you have written?" I told him. He said, "Macleod Sahib has asked for a copy to look at; and let me have one too." I said, "I will bring them tomorrow". Then he asked me about my pension. I told him the facts and returned home feeling very pleased with myself. . . .

'Now see, Mir Mahdi, what does the Commissioner of the Panjab know about the proceedings in England? How does he know about the books? What is his object in asking about the pension? These enquiries are being made at the order of the Governor-General. And this is a favourable augury for a successful outcome of it all. Anyway, next day, being Saturday, was a holiday, and I stayed at home. On Monday, February 28th, I went again. I sat down in an outer room and sent word that I had come. I was asked to wait. After a very short time a letter arrived from the garrison commandant. The Commissioner ordered his carriage, and when it arrived, came out. I said, "I have brought the books". "Leave them with Munshi Jiwan Lal," he said, and got into his carriage. I too . . . went home. On Tuesday, 1st March I went again, and we talked for some time in a very friendly and informal atmosphere. I showed him some certificates from various Governors that I had brought with me. I had brought a letter for Macleod Sahib Bahadur, and I gave it him with the request that it should be sent to him along with the book. "Very well," he said, and took it. Then he said, "I have written to Edgerton Sahib Bahadur about your pension. Go to see him". "Very well," I said. As you know, Edgerton Sahib was away, but he came back yesterday, and today I have written to him. I shall act on whatever instructions he sends and go to see him when he sends for me. See how the Lion of God, the Prevailer¹—peace be upon him!—has helped me, his slave, and preserved me. In twenty-two months he never let me go hungry and thirsty. And see from what an exalted quarter . . . he has favour bestowed on me, honour shown me by the authorities. My patience and steadfastness has received its reward. And that patience and steadfastness too was his gift. . . .'

Further letters follow in the same vein. One of March 7, 1859 begins with good-humoured, and perhaps slightly ironic, praise of Majruh's prose style.

¹ Ali—cf. p. 35, n. above. In Arabic his title reads 'Asadullah al Ghalib'—i.e. almost identically with Ghalib's own name and takhallus.

'You've developed real style in your Urdu writing, so much so that I've begun to feel jealous of you. Let me tell you, all Delhi's wealth and property and gold and jewels have been looted and carried off to the Panjab. This style of writing was my own personal wealth, and now a tyrant from Panipat, who lives in the Ansaris' muhalla, has carried it off. [Majruh had left Delhi at the time of the revolt and gone to Panipat, in the Panjab, where he was living in the Ansaris' muhalla.] But I have pardoned him. May God prosper him.

'I want you to understand the exact position about my pension and the emoluments I expect from England. "God bestows his blessings by stealth." The way in which things were initiated is something special. The Governor-General wrote to the Governor of the Panjab to the effect that he was to get a report from the Commissioner of Delhi on the possibilities of the arrears of such and such a man's pension being given him as a lump sum and then continued by regular monthly payments. He was to note his approval, and then forward the report to receive his sanction and be returned. Accordingly, by the proper procedures, this order will be put into effect. In about two months—more or less—I shall get the full sum. Oh yes, and the Commissioner also told me that if I needed money I could draw Rs. 100 from the treasury. I said, "Sahib, how is it that others have received a full year's arrears and you are authorizing only Rs. 100 for me?" He replied, "In a few days I shall be authorized to pay you in full and re-issue your pension. It will be years before the others get as much. . . ." So I said no more. Today is Monday, 1st Shaban, and 7th March. Come midday I shall send my man with a receipt and draw Rs. 100. But, my friend, I trust in God alone to bring me my reward from England. An order about this came along with the order calling for the report, but it simply called for a statement of opinion. Let's see what opinion the two Commissioners—of Delhi and of the Panjab—express. . . . Your letter, and one from Yusuf Mirza, have just come. I have enjoyed a talk with you, and have replied to both of you right away. Now I'm going to have my lunch. . . .'

On March 27, 1859 he writes of further good news. The Lieutenant-Governor has written from Allahabad in the same style as of old, addressing Ghalib by his old styles of address, to express his appreciation of *Dastambu*. He now hopes to receive a similar response from the Governor-General.

From a letter to Aram dated April 19, 1859 it appears that Aram was trying to collect Ghalib's Urdu ghazals. Ghalib writes:

'Where would I find Urdu ghazals to send you? The printed diwans are defective. There are many ghazals which they do not include. The manuscript diwans, which were comprehensive and complete, were looted. I have told everybody here to buy them if they see them offered for sale, and I wrote the same to you. And remember another thing: I have very few ghazals indeed of fifteen to sixteen couplets. Generally there are not more than twelve couplets and not less than nine. [Mihir here notes: "This generalization is not valid.

Ghalib has numerous ghazals of less than nine couplets.”] The ghazal of which you have sent me five couplets has nine in all. I have a friend who has a more complete Urdu diwan than the printed one. He has got together various manuscripts from here and there. It was from him that I got the ghazal rhyming “pinhan hogain, wiran hogain”. I have just now written to him, and now I am writing to you. I will keep this letter open, and when he sends a ghazal I will enclose it with this and post it off. It will go off either today or tomorrow.

I have written an ode in praise of my old patron and benefactor Mr Frederick Edmondstone, Lieutenant-Governor of the North Western Provinces, and another in praise of Mr Montgomery, Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab. If you wish I can send you these. But both are in Persian, and about forty to forty-five couplets in length.

I was pleased to hear of the sales of *Dastambu*. I sincerely hope that before you sold them you corrected those two or three mistakes you know about. You didn't say whether it was Britishers or Indians who bought them. Be sure you write and let me know about this. And see! You were apprehensive, but the books have sold, and you are not left stranded with them. My friend, India has become a realm of darkness. Hundreds of thousands are dead, and hundreds of those who still live, languish in prison. Those who have life (freedom) have no means.

My guess is that the books you have just sold went either to Englishmen or to the Panjab. You won't have had much demand from the east [the region extending from the neighbourhood of Lucknow to the borders of Bengal].

My boy, I regard you as a son, no matter whether letters pass between us or not. You have your place in my heart. Now I am going to see what I can do about the ghazal you sent. I am writing it out; God grant that I remember all nine couplets.'

Here the full ghazal follows, and he continues:

'It is your good fortune that I've remembered all nine couplets. So what with this ghazal and the two that are on their way you will have three weeks' supplies in hand. ["He means," says Mihr, "that Aram can print one a week in his paper."'] If you want them I will send the two odes as well.'

From the next letter, written only three days later, we learn that Aram's discoveries included a ghazal which was not Ghalib's at all:

'My friend, God forbid, and God forbid again that this ghazal should be mine! [He then quotes a line and goes on] I won't say anything against the poet who wrote it, poor fellow. But a thousand curses on me if I wrote it. On one previous occasion somebody quoted its closing couplet to me:

Asad, so loyal to your cruel idol?
Bravo, my lion-heart! God's mercy on you!¹

¹ There is a play on words in the original. 'Asad', which Ghalib too used as his takhallus in his earlier verse, literally means 'lion'.

And I said the same thing to him, "If this couplet is mine, then a curse upon me!" The thing is that there was another Asad, and this ghazal comes from his wonder-working works . . . True, I did use Asad as my takhallus for a year or two when I first started writing verse; but since then I have used only Ghalib. [Mihr notes that Ghalib is exaggerating here. "There is evidence that Asad remained his takhallus for ten to twelve years; in fact, even after he changed it to Ghalib he wrote Asad when occasion demanded. . . ."] You haven't paid attention to the thought and expression either. Could such rubbish be *my* work? Let's hear no more about it.

Before you print the ghazal I sent you, make a copy and give it to Mirza Hatim Ali Mihr. Do it the day you get this letter, and send it to him.'

He goes on to speak of the recent sale of *Dastambu* mentioned in his previous letter. (It *had* gone to the Panjab, as he had suspected.) Then he again gives full details of the two odes, concluding, one suspects with a good deal of secret regret,

'But then they are in Persian, and you will of course not want to print them along with Urdu ghazals. So let them be. As for my old ghazals, I will send them as they come to hand. My dear boy, I swear to you by my life, I never feel like writing Urdu verse now, nor could I even if I did feel like it. Apart from that ode of twenty-five couplets which I wrote and sent out of regard for you, I haven't written an Urdu verse for these last two years; God punish me if I have. In fact, by God, I haven't even written a Persian ghazal—only the two odes. I can't describe the state of my thoughts and feelings. . . .'

A few days later, in a letter to Junun dated April 29, 1859, he has improved upon his reply to the gentleman who congratulated him upon the couplet which was not his. The story is recalled to him by a similar enquiry from Junun about yet another ghazal which Junun has wrongly assumed to be his.

'Lord and Master, your servant has been ever ready and never failing in your service; and I fulfil your every command. But to bring the non-existent into being is beyond the scope of my powers. I have never written a ghazal in this metre and rhyme. . . . God knows . . . why Maulvi Darwesh Hasan Sahib thought the couplet was mine. Although I thought hard I could not recall any ghazal of mine in this metre and rhyme. But there are a few copies of the printed edition of my diwan about, so I did not simply trust to my memory but looked at that too. There was no such ghazal in it. Let me tell you that it quite often happens that people recite someone else's ghazal and attribute it to me.'

He then goes on to relate the story of Aram's enquiry, without however mentioning his name, and says that his rejoinder to the man who praised 'his' couplet was: 'Sir, as for the gentleman whose couplet this is, to use his own

phrase, God's mercy on him! And if it is mine, then a curse upon me.' After which he goes on to explain in somewhat more detail than he had to Aram the many features of the verse which distinguish its whole style from his.

Some time in April he is writing again to Majruh:

'Friend your incessant demands for answers to your letters will be the death of me!

'A curse upon the heavens, that move so perversely! What harm had I done to them? I had no wealth or goods or rank or majesty—only a few possessions and a corner where a handful of poor beggars would gather together to laugh and talk. But

That too you could not bear to look upon,
o cruel sky,
Although to look upon each other was
our only wealth.

Remember, this couplet is Khwaja Mir Dard's.¹ "Since yesterday I keep thinking of Maikash," [you write]. So? You tell me, what am I to write? When the memories of all the times we and our friends used to sit and talk come back to you, all you can think of doing is making me write you letter upon letter. But a man cannot quench his thirst with tears. And my writing is no substitute for their talking. Anyway, I'll write you something. Let's see what I can think of to write.

'I must tell you that I haven't heard any more about the report on my pension. "Slow but sure."

'My friend, I've got a bone to pick with you. You tell me that Miran Sahib is better, but you express no pleasure, nor do you congratulate me. In fact you write as though you didn't like him getting better. You write, "Miran Sahib is back to what he was before, jumping and leaping and roaming about the place." In other words, "Oh God! what a trial! Why did he have to get well?" Well, I don't like your attitude. You must have heard Mir's² couplet? I write it with a word or two changed. [He then quotes a verse which means "Be thankful that at least you have Miran—the only one left among Delhi men", and compares it with Mir's original verse, which means, "Be thankful that at least you have Mir—the only one left of men of former times."] Don't you think it's a fine adaptation?

'Oh, and there's more news. Have you heard? Yesterday I had a letter from Yusuf Mirza in Lucknow to say that Nasir Khan's (Nawwab Jan's) father has been sentenced to life imprisonment. I'm astonished that such a thing could happen. But Yusuf Mirza wouldn't tell me anything that wasn't true, and I can only hope that the news he heard wasn't true.

¹ A famous Urdu poet of the eighteenth century.

² The great eighteenth-century Urdu ghazal poet.

'Well, my friend, *you* can sit here or not as you like, but *I'm* going off for my lunch. Everyone here, in the zenana and outside it, is keeping the fast—even the elder boy, Baqir Ali Khan. Only I and my son Husain Ali Khan are eating—the same Husain Ali Khan whose daily cry is, "Get me some toys" and "I want to go to the shops." Give my blessing to Mir Sarfaraz Husain and mind you read him this letter. And my blessing to my boy Mir Nasir ud Din'

The letter illustrates a very lovable side of Ghalib's character. No one could have felt more deeply than he the loss of Maikash and all his other friends, but he is ready to respond to Majruh with a letter to cheer him up.

In March or April he writes to Hatim Ali Beg Mihr:

'Keep strong your faith in the unseen—
else you are no believer.
You who are hidden from my sight, love
for you is my faith.¹

Your auspicious portrait has gladdened my sight. Do you know what Mirza Yusuf Ali Khan Aziz meant by what he said to you? I must have said some time in the company of friends, "I should like to see Mirza Hatim Ali. I hear he's a man of very striking appearance." And, my friend, I had often heard this from Mughal Jan.² In the days when she was in Nawwab Hamid Ali Khan's service I used to know her extremely well, and I often used to spend hours together in her company. She also showed me the verse you wrote in praise of her beauty.

'Anyway, when I saw your portrait and saw how tall you were, I didn't feel jealous because I too am noticeably tall. And I didn't feel jealous of your wheaten complexion, because mine, in the days when I was in the land of the living, used to be even fairer, and people of discrimination used to praise it. Now when I remember what my complexion once was, the memory is simple torture to me. The thing that *did* make me jealous—and that in no small degree—was that you are clean-shaven. I remembered the pleasant days of my youth, and I cannot tell you what I felt. But as Shaikh Ali Hazin says:

I rent my clothes when I was young
and felt a lover's frenzy.
Now I may wear my woollen cloak and feel
no sense of shame.

When white hairs began to appear in my beard and moustaches, and on the third day they began to look as though ants had laid their white eggs in them—and, worse than that, I broke my two front teeth—there was nothing for it but to . . . let my beard grow long. But remember that in this uncouth city [Delhi] everybody wears a sort of uniform. Mullahs, junk-dealers, hookah-menders,

¹ The same verse as he had quoted in a letter to Mihr in 1857—(cf. p. 152 above).

² The style of name shows that she was a courtesan.

washermen, water-carriers, innkeepers, weavers, greengrocers—all of them wear their hair long and grow a beard. The day your humble servant grew a beard he had *his* hair shaved off—But God save us! what am I prattling about?

'Sahib, your humble servant sent a copy of *Dastambu* as a present to . . . George Frederick Edmonstone Sahib, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces. In reply I received by post a letter in Persian, written on March 10th, praising the book and expressing his pleasure. I then sent a Persian ode of congratulation on his Lieutenant-Governorship, and received a reply in Persian, dated 14th, expressing appreciation of the poem and satisfaction at its contents. Then I sent a Persian ode of eulogy and praise to . . . Robert Montgomery Sahib Bahadur, Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab, sending it through the Commissioner of Delhi. Yesterday a letter bearing his seal reached me through the Commissioner of Delhi. About my pension, instructions have so far not been received. But grounds for hope continue to grow. Slow but sure. I never eat bread; just a pound of meat during the day and eight ounces of wine at night.'

He then quotes the first couplet of one of his ghazals and says: 'If my insight is true and the person who wanted this ghazal is a man of sound taste, then the ghazal will have reached him before this letter. As for my greetings, I'll send them now.'

His next letter—undated—begins with a reference to his own verse:

'The condition of Delhi is

My home was wrecked; what further
ruin could your love inflict?
The yearning to rebuild it filled my
heart and fills it still.

What is there left here for any one to loot? . . . The late Nasikh was your ustad and my true and loving friend, but he was a poet with a single skill. He wrote only ghazals and never touched the ode or the masnavi. Praise be to God! You've written an ode that Insha¹ would have envied. And I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed the couplets from your masnavi. . . . God grant you long life. In days like these men like you are precious. . . .'

On June 12, 1859 he writes again to Aram. Mihr's note gives the necessary background information to the letter:

'Aram had named his newspaper *Aftab i Alamtab* ['The Sun that Lights the World'] and along with it had also begun to print *Halat i Darbar i Shahi*

¹ An Urdu poet of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

['News of the Royal Court']. He had also brought out a literary journal named *Miyar ush Shuara* ['The Criterion of the Poets']. This was a fortnightly. He was proposing also to bring out another periodical publication giving an account of the Mutiny, for which Ghalib suggested titles. In the end the title chosen was *The Indian Revolt*.'

Ghalib writes:

'The position here is that among the Muslim nobles [who might have been expected to subscribe to your publications] there are three—Nawwab Hasan Ali Khan, Nawwab Hāmid Ali Khan, and Hakim Ahsanullah Khan; but their position is such that if they feed themselves they cannot clothe themselves. Moreover, it is uncertain whether they will stay here. God knows where they are to go and where to live. Hakim Ahsanullah Khan has subscribed to *Aftab i Alamtab*, but he is not likely to take *Halat i Darbar i Shahi* too. Apart from the moneylenders there are no rich men here, and *they're* not going to be interested in such things. You'd better forget any idea of getting subscribers here.'

It will be remembered that he had sent a similarly discouraging reply a year earlier. If he really means what he says about the Muslim nobles whom he names, their present straitened circumstances made a striking contrast with their former wealth. Mihr's notes on the two first-named are as follows:

'Nawwab Hasan Ali Khan: younger son of Nawwab Najabat Ali Khan, ruler of Jhajjar. He received a pension of Rs. 3,000 a month. Nawwab Hāmid Ali Khan: nephew and son-in-law of Itimad ud Daula Mir Fazl i Ali Khan, Minister to the King of Oudh. When Fazl i Ali Khan died, Hāmid Ali Khan came to Delhi, where he deposited his money in the treasury, drawing Rs. 4,500 a month in interest. He was kept in confinement for fourteen months after the Mutiny, but was released in February 1859.'

Ghalib continues his letter:

'As for the name of the publication [on the Mutiny], never mind about making it a chronogram. [He then suggests three possible titles.] And now tell me: does your paper *Miyar ush Shuara* go to the Nawwab of Rampur? I saw in the last number that you had written, "A poet named Amir¹ sends us his ghazals, but we cannot print them until we know his full name and other particulars." So let me inform you that he is a friend of mine. His name is Amir Ahmad and his takhallus Amir. He is a distinguished Lucknow gentleman, and was at one time a courtier and companion of the Oudh Kings. He is now with the Nawwab of Rampur. You can print his ghazals giving my name as a reference—something like, "These ghazals were sent to us by Ghalib, who also informed us of

¹ Amir Minai, at this time relatively unknown, later became a famous Urdu poet.

the poet's name and supplied the particulars which follow." Then print the information I have just given you. Put this in the forthcoming issue and send a two-page or four-page section to him at Rampur. Address it as follows: "Maulvi Amir Ahmad Sahib Amir, His Highness's Court, Rampur." And let me know whether your paper goes to Rampur or not.'

On June 17, 1859 he writes to Tufta:

'Four days ago, that is on Tuesday, at about ten in the morning I was unexpectedly honoured by a visit from Raja Umid Singh. I asked him about his travels and he told me that he had just returned from Agra. He has bought Joras Sahib's mansion in Basavan Lane, near Hakim's Lane; and he has also bought the adjoining land and is building on it. I spoke about you and told him that you ask after him whenever you write and also that you say you have sent him several letters, but had no reply. He said he had had one letter from you, and had replied to it, but had not had any more letters from you after that. Anyway, I've got boils, so I haven't returned his visit. I think he is going away today or tomorrow. (He's again going to Agra.) I'll send my man to him today. Yesterday I had a letter from Mirza Hatim Ali Mihr. He was asking after you—where you were, and how you are. Write to him, my friend.'

On June 29, 1859 he writes to him again:

'I had a letter from you the day before yesterday in which you said you were going to Meerut. This morning I had another in which you said you would be leaving on July 1st and would see me before you left. In both letters you speak of a parcel which you sent off on 20th June. Well, that's ten days ago, and during these ten days no parcel or pamphlet packet has reached me. The last pamphlet I had from you was the one with the two masnavis. (One of them was about that incident at Bulandshahr—about the boy that died, and how his lover stood by the funeral pyre, and how while the flames of the pyre consumed the boy's body, the flames of love consumed him too.) I made my corrections on both masnavis and posted them off to you; in fact I seem to remember your acknowledging them. But I have an idea that all this was before 20th June. Anyway, I've not had any parcel since that one. I don't keep things sent to me for correction more than two days, wherever they come from—least of all yours. But I can't do anything about things which don't reach me. In fact, I sent *you* a letter to which you owe me a reply. Perhaps that didn't reach you, or else you didn't think any reply was necessary. . . .'

In June comes the first of the Urdu letters to Husain Mirza which have survived, though Ghalib had told Majruh as long ago as February that he was in regular correspondence with him.

We are fortunate in knowing a good deal about Husain Mirza and his

nephew¹ Yusuf Mirza from Mihr's account, which is based upon materials in the possession of Husain Mirza's family. The family was an old and distinguished one, and shared a common ancestor with the Kings of Oudh. For generations it lived in Lucknow, but Husain Mirza's father Hisam ud Din Haidar Khan had migrated to Delhi where, while continuing to draw a large income from Lucknow, he acquired considerable wealth and high rank. Husain Mirza was his third child, and second son, and was ultimately married to the daughter of a noble who was Steward to the Royal Household. On his father-in-law's death, Husain Mirza was appointed to succeed him in this office. He still held it when the Mutiny broke out. We know that he was one of the two nobles—the other being Ziya ud din Ahmad Khan—who preserved every thing that Ghalib wrote.² Once the rebel sepoys occupied the capital, Husain Mirza would have been in no position to relinquish his office at the Mughal Court even if he had wished to, and the British re-occupation of Delhi in September therefore put him in a position of great danger. The fate of his elder brother Muzaffar ud Daula was soon to underline the jeopardy of his situation. Mihr writes:

'When the English forces entered Delhi, Muzaffar ud Daula, with a number of others, went to Alwar, where the Raja was his friend. But he was taken prisoner there and brought to Gurgaon, where the British officers, without any trial or investigation or inquiry, shot him, along with a number of others. . . . Husain Mirza and his dependants first made their way to Safdar Jang's tomb [outside Delhi]. . . . From the Ajmeri Gate to the tomb must be about four to five miles, and in this short distance . . . robbers extorted ten thousand rupees from them. Then Nawwab Hämud Ali Khan secretly got them all away to his village . . ., which is near Panipat. He had been Steward at the royal court, and could not be overlooked. A widespread search for him was made, and when the English discovered that he was in the village, a warrant was issued for his arrest. But before he could be taken he got to Panipat, where the Ansaris saved him at the risk of their own lives. He then made his way in disguise to Lucknow, where he lived in hiding. After the proclamation of general amnesty he returned to Delhi. [At the time when Ghalib writes he was out of danger, but still in Lucknow.] He had two sons, the elder named Sajjad Mirza and the younger Akbar Mirza. . . . Ghalib was on intimate terms with the whole family, and especially with Husain Mirza, whom he loved as a brother.'

Ghalib's own writings bear out this estimate. We have seen that Husain Mirza's father, Hisam ud Din Haidar Khan, was one of those to whom Ghalib offered his advice on the writing of poetry³ and when his Urdu diwan was published, Ghalib wrote an introduction to it. The warmth of his feeling for the family is also evident in his account of the burning of their mansions after their flight from Delhi,⁴ while in a letter he speaks of the death of Muzaffar ud Daula as

¹ Sister's son.

² Cf. p. 182.

³ Cf. p. 93 above.

⁴ Cf. pp. 147-8 above.

'ranking with the tragedy of Karbala'.¹ In the series of letters to Husain Mirza and Yusuf Mirza which begins at this time there are two recurring themes—the possibility of help from Wajid Ali Shah, the exiled King of Oudh, and the position of the family's Delhi properties—but the first, dated June 18, 1859, speaks also of a matter of great importance to Ghalib's own personal fortunes. He writes to Husain Mirza:

'My dear Nawwab Sahib, it's easy to complain. Your honour got hold of some green ink from somewhere without having to pay for it, and proceeded to complain to me. And Yusuf Mirza Sahib has issued his command that I am to send him something in verse and prose. Well, my friend, I have already written a reply to you and sent it off. I don't propose yet to draft any petition [for you] on my own to the Lord of the World,² and when I do, I shall send it through my master³—may God preserve him! *You* should write out what you want to say in the current, accepted Persian and then send it to me. This is what I have said in my letter to you, and this is the answer to Yusuf Mirza too.

'Mirza Agha Jan Sahib came here the day before yesterday, bringing me the news that Bhara Singh and Kashi Nath have come. I told him, "They can't do anything either for you or for me. What can they do? It's out of the question. What's going on is of the same order as the coming of the morning, or the coming of evening, or the gathering of the clouds, or the falling of the rain. Man's efforts, and plans, and desires don't enter into it." The talk about re-settlement has died down again. Somewhat less than a hundred houses in the area near Lahori Gate have been re-occupied. There are several thousand houses in that area, and if God Almighty wills, it will be re-occupied within the next three or four years. And when that area is re-occupied a start will be made on the next. Don't worry about it. What's the hurry?'

After this sarcastic comment he goes on to give news of the comings and goings of various people known to both of them, and then turns to his own troubles.

'Well, so much for that. Now listen to my tale of woe. I didn't run away; I wasn't arrested; nothing about me was found in the Fort records; no stain of indifference or disloyalty [to the British] was found on my character. But some newspaper proprietor, Gauri Shankar, or Gauri Dayal or something, used to send his paper here during the days of the Mutiny, and some correspondent sent in a news item, which he printed, that on such and such a date Asadullah Khan Ghalib composed this inscription for the King's coinage and presented it to him. [The inscription then follows.] When the Commissioner interviewed

¹ Cf. p. 210 below.

² Wajid Ali Shah, King of Oudh until the English annexed the kingdom in 1856, and removed him to Calcutta.

³ The *mujtahid ul asar* (leading Shia divine) at Wajid Ali Shah's court.

me he asked me, "What is this that he writes?" I said, "It is incorrect. The King was a poet, his sons were poets, his servants were poets—God knows who wrote it. The correspondent has ascribed it to me; but if I had written it, some paper in my writing would have been found in the Court records. You should ask Hakim Ahsanullah Khan about it." At the time he said nothing more. Now he has been transferred. Two weeks before he left he wrote a minute in Persian to the effect that this Asadullah Khan is famous for his unique knowledge of Persian, but we are not concerned with that. He was in the King's employ and composed an inscription for his coinage. In my opinion he does not merit a pension. Just see. I am here in Delhi; I have personal dealings with his staff; no one will tell me the date of this minute, or whether it has been forwarded to higher authority or not. I am at a loss to know what I should do. I shall go to see the new Commissioner, and if he consents, will get a copy of this minute from him. I also took the precaution of sending a reply before his predecessor's departure. But [no attention was paid to it and]¹ only the statement of the charge against me is receiving attention. My friend, I put my trust in Ali—let me live, or let me die. If once I get a flat refusal I shall leave this city, and consign these two rupees a day² to the grave of the accursed tyrant who out of ten thousand rupees a year³ saw fit to grant me just this. And may curses and torment be his lot.

'Give my blessings to Yusuf Mirza.

'Friend, Mir Ahmad Husain (Mir Raushan Ali Khan's father) has just told me that when Bahadur Shah came to the throne he was in Murshidabad, and he remembers hearing this inscription there. When he told me this I remembered that when Maulvi Muhammad Baqir printed [in his newspaper] the news of Akbar Shah's death and Bahadur Shah's accession, he also printed the news that Zauq had composed and presented this inscription. Bahadur Shah came to the throne in October 1837 or 1838.⁴ Some people keep files of newspapers. If you can trace it there and send me the issue of the original newspaper just as it is, you will be helping me a great deal. I have written off to friends in Agra, Farrukhabad, Marahra and Meerut; and now I've written to you too. Now I only have to write off to Kalpi, and I'll do that within the next day or two. We have to examine twelve issues of the paper—covering the three months October, November and December of 1837 and 1838.'

In the same month he writes to Yusuf Mirza:

'My dearest friend, dear to me as the sight of my eyes,

The child has left you and returned to dust.
Grieve not; he came pure and departed pure.

¹ The words in square brackets are a surmise. Mihr gives a dotted line, with a note that it represents a passage in the original which is illegible.

² The pension was Rs. 62 As. 8 per month.

³ Cf. p. 44-5 above.

⁴ The former date is correct.

He was God's servant, and found favour in his Creator's sight. He came into the world bearing a good soul and a good fortune. What would he have wanted with staying here? You must not feel the least regret. And if the thought of having children pleases you so much, well, you yourself are no more than a child: God give you long life and children in abundance. Why do you write about the death of your grandfather and grandmother? Their time had come. The death of his elders is the common heritage of man. Did you want them to go on living in times like these and see their honour destroyed? Yes, grief for [your uncle] Muzaffar ud Daula [who was killed in the Mutiny] is another matter. It ranks with the tragedy of Holy Karbala, and will live on as long as I live. You should never feel any regret for what you have done to serve your father. For anything in your power which you failed to do, you would have been justly censured. When you are powerless to help, what are you to do? The problem which faces us all these days is, where are we to live and what are we to eat? You sent me news of Maulana [Fazl i Haq];¹ now let me send you some. The court of appeal has upheld the sentence of life imprisonment; in fact it has gone further and recommended that his transportation should be expedited. You will get the news of this in due course. His son is going to appeal to England, but what is the use? What had to happen, has happened. "Verily we are for God, and verily to Him we shall return." Give . . . [Husain Mirza] my regards and tell him that I have already written him a full account of my position. If he can get that issue of the Delhi *Urdu Akhbar* it will be a great help. But anyway I have nothing much to fear. The higher authorities won't pay much regard to such things. I didn't compose the inscription, and if I did, I did it under duress, to preserve my life and my honour. That's no sin, and if it *is* a sin, is it so grave a sin that even Her Majesty's proclamation² cannot wipe it out? Good God! Can the artilleryman who made ammunition and sited the guns and looted the bank and the magazine be pardoned, and a poet's couplet not be pardoned?

'Let me tell you a funny story of something that happened two days ago. Häfiz Mammu has been cleared of all guilt, and been released. He attends upon the Commissioner asking for the return of his property. The fact that it *is* his property has already been verified, and only the Commissioner's order is required. Two days ago he presented himself, and his file was laid before the Commissioner. "Who is Häfiz Muhammad Bakhsh?" the Commissioner asked. He replied, "I am." Then he asked, "And who is Häfiz Mammu?" He replied, "I am. My real name is Muhammad Bakhsh, but people call me Mammu." He said, "That doesn't make sense. Häfiz Muhammad Bakhsh is you; Häfiz Mammu is you; everyone in the world is you. Who am I to hand over the house to?" The file was sent back to the office and our friend Mammu went home . . .'

¹ One of Ghalib's oldest friends. Cf. p. 33 above.

² Of general amnesty.

An undated letter to Sahib i Alam clearly belongs to about this time, as internal evidence shows:

'I spend my days and nights thinking to myself, "This is what life was like; now let me see what death will be like."

I lived my life waiting for death to come
And dead, I still must see what else I face.

The couplet is my own, and it aptly describes my state of mind.'

He goes on to speak of the trouble over the inscription he was alleged to have written, repeating the information he had given in letters to others and adding:

'I searched the whole realm of Hindustan for the Delhi *Urdu Akhbar*, but I could not get it anywhere. The stain upon me remains; my pension is lost, the tokens of my noble rank, the robe and the durbar, are wiped out. Well, when all that happens, happens by the will of God, how can I complain?

God sets the skies in motion. Understand then
Nothing that comes from them can be unjust.¹

. . . The story is told that Abul Hasan Khirqani (God's Mercy be upon him) was asked, "How are you faring?" He replied, "How will that man be faring of whom his God demands the fulfilment of his religious duty, and his Prophet the observance of his own standards, and his wife his wealth, and the angel of death his life?"

'In short, I live on in hope of death. . . .'

On July 15, 1859 he writes to Yusuf Mirza:

'I'm not going to correct your masnavi until I have the whole of it. You can put forward as many plausible arguments as you like, or appeal to my sense of shame, but until I get a complete ghazal or a complete masnavi, how am I to correct it? Give your uncle [Husain Mirza] my regards (because I love him) and my humble submission (because he is a Sayyid)² and my blessing (because he is my intimate friend and I am his ustad) and ask him what else he expects me to write. He asks me for a copy of the order; but where am I to get the original to take a copy from? It's true that everyone is saying that those who were formerly in [the King's] service are not being called to account; but my own observation tells me otherwise. Just see, only a few days ago Hämid Khan was brought in under arrest, fettered hand and foot. He is in prison. Let's see what orders are finally issued. He contented himself with Navind Rae alone to represent him. What is to be, will be. People's cases are being decided on the

¹ Cf. p. 133.

² A descendant of the Prophet.

basis of whatever reports about them the authorities have. No law, no regulation matters. No precedent, no plea has any effect. A report has been forwarded sanctioning a full pension of Rs. 200 to Irtiza Khan, son of Murtaza Khan, and his two sisters, who received a monthly pension of Rs. 100 each, have been officially told that their brother has been found guilty, and that their pensions are therefore forfeit; but that on compassionate grounds they will each be granted Rs. 10 per month. If that is compassion, what must indifference be like! Here am I myself. I know the higher authorities, but I can't even pluck out a pubic hair [i.e. there is absolutely no move I can make]. For fifty-three years I've been drawing a pension, appointed by Lord Lake, and approved by the Government; and yet I don't get it and am not likely to. Anyway, I can still hope. You know that I am Ali's slave, and that I never take his name in vain. Believe me then, at this moment Kallu¹ has one rupee and seven annas left; and when that is spent, there is nowhere I can turn for a loan and nothing I have left that I can pawn or sell. If money comes from Rampur, well and good. Otherwise "Verily we are for God, and verily to Him we shall return."

'Some people have the idea that instructions about pensions will be issued this month. Well, we shall see whether they are or not, and if they are, whether I am among the chosen or the rejected. . . .'

As we have seen, money did come from Rampur; from this month onwards Ghalib received from the Nawwab a regular income of Rs. 100 per month.

On July 23, 1859 he writes to Aram:

'Your letter reached me, and the issue of *The Indian Revolt* reached me a few days before it. The firmness of your resolution pleases me. God be praised, that now I shall look upon you, Bansi Dhar's grandson—my own grandson. See that *The Indian Revolt* reaches me every month and *Miyar ush Shuara* every fortnight. We'll talk about other things when we meet. I told my dear friend Master Ramchandrar the news that you were coming. He was very pleased. I am sending his reply to my letter for you to read. If there are any copies of *Dastambu* left, bring them with you.'

On July 26, 1859 he writes to Yusuf Mirza:

'My friend how is it that you have got this skin irritation? And how did Husain Mirza fall ill? O God, bestow peace of mind upon these wanderers in the deserts of strange lands whenever it be Thy will, but preserve them in good health, in Ali's name. Alas! Alas! Husain Mirza's beard has turned white. These are the blessings which these extremes of grief and distress confer. As soon as this letter arrives, write and tell me how you both are.

'You read my letter to you in a place [Lucknow] which exemplifies the poet's lines:

¹ Ghalib's servant.

He said to me, "Our state is like the
lightning's—
Born in a flash, and vanished in a flash" . . .

He is my master and, God keep him safe, my revered elder. Agha Baqir's Imambara,¹ besides being the house in which my master goes to mourn, is an ancient foundation of exalted fame. Who would not grieve at its destruction? Here two roads are forging rapidly ahead—the cool road and the iron road [i.e. a road with water-courses, and the railway]—each in its own location. More than that, barracks for the British soldiers are to be built in the city, and in front of the Fort, where Lal Diggi is, there is to be a great area of open ground. It will take in the whole area right up to the Khas Bazaar, from . . . [here Ghalib lists a number of other localities]. Put it this way: from Ammu Jan's Gate to the moat of the Fort, except for Lal Diggi and one or two wells, no trace of any building will remain. Today they have begun demolishing the houses of Jan Nisar Khan Chatta. I should rejoice in the desolation of Delhi. When it's citizens have gone, then to hell with the city.

'Baqir Ali and Husain Ali have gone with their grandmother to Qutub Sahib [the area around the Qutub Minar], to Ziya ud Din Khan's mother's. Ayaz and Niyaz Ali are with them. So two "humble submissions" and one "blessing" and two "respects" are deferred till later.' [These are the forms of greeting which, respectively, the two boys, their grandmother, and the other two named would have sent had they been there.]

Two days later, on July 28, 1859 he writes to Husain Mirza:

'O Husain, son of Ali, I pledge my soul to thee! . . .² My friend, what Muhammad Quli Khan wrote was false. Neither Hasan Ali Khan, nor Hāmid Ali Khan, nor Hakim Ahsanullah Khan have been imprisoned. In the end no order was issued against any of them. Hakim Ahsanullah Khan has obtained possession of his houses. There is an Englishman living in the zenana, at the back of the baths. He pays a rent of thirty-five rupees a month. The other two are still held up by the same difficulties. Ahsanullah Khan has moved into his house. He has turned the main hall into the zenana, and made his own quarters where the stable used to be. Debi Ram and Salig Ram have also got their houses back; in fact I have heard that even their buried valuables were intact. Now they've brought Hāmid Ali Khan from Qutub ud Din the merchant's mansion to their own house . . .'

In an undated letter of about this time he writes to Majruh:

'My devoted son, did you see the poem? It's a faithful reflection of my state;

¹ Cf. p. 49 above.

² A play upon the name of his correspondent. Husain, son of Ali, was the grandson of the Prophet.

there's no poetry left in me. I had meant when I sent it off to write a letter too, but the children were pestering me, "Come on, grand-dad, dinner's ready. We're hungry." I had already got three letters written and I thought to myself, "Why should I write any more now?" So I just put the paper in the envelope, stamped it, addressed it, gave it to Kalian [Ghalib's servant] to post, and went to dinner. I did it to provoke you too. "This will annoy Mir Mahdi [Majruh]. Let's see what he says," I thought to myself. And that's just what happened. A real outburst of indignation! Well, here I am, sitting down to write to you. Tell me, what shall I write? Miran Sahib will have told you all about what's going on here. But don't believe what he's told you. The question of my pension is now before the Governor-General in Calcutta. The Commissioner here left a minute when he went, but what harm can that do me?

I had written this much when two friends came to see me. It was not long before sunset. I shut up my box and went out to sit with them. It got dark, and the lamp was lighted. I was lying on the bed, with Munshi Sayyid Ahmad Husain sitting at the head on a rush-chair, when all of a sudden that Eye and Lamp of the family of Faith and Learning, Sayyid Nasir ud Din arrived, riding-whip in hand, and accompanied by a servant carrying on his head a basket covered over with green grass. I said to myself, "Aha! Good! Good! The King of Divines, Maulana Sarfaraz Husain of Delhi has sent me a fresh supply [of wine]." But it turned out not to be that, but something else—not special bounty, but general largesse; not wine, but mangoes. Well, no harm in such a gift either; in fact it's better than the other. I thought of each mango as a sealed glass, filled with the liquor of the grape, and filled with such superb skill that not so much as a single drop spilled from any of the sixty-five glasses. The man said there had been eighty, but fifteen went bad—rotten, in fact—and he threw them out in case they should affect the others. I said, "There are plenty left, my friend". I was not pleased, though, that you had put yourself to such trouble. You haven't enough money to go spending it on mangoes. God grant you prosperity and increase of wealth.

'There's a kind of English drink called "likur" [liqueur]—an exquisite liquor with a fine colour, and as sweet to the taste as a thin syrup of sugar. Let me tell you, you won't find its meaning in any dictionary, except perhaps in Sarwari.

'Give my blessing to the Authority of the Age [Mir Sarfaraz Husain], and to Hakim Mir Ashraf Ali, who is the key to his learning, and has gathered halfpenny pamphlets to the value of forty to fifty rupees.'

In July 1859 he again writes to Majruh:

'My friend, you talk like a child. There was indeed ground for anxiety . . . but your letter removed it. So what are you weeping and wailing for? The higher authority is favourable; and the subordinate, who was unfavourable, has gone. So what's all the fuss about? . . .

'The word "fahmaish" is a coining of old Budha, son of Jumma, and Lala Ganesh Das, son of Lala Bhairun Nath. Have you ever heard *me* use it?'

He then goes on to explain the rules governing the formation of certain types of Persian words, and concludes:

'Give Hakim Mir Ashraf Ali first, my blessing, and next my congratulations on the birth of his son. Last night, my boy, when I was slightly merry, I thought up a name which would be a chronogram of his birth—Mir Kazim Din. It works out at 1275, but, like "fahmaish", no literate person would use it.'

On August 18, 1859 he writes to Yusuf Mirza:

'May God Almighty grant you long life and wealth and happiness and honour. There was nothing in your letter of 2nd that called for a reply—only the news of Mirza Haidar Sahib's death. Yesterday morning, Wednesday, the 17th of both months [Muslim and Christian], Mirza Agha Jan Sahib came. He told me that Husain Mirza's wife had come from Lucknow . . . but had now gone on to her son at Pataudi. She had told him that Nāzir ji [Husain Mirza]—may his troubles befall his enemies—was very ill. . . . Yusuf Mirza, I tell you I felt desperate. What could I do? And how could I get news of him? I began to repeat to myself 'O, Ali! O, Ali! O, Ali!'" and I must have repeated his name ten times when Madari's son came running and brought me three letters. He was downstairs in the house when the postman came and handed him the letters; and Niyaz Ali brought them up to me. One was from Aziz, one from Hargopal Tufta, and one from Maulvi Zulfaqar Haidar.¹ My friend, I was near to tears with joy. At length I put his letter to my eyes² and then kissed it.

'Now just look at this: His letter of 13th Muharram reaches me on 17th. In it he writes that on Friday 19th he will be leaving by the mail for Calcutta. And then, the gentleman demands a reply! Yes, once he gets to Calcutta, and writes to me from there, and gives me the address where he is staying, then I'll write whatever I have to write. . . . Ziya ud Din has been here for the last two weeks. He is staying in the grounds of his old house. He has been to see me twice, and stayed about an hour on each occasion. It seems that he has chosen to show some regard for our former intimacy. God willing, I'll get him to send something to Sajjad Mirza, and once I hear from him from Calcutta, to Nāzir ji.

'Things are still just the same with me. I don't go hungry, but I am incapable of being of any service to anybody. If I speak to anyone I shan't be believed, and in any case it's not a matter for words, but for action; and I haven't the means to do anything. . . . Our friend Fazlu is staying in Arabsara. He's been here two days now. He runs around presenting petitions, but nobody takes any notice of them. He sends you his regards.

'Entry and exit permits have been discontinued. Beggars and people bearing arms are not allowed in, but anyone else—Hindu or Muslim, man or woman,

¹ Husain Mirza's name. Husain Mirza was the familiar name used by his family and close acquaintances.

² A sign of love and devotion to the writer.

mounted or on foot, can come and go as he pleases. But no one can stay overnight unless he has a residence permit. You remember all the talk about new roads being laid and a cantonment for the British troops being built? Well, nothing has happened. After all the fuss, all they've made is the new road in the area of Jan Nisar Khan's Chatta. People here in Delhi have been spreading all sorts of rumours about Lucknow. They say that thousands of houses have been demolished to make an open expanse. But I don't suppose that's so. I expect that nothing more has happened than what you wrote to me. Anyway, however that may be, write and tell me if Nāzīr jī went off all right, and if Sajjad and Akbar and his mother and your father are all well.'

On September 8, 1859, he writes in great depression to Junun:

'The letter with the verses . . . enclosed reached me, and I replied to it, without writing anything about them. I can't contemplate writing Persian. I have no spirit left in me. My friends, my brothers, have all been killed or have disappeared without trace. I have a thousand friends to mourn, grieving alone and comforting myself alone. More than ruined and destitute; my life is ending, and "my foot is in the stirrup". . . .'

He goes on to speak contemptuously of a Persian dictionary which, presumably, Junun had quoted as an authority, corrects a line which Junun had misquoted from the chronogram which he had composed in anticipation that he would die in 1277 AH, denies indignantly that he could ever use the wording that Junun had given, and then gives the full verse (with a slight variation, however, in the first line), concluding: 'I learned this date not from the stars, but by revelation. "Verily we are for God, and verily to Him we shall return."'

He is still in the same mood when he writes on October 1, 1859 to the Nawwab of Rampur: 'I am your servant, and to praise and bless you is my task. Old age has laid me low, and in a little while I shall breathe no more.'

It was perhaps in the same period that he wrote an undated letter to Tufta:

'My friend, the way your mind works beats me! When did I say that your poetry was not good? When did I say that you will find none in the world to understand it and appreciate its worth? But it's true that you are intent on poetry, while all my faculties are intent on attaining oblivion. To me the learning of Avicenna and the poetry of Naziri are alike wasted, and pointless and illusory. To pass one's life one needs a little ease—and all the learning and power and poetry and magic are nothing. What of it if an avatar comes to the Hindus? And what of it if a prophet arises amongst the Muslims? What of it if a man wins fame in the world? And what of it if he lives out his life unknown? Let a man have something to live on, and physical health, and the rest is nothing, my dear friend. As a matter of fact these too are nothing, but I have not yet reached the stage where I realise it. Perhaps in due course this veil too will fall from my eyes, and I shall pass beyond the stage where getting a living,

and enjoying health and pleasure mean anything to me, and pass into a world where sensation ceases.

'In the desolation in which I live I am lost to the whole world, indeed to both worlds. I go on giving my answers to suit the questions I am asked, and behave with every man as our relationship warrants; but it is all illusion in my sight—not a river, but a mirage; not reality, but fantasy. You and I are not bad poets. Suppose I grant we win the same fame as Sadi and Hāfiz. What did their fame bring them? And what would ours bring us? . . .'

But by October 15th he seems to have recovered. He writes to Majruh:

'My dear, you have nothing to do, and you fill in the time by writing letters. Your pen and ink is always ready. If a letter comes back you reply to it; if not, then you take up your pen to grumble and complain and get cross and call me names. Hakim Ashraf Ali came to see me. He had shaved his head. . . . By God, he's a sight to be seen. He told me that Mir Ahmad Ali had come, and that all was well with him again. I gave thanks to God. God grant us once in a while to hear such good news of our friends. Give him my regards and my congratulations. Mind you don't forget!

'My answer to your unwarranted complaints is this: The letter you sent from Panipat said that you were leaving for Karnal. I planned to write to you when I heard from you at Karnal. Well, today is Saturday, 15th October. It is morning. The food isn't even cooked yet. I have just had my cool morning drink. Your letter came; I read it; and I wrote this reply. Kalian is not well, so I'm sending Ayaz with it to the post office. Well, what have you to say? Was your complaint unwarranted, or wasn't it? If you want to complain to anyone, my friend, complain to yourself for waiting so long after you got to Karnal before you wrote to me. . . .'

'As for my pension, don't talk about it. If I get it, I'll let you know. There was talk about re-settling the city, and houses could be had for rent. Four to five hundred houses were re-occupied, and then the order was cancelled. God knows what rule is in force now or what will happen next. . . .'

On October 29, 1859 he writes to Husain Mirza:

'I have already sent off replies to your and Yusuf Mirza's letter . . . Kashi Nath¹ is a careless sort of man. You should send off a letter of instructions to him too. He is always saying that when Husain Mirza writes, it is always to Mirza Noshā.² Don't let him know that I told you this; but write to him about your affairs.

'What can I do? I could say that my very life is yours to command, but that would be mere formal politeness. No one gives his life for another, or asks

¹ Who was acting on Husain Mirza's behalf in Delhi.

² Ghalib's nickname.

another to give his life for him. But the Lord my God knows the thought I take for you and what resources I possess. My resources you too know. . . .

'I write these few lines to tell you that your creditor Chunni Lal came a little while ago. He was asking me about you. I told him a mixture of truth and lies and got him to consider sending you another hundred to two hundred rupees. I talked to him like a *baniya*.¹ "Lala," I said, "when a man wants the fruit of a tree, he first waters it. Husain Mirza is your farm. Water it, and it will give you grain." My friend, that softened him a little. He got me to write down your address and took it away with him saying that he would discuss the matter with his son Ramji Das and would come and let me know what they decided. If he sends you money, what more do you want? And if he writes to you first, be sure to tell him in your reply that what Asadullah told him was quite true and that the matter will shortly be coming to fruition. . . .'

On November 2, 1859 he writes to Aram, asking him why he had not answered the questions which Ghalib had put to him, in some cases as long ago as August:

'If you're cross with me, say so. I am sending this letter unstamped to show you that I want a reply. And listen; there's something else I have to say to you. There are you, behaving as though you'd sworn an oath not to write to me, and here am I, anxious to get all the news about the Governor-General. Keep writing to me, and pass on all the news you hear, especially about what happened in Agra; I want to hear about that in detail. Did the Lieutenant-Governor accompany him there, or did they proceed there separately and meet after their arrival? What happened at the durbar? What awards were made to their well-wishers? Were any new administrative changes introduced, and if so, what are they? Keep me informed of all these things. Now mind, you're not to be idle about this. What have you heard just lately? How far have they come from Lucknow? Will they be coming to Agra via Kanpur and Farrukhabad? Where have they met the local nobility? And whom have they met? Write me whatever you've heard about the durbar at Lucknow. People here get the newspapers regularly, and I read them too, but I want *you* to write regularly and keep me informed, because you will write in greater detail and make matters clearer. I am sure my beloved nephew, your respected father, must have settled that Matter of Mirza Yusuf Ali Khan's successfully with Lala Joti Parshad. I need to know about this too. I expect a reply from you.'

On November 7, 1859 he writes to the Nawwab of Rampur telling him of the honours which the British had once shown him, and the uncertainty of his present position:

'My standing with the British government is that of a hereditary noble. My

¹ A caste of Hindus who deal in grain and in money-lending. 'Lala' is the title by which they are addressed.

income is small, but I am treated with an honour out of proportion to it. In the Government durbars I occupy the tenth place to the right, and the marks of honour prescribed for me comprise a ceremonial robe, seven gifts of cloth, a turban with an embroidered velvet band and jewelled gold ornament to wear in it, a string of pearls and a cloak. I used to receive these up to Lord Hardinge's time. Lord Dalhousie did not come here [to Delhi]. Now the present . . . [Governor-General, Lord Canning] has come. The complexion of the times has changed. I know no one in authority, and no secretary. My great patron and admirer was Mr Edmonstone; he too is no longer Chief Secretary; he has become Lieutenant-Governor [of the Panjab]. Had he still been Secretary I should have had nothing to worry about. To this day I do not know whether I am to regard myself as innocent or guilty, accepted or rejected. Granted that I performed no service to the British that I should merit new honours, still I committed no act of disloyalty, that my former honours should be abridged. Anyway, this is my predicament. My troubles are with me, and the road to remedy is closed. . . .'

The Nawwab wrote in reply that he often spoke of Ghalib in conversations with high British officials, and felt certain that the government would continue the honours formerly shown to him.

On November 8, 1859 he writes to Majruh:

'Friend, I have neither paper nor stamps, and only one unstamped envelope left. I've torn this paper out of a book to write to you, and I'll post it off in the unstamped envelope. Don't worry. Last night some booty came in, and today I'll send out for paper and stamps. It is the morning of Tuesday, 8th November—what the people call "high morning". I got your letter two days ago and today I felt like writing to you; so I'm writing these few lines. . . .'

'How should I know what's going on in the city? There's a thing called "Pown Tuty" been introduced. ["Town Duty"—i.e. a tax levied on all commodities entering the city.] Except grain and cow-dung cakes¹ every single thing is liable for it. All round the Jama Masjid to a radius of twenty-five feet there's to be an open space. Shops and houses will be pulled down. The Dar ul Baqa² will vanish. [There is a play on words here: Dar ul Baqa means literally "House of Eternity".] Nothing but the name of God abides. From Khan Chand's lane to Shah Bula's banyan tree everything will be demolished. The picks and shovels are plying from both sides. Otherwise all is well. We hear that the Highest Ruler [the Governor-General] is coming this way. Let's see whether he visits Delhi, and, if he does, whether he holds a durbar, and if he does, whether this sinner will be invited, and if he is, whether he will get a robe of honour. I've heard nothing about the pension, and no one knows anything about it.'

¹ Used for fuel.

² The seminar for the teaching of literature, medicine and the religious sciences, established by Azurda. The students were maintained free of charge and provided with books.

He gives further news in a letter of November 9, 1859 to Husain Mirza:

'These days a lot of the officials from the Panjab are here. There was a conference about the Pown Tuty [Town Duty]. It was introduced on November 7th, two days ago, and the levying of it has been given to Salig Ram . . ., Chunna Mal and Mahesh Das. Every commodity is taxed except grain and cow-dung cakes. General re-settlement is now permitted,¹ and people are pouring in. Formerly only owner-occupiers were allowed in, and no one was allowed to rent a house; but since the day before yesterday this too has been permitted. But don't get the idea that you or I or anyone else can let any part of his house to a tenant. People who never owned a house and always lived in rented accommodation are taking up residence, but the rent they pay goes to the government.

'Judge for yourself. How can your sister's application be put forward? If she comes in person, and submits an application, and the application is approved, and she gets a house, then somewhere in this great desolate city she will have a mansion, and she will have to live there. How will she manage all alone in this wilderness? She'll be scared to death. And suppose she can steel herself to live here, how will she eat? . . .

'Hakim Ahsanullah Khan has got back his houses in the city, and has been forbidden to leave the city, or indeed to step outside his own door. He is to keep to his house. All Nawwab Hāmid Ali Khan's houses have been confiscated. He and his wife² are living in rented accommodation in Hauz Qazi. He too is not permitted to go out. Mirza Ilahi Bakhsh has been ordered to Karachi. He has stayed put, and is living in Sultan Ji. He is appealing against the order. Let's see whether *he* stays, or whether the order does.'

On November 13, 1859 he writes to Aram:

'I have had two letters from you, and today the newspaper arrived. My cousin Ziya ud Din Khan gets this "*Avadh Akhbar*" and sends it on to me. So I don't need it. Why waste my postage and your own on it? All I wanted was that since you are not far from Farrukhabad and news from there must be reaching you all the time, you should write and tell me whatever you hear. And when the . . . [Governor-General] comes to Agra you should write and tell me what you yourself observe. That's all. I'm putting the newspaper you sent me in a fresh envelope and sending it off today. . . .

'I am very concerned about your father. I pray for him. May God grant my prayer and send him a complete recovery. . . . I got your news of Mirza Yusuf Ali Khan Aziz. He is a man of distinguished family, brought up in every luxury. God will reward you for anything you can do to serve him. . . .'

¹ More than two years after the population of the city had been expelled.

² In the original the word used is 'mamtua'. This indicates that Hāmid Ali Khan was a Shia. In the Shia sect a man may contract with a woman for a specified period of marriage. A 'mamtua' is a woman married under such a contract.

On November 28, 1859 he writes to Yusuf Mirza in an outburst of bitterness:

'Yusuf Mirza, none but my Lord and God knows my plight. Men go mad from excess of cares and sorrows; their reason deserts them. And if amid the griefs that beset me my reflective power is failing, that is no ground for surprise; indeed, not to believe it is monstrous. Grief and cares for what? you may ask. For death; for separation; for my livelihood; for my honour. Whose deaths? Leave aside the Inauspicious Fort,¹ and count up only the men of Delhi: Muzaffar ud Daula;² Mir Nāsir ud din; Mirza Ashur Beg; my nephew's³ son Ahmad Mirza, a mere child of nineteen; Mustafa Khan, son of Azam ud Daula; his two sons Irtiza Khan and Murtaza Khan; Qazi Faizullah. Did I not love these as much as my own kin? Yes, and two more names that I forgot: Hakim Razi ud Din Khan and Mir Ahmad Husain Maikash. O God, O God! What can replace these men? Separation from whom? From Husain Mirza, and Mir Mahdi [Majruh] and Mir Sarfaraz Husain and Miran Sahib—may God preserve them! If only they could have been happy where they are! But their homes are sunk in darkness and they are condemned to wander. When I think of the state in which Sajjad and Akbar are living my heart breaks within me. These are words that any man can say, but I swear to you as Ali is my witness that, grieving for the dead and parted from the living, the world is plunged in darkness in my sight.

'I had one brother, and he died insane. His daughter, his four boys and their mother, my sister-in-law are stranded in Jaipur. In these three years I could not send them a penny. What will my niece be thinking? She must wonder whether she *has* an uncle. Here the wives and children of men who were once wealthy nobles are begging in the streets, and I watch them helplessly. To bear such affliction needs a stout heart.

'Now listen to my own tale of woe. I must support my family—a wife and two children; then there are the servants—Kallu, Kalian and Ayaz. Madari's wife and children are still here as usual; in short, it's as though Madari were still here. Miyan Ghamman had only left me a month when he came back. "I've nothing to eat." "Very well, my friend, you too can stay." Not a penny comes in, and there are twenty mouths to feed. The allowance I get from you know where [Rampur] is just enough to keep body and soul together. And I have so much to do that during the twenty-four hours I get practically no time to myself. There is always something to worry about. I am a man; not a giant, and not a ghost. How am I to sustain such a heavy load of care? I am old and feeble. If you could see me, you would know what a state I am in. I can sit for an hour or two, but I spend the rest of the time lying down—practically confined to my bed. I can neither go out visiting regularly, nor does anyone come to see me. That liquid which sustained me, I can no longer get. And more than

¹ The Red Fort had been called the Auspicious Fort in the days when it was the seat of the Mughal Court.

² Husain Mirza's elder brother and Yusuf Mirza's own uncle.

³ Sister's son.

all this, is all the bustle because of the Governor-General's coming visit. I used to attend the durbar, and receive a robe of honour. I cannot see that happening now. I am neither one of the accepted nor one of the rejected, nor a culprit, nor an informer, nor a conspirator. Well, tell me yourself: if a durbar is held here and I am summoned, where am I to get an offering to present?¹

'I have sweated blood day and night for the past two months to write an ode of sixty-four couplets. I have given it to Muhammad Afzal the painter, and he will let me have it on December 1st. . . . I set myself the task of recording the events of my life in it. I will send you a copy. . . . See how I can write, even though my heart lacks fire,—indeed, lacks life.

'I could not manage a new ode to the Refuge of the World [Wajid Ali Shah, the deposed King of Oudh]. This one [i.e. the one I have already sent] was never presented; so I have put Wajid Ali Shah in Amjad Ali Shah's² place. After all, God himself did the same. Anwari³ repeatedly did this, altering an ode in one man's praise for presentation to another. So if I alter the father's ode to suit the son, that's nothing so terrible, especially amid all the afflictions which I have briefly related to you. And I wrote it not to show my prowess in poetry, but to beg.

'Anyway, tell me, did the ode arrive safely? I had a letter from your uncle two days ago, but he didn't say whether the ode had reached him. Put me out of my uncertainty and write plainly whether it arrived or not. And if it did, has it been presented to His Majesty? And if it has, by whom was it presented? And what orders were given? Write to me quickly about all this. . . .

'I'm waiting for a final decision about my pension; then I shall go to Rampur. Jamadi ul Awwal to Zil Hij⁴ is eight months. Then, with Muharram, the year 1277 will begin. I have to live through perhaps two, perhaps four, perhaps at the most ten or eleven months of it—nineteen to twenty months in all. For that space I shall face whatever grief or joy, whatever humiliation or whatever honour is fated for me, and then, repeating Ali's name I shall depart for the land of oblivion—my body to the realm of Rampur, my soul to the realms of light. O Ali, O Ali, O Ali!

'Let me give you another piece of news, my friend. Brahma's son fell ill; he lay ill for two days, and on the third day died. Ah me, what a nice, inoffensive boy he was! His father Shivji Ram is distraught with grief. Thus I have lost two more companions, for one is dead and one is sick at heart. . . .

'Ziya ud Din Khan went off to Rohtak without attending to that matter [i.e. without sending money to Sajjad Mirza and Husain Mirza—cf. the letter to Yusuf Mirza dated August 18, 1859, given on p. 215 above]. Let's see what he says when he comes back. If he didn't get back last night, he'll be back by this evening. What am I to do? To whom can I open my heart? I promise you by

¹ It was considered obligatory for a man granted audience at court to bring a present suited to his status.

² Father and predecessor of Wajid Ali Shah on the throne of Oudh.

³ The great Persian poet.

⁴ Months of the Muslim calendar.

Ali, I had made up my mind beforehand that I would divide whatever the King of Oudh sends between us, like brothers—half for Husain Mirza and you and Sajjad, and half for me. The poor sustain life by such fancies, but it is by these fancies that the goodness of their hearts is known. Goodbye, and may all end well.'

This letter crossed with one from Yusuf Mirza, and Ghalib writes again on the very next day, November 29, 1859:

'Friend, I posted off a letter to you yesterday morning, and yesterday evening I had another letter from you. It's surprising that Hazrat Zubdat ul Ulama hasn't yet reached there [Calcutta, to ex-King Wajid Ali Shah]. God Almighty protect and preserve him, wherever he may be. . . . All I want is that the ode should be presented and bring something in for you and me. But the few lines in Nazir Ji's [Husain Mirza's] hand on the back of the envelope have dashed all my hopes. I can't see us getting anything.'

He goes on to speak of the virtual impossibility of the family recovering its Delhi properties, and goes on to quote the verse of

'Maulana Ghalib—Peace be upon him:

He who lives on because he hopes to die—
His hopelessness is something to be seen.

I cannot describe the state in which the few lines in your uncle's hand put me. Alas! Alas! that Husain Mirza should have to write, "Where am I to go? And what am I to do?" and that I, wretch that I am, can give no answer. We had high hopes of him [Wajid Ali Shah], and, granted that he could not take him into his service or confer rank. . . . upon him, what was so difficult about granting him a pension of a hundred rupees or so a month? Delhi men, and especially those who held rank under the King, are in such disgrace in every city that people even flee from their shadows. There was a princely court at Murshidabad, and Hyderabad is a really big court; but when you have no one there to provide a link, how can you go? Whom would you make contact with if you did? And what would you say to him? There's nothing for it but to stay where you are, and hope that somehow you can gain access to the King of Oudh. Where else can I advise you to go? . . .'

About this time he writes to Majruh of leaving Delhi, but says he cannot go until he knows how he stands in relation to the coming durbar and how the question of his pension will be settled.

'And even if my pension is restored there is nowhere I can go except Rampur;

and there I shall go, for certain. When I have been steadfast these three years why should I get agitated now? Say no more about it, and whatever happens, don't imagine that it grieves or worries me. . . .'

On December 2, 1859 he writes again. Majruh must have asked him what Delhi was like these days. He replies:

'My friend, what a question to ask! Five things kept Delhi alive—the Fort, the daily crowds at the Jama Masjid, the weekly walk to the Jumna bridge, and the yearly fair of the flower-men.¹ None of these survives, so how could Delhi survive? Yes, there was once a city of that name in the realm of India.

'The Governor-General will be here on December 15th. We shall have to see where he stays and what arrangements are made about the durbar. In former durbars the lords of seven principalities used to be in attendance, and each was received separately—Jhajjar, Bahadurgarh, Ballabgarh, Farrukhnagar, Dujana, Pataudi and Loharu. Four of these have gone. [The British abolished the four first-named after the Mutiny.] Two of the others—Dujana and Loharu—come under the Hansi-Hissar authorities. That leaves Pataudi. If the Hissar Commissioner brings his two here, that will make three nobles. Otherwise only one. In the general durbar all the Hindu notables and so on will be there. Only three [prominent] Muslims are left—Mustafa Khan [Shefta] in Meerut, Maulvi Sadr ud Din Khan in Sultan Ji, and that slave to the things of this world Asad [Ghalib] in Ballimaron. And all three are despised and rejected, destitute and distressed.

We smashed the wine-cup and the flask;
what is it now to us
If all the rain that falls from heaven
should turn to rose-red wine?

If you're coming, come along. Come and see the new road through Nisar Khan's Chatta, and the new road through Khan Chand's Lane. Come and hear how Bulaqi Begam's Lane is to be demolished and an open expanse cleared to a radius of seventy yards from the Jama Masjid. Come and see Ghalib in all his dependency. And then go back. . . .'

On December 13th, 1859 he writes again:

I have no wine: the pen I hold will not
move on.
The wind is cold. O smokeless fire,
where are you?

Mir Mahdi Sahib, it is morning, and freezing cold. The brazier is before me.

¹ Cf. p. 302 below.

I write a word or two, then warm my hands. True, there is warmth in the fire, but alas! where is that liquid fire, two sips of which run coursing through your body the moment you swallow them, bringing strength to the heart, and illumination to the mind and ecstasy to the power of speech? O cruel fate that the lips of one who serves the saki of Kausar,¹ should be parched!

'My friend, you keep on and on about the pension, but . . . it's the durbar and the robe of honour that worries me to death. . . . The Commissioner here has not included my name in the list. I have appealed against this to the Lieutenant-Governor. Let's see what he says in reply . . .'

Three days later, on December 16, 1859, when he writes to Husain Mirza, he has already given up hope:

' . . . On the 19th or 20th December the Governor-General will pitch camp in Meerut, and the durbar will be held there. As for Delhi, it is not certain whether he will come. . . . Your friend too [Ziya ud Din Ahmad Khan] will be going to Meerut tomorrow or the day after, on the orders of the Commissioner of Hansi-Hissar. . . . All my hopes of going there and receiving a robe have vanished. And I don't expect to get the pension either. . . .

'Give my blessing to Yusuf Mirza. Kallu fetched the shoes two days ago. We packed them in a parcel open at both ends, but the post office people sent them back saying that we should pack them in a closed parcel. We did that, and he took them back. "We will accept it at two o'clock," they told him. So he sat and waited, and at nine o'clock at night it was despatched in his presence. He got a receipt for it and came back home. God grant that the shoes reach you safely and that you like them.

'I've given up all hope in the matter of the ode,² but anyway write and tell me what happens just by way of keeping me informed. I was glad to hear that *An Adverse Wind*³ had arrived. All the buildings in Fil-Khana, and Falak Paira and around Lal Diggii⁴ have been pulled down. The fate of Bulaqi Begam's Lane is still undecided. The military is for pulling it down, but the civil authorities want to preserve it. Let's see what happens in the end.'

On December 23, 1859 he writes to Tufta. It seems that someone named Abdur Rahman, a distant kinsman of Ghalib's, had behaved badly towards Tufta, who had asked Ghalib to remonstrate with him. He writes in reply:

'My dearest friend, what are you thinking of? Can every created mortal be a Tufta or a Ghalib?

'Each man was made to fill his proper role. "Last thoughts are best"⁵ Sugar is

¹ Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet, whom Ghalib specially revered, will pour the wine of purity for the blessed in Paradise. Kausar is the name of a spring in Paradise.

² To the ex-king of Oudh.

³ Cf. p. 48 above.

⁴ Names of localities in Delhi.

⁵ i.e. one must think a thing out to the end before deciding how to act.

sweet, salt savoury; and nothing can change a thing's inherent taste. If I write and remonstrate with this man, can't you see what he will think? He will think to himself, "How would Ghalib know who Abdur Rahman is? And what have I got to do with him?" And he's sure to realize that you must have written to me. I shall make myself cheap in his eyes and he'll be even more cross with you. As for what you write about my numbering him among my kinsmen, my gracious friend, I hold all mankind to be my kin and look upon all men—Muslim, Hindu, Christian—as my brothers, no matter what others may think. And as for that kinship which the world calls affinity, in that, community and caste and religion and way of life all have their place, and there are grades and degrees of affinity. Viewed by these standards, you will find that this man isn't related to me in the smallest degree. If I was polite enough to write of him as kinsman, or speak of him of kinsman, what of that? Zain ul Abidin Arif was the son of my wife's sister, and this man is the son of *his* wife's sister. Make what you can of that! In short, when *he* can't behave with ordinary decency, to write to him is pointless, useless, and even harmful.

'I had already heard of your journey to Meerut and your meeting Mustafa Khan [Shefta] there. Now your letter tells me of your arrival at Sikandarabad via Muradabad. May Almighty God in His glory keep you well and happy.'

On December 29, 1859 he writes to Husain Mirza:

'The Lord Sahib's [i.e. the Governor-General's] party arrived about nine in the morning. His tent is pitched opposite Bhula Shah's tomb near the city wall by the Kabuli Gate. The accompanying force occupies the area up to Tis Hazari Bagh.'

He continues after two days:

'Now listen to the tale of Ghalib's troubles. . . . Two days ago I went to [the Governor-General's] camp and saw the Chief Clerk, in whose tent I waited while word was sent to the Secretary. Kallu went along with the orderly. He brought the reply, "Present my compliments and say that I am not free." Well, I returned home. Yesterday I went again, and sent in word that I had come. A message came in reply, "In the days of the Mutiny you took care to keep in the good books of the rebels. Why do you ask to see us now?" The world became dark in my sight. This reply announces an end for ever to all my hopes. . . .

'Yesterday morning Muhammad Quli Khan came with a petition¹ written in English in his hand. He said that Talib Ali . . . had returned it, saying that this was not the occasion to present it. I was just going out at the time. I left, feeling your disappointment and the wound of the unfulfilled desires of my own which I have told you about.

¹ Husain Mirza's.

'Ibrahim Ali Khan has died of dropsy in Alwar. God forgive him his sins and grant me the same fate. . . . I hear that it is proposed to establish in Lahore a department to award compensation, to ten per cent of its value, to citizens whose property was looted by the blacks [the rebel sepoys]. That is, a man who asks a thousand rupees will be given a hundred. As for the plundering which the whites did, that's all pardoned; there will be no compensation for that. . . .

'Why do you speak of "Hämüd Ali Khan's houses"? They were confiscated long ago, and became government property. The grounds look quite different now. There were British soldiers occupying the zenana and the big house. Now the main gate and a whole row of shops have been pulled down, the brick and stone sold by auction, and the proceeds sent to the treasury. Don't get the idea that the rubble sold was Hämüd Ali Khan's. It was its own seized property that the Government demolished. Well, when the King of Oudh's properties are treated as they are, who is going to care about the properties of ordinary citizens? You haven't yet got it into your head what the authorities intend, and you never will. Your Navind Rae, and copies of orders, and appeals mean nothing. The orders issued here in Delhi are the decrees of fate and destiny, against which there is no appeal. Say to yourself, "We never were nobles; rank and wealth were never ours; we had no property, and never drew a pension."

'Rampur shall be my dwelling-place in life and my resting-place when I am dead. It makes me laugh when you write pressing me to go there. I am certain that I shall see the new moon of the month of Rajab . . . in Rampur . . .

'Give my blessings to Yusuf Mirza Khan. I understand the position about the ode and the *mukhammas*.¹ My revered master treats me as a father treats his son. . . . It is his wish that my prayer and praise should each receive its separate reward and recompense. . . . But, my dearest friend, you may judge for yourself that I cannot live on such rewards. And it is futile even to think of it. How much life is left to me? Seven months of this year and twelve of next year. Then in this very month I shall go to my Master, where hunger and thirst and piercing cold and raging heat will be no more. No ruler to be dreaded, no informer to be feared, no rent to be paid, no clothes to be bought, no meat to be sent for, no bread to be baked. A world of light, a state of pure delight.

O Lord, how dear to me is this my wish:
Grant Thou that to this wish I may attain!

The slave of Ali, son of Abi Talib,
Who longs for death's release,
Your servant,
Ghalib.'

On this despondent note the letters for 1859 end.

¹ A poem written in stanzas of five lines.

Chapter 9

1860

He begins 1860 on a more cheerful note, writing to Majruh, on January 1, 1860:

'Where are you, my boy? Where are you roving? Come here and listen to the news. [He then tells him of the Governor-General's durbar and subsequent visit to Delhi and his own lack of success. But he continues:] As for the pension, although there is still no decision one way or the other, I am planning something and we shall see what comes of it. . . .

'Orders have been issued for the general return of the Muslims' properties. Those who had been paying rent for them have now been exempted from paying it. . . . If you think fit, come and take possession of your property. Then stay on here or return [to Panipat] just as you like. . . . Give my blessing to Hakim Mir Ashraf Ali and tell him to write out the prescription for those pills he gave me and send it to me quickly. . . .'

What he was planning in relation to his pension does not become clear until March, when in a letter to Bekhabar (dated only 'March, 1860') he explains what he did after being told that the Chief Secretary would not receive him because he had been a well-wisher of the rebels.

'The next day I wrote a letter¹ in English to the effect that it was sheer conjecture to think that I had been a well-wisher of the rebels, and requesting an investigation so that my name could be cleared and my innocence established.'

Then, either because he decided after all that his hopes were futile, or because he saw no need to stay on in Delhi waiting for the British to reply, he decided to carry out his intention to go to Rampur.

The Nawwab had long been pressing him to come—ever since early 1858, in fact—and letters from him in November 1858 and April 1859 had repeated the invitation. Ghalib had replied that he wished to wait until the British restored his pension, as he was generally confident that they ultimately would. Thus he had written to the Nawwab on April 18, 1859: 'The day after I receive the [pension] money I shall ask you for money to pay for conveyance and portorage; and the day after I receive it I shall start out for Rampur.'

¹ i.e., presumably, had a letter written.

1860

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But, as we have seen, 1859 passed by, and the restoration of his pension was not yet in sight. On December 8, 1859 he had had to ask the Nawwab bluntly for extra money:

'Your draft of Rs. 100 for . . . November 1859 reached me. I drew the money and spent it, and was again hungry and naked. Whom should I tell if not you? If you will send me Rs. 200 over and above my regular allowance, I shall be able to breathe again—provided that it is not reckoned against my allowance, and that you send it very soon.'

The Nawwab sent him the money, and at the same time repeated his invitation to him to come to Rampur. Ghalib had in any case intended to accept the invitation in due course, and in the circumstances probably felt that he could not reasonably delay much longer.

On the way to Rampur, on January 21, 1860 he wrote to Tufta:

'My friend, I have left Delhi for Rampur. I reached Muradnagar on Thursday 19th and Meerut on Friday 20th. Today, Saturday 21st, I am staying on at the insistence of our friend Mustafa Khan [Shefta], and I'm posting off this letter to you from here. Tomorrow I shall stay at Shahjahanpur and the day after at Garhmukteshar, and then go on to Rampur via Muradabad. So send your next letter to me to Rampur. All the address you need write is my name, and Rampur. This is enough for now. I will write to you again from Rampur.'

He also wrote from Meerut on the same day to Hakim Ghulam Najaf Khan giving him the same information and adding:

'It's nine o'clock [a.m.], and I'm sitting here writing to you. I am getting my food free, and shall stuff myself to my heart's content. . . . I've got the two boys to write to their grandmother [Ghalib's wife] and am sending their letters off. Go to my house with this letter and read it out to your teacher [Ghalib's wife] and tell her that I am safe and sound. . . .

'I've thought it best to tell you the stages of my proposed journey, but now if anyone asks you, tell him plainly that I'm in Rampur. Don't make a secret of it. I want every one to know the position plainly.'

Tufta, as usual, was not content to address his letters in the (in his view) inadequate style Ghalib had suggested. Ghalib's next letter (undated) rebukes him:

'You say that your son doesn't know the world, but you're no better yourself. Tell me first, who in Rampur doesn't know me? Do you think they know Maulvi Wajih uz Zaman Sahib better? [Tufta had presumably addressed Ghalib in his care.] His house is a long way from mine. And I'm not at the

Nawwab's court. He entertained me in his own mansion for four days, and then I asked for separate accommodation. . . . It so happens that the post-office is near where I am living, and the post-office clerk has got to know me. Letters reach me from Delhi all the time addressed with my name and "Rampur", and that's all. . . . In fact if you address me c/o the Maulvi Sahib and the Court your letters may go astray. . . .'

He was very well satisfied with the treatment he received at Rampur. He writes to Hakim Ghulam Najaf Khan on February 3, 1860:

'Write and tell me in detail any fresh news of what is going on in Delhi. And now let me tell you my news: I am treated with great honour. I have met the Nawwab three times, and have been given a house which is three or four houses in one. There is no stone here . . . and only a handful of the houses are brick-built. Mud walls and tiled roofs—the whole population lives in this kind of house, and my houses too are of the same kind. So far we have not discussed anything together. I shall not make the first move, and he too will not speak to me directly, but through his officials. Let me see what he has to say and what allowance he will make me. I had thought that once I arrived here, things would be settled very quickly, but so far—and today is Friday, my eighth day here—nothing has been said. The Nawwab has both meals sent to me every day, and there is enough food for all of us. It's not unacceptable to my taste either. As for the water, I cannot find words to express my thanks to God for it. There's a river here called the Kosi. God be praised! Its water is so sweet that you would think it was diluted sherbet—clear, light, refreshing and quickly assimilated. For these eight days I have been safe from attacks of constipation. I develop a really good appetite in the mornings. The boys are thriving and my servant [unnamed] well and strong. True, Inayat [another servant, says Mihr] has been out of sorts for the last two days, but he'll soon be well. . . .'

On February 14, 1860 he writes again to Hakim Ghulam Najaf Khan: 'My friend, you ought to have opened the letter. . . . It wasn't from the Lieutenant-Governor, but from the Chief Secretary to the Governor-General.' [He then translates it into Urdu. It is dated January 27, 1860, and is to the effect that the Governor-General has received Ghalib's petition and will reply after due enquiry has been made.]

'The position here is that the Lieutenant-Governor is coming to Muradabad from Agra. Muradabad is twelve *kos*¹ from here. The Nawwab is away on a tour of his dominions, but he will be back in three or four days, and if he goes to Muradabad to meet the Lieutenant-Governor, I shall go with him. True, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North Western Provinces has nothing to do

¹ About 18 miles.

with Delhi, but let me see what comes of the interview. I will write and let you know what happens.

'What is this that you write, telling me to write home¹ more often? The letters I write to you are in effect written to her too. Is it too much to ask of you to go and read them to her? Now she will be wondering what was in the English letter. Take this letter of mine with you and go and read it to her word for word.

'The boys are both well. Sometimes they amuse me, and sometimes they plague me. Their goats, and pigeons, and quails, and their kites—small and big—are all in good order. I gave them their two rupees apiece for February, and they spent it all in the first ten days. Then two days ago the younger gentleman came to me and said, "Grand-dad, give me something on indefinite loan." So I gave him something. Today is the 14th, and the end of the month is a long way off. Let's see how many times he comes back to borrow more. . . .

'Ask at home whether Kidar Nath has paid all the servants. I have sent the pay for all of them—even the sweeper. . . .'

On March 1, 1860 he writes to Tufta:

'Nothing is fixed yet. At present it seems that the Lieutenant-Governor will be coming to Muradabad, and thence to Rampur. After he leaves I shall be in a position to know whether I am going to stay here or not. If I do, I intend to send for you at once, so that we can spend together whatever days of life are left to me.'

However, he did not stay on in Rampur. In a letter to Aram dated March 14, 1860 he says, 'I am leaving for Delhi on Saturday, March 17th'—without, however, giving any explanation of his departure. There is a hint in a letter to Yusuf Mirza written on April 2, 1860, which tells us that he arrived back in Delhi on March 25th, the first day of Ramzan, the Muslim month of fasting, and adds: 'The children made my life a misery: otherwise I would have stayed a few days more.'

But a letter of April 6, 1860, to Majruh is more explicit. Majruh had apparently been surprised to learn of Ghalib's return to Delhi. Ghalib rebukes him with mock solemnity:

'Mir Mahdi, have you forgotten my accustomed ways? Have I ever once missed listening to the recitation of the Quran at the Jama Masjid during the blessed month of Ramzan? How could I stay in Rampur during this month? The Nawwab tried to detain me, and tried very hard, in fact, tempting me all the time with the prospect of the mangoes I would get there during the rains. But, my friend, I would have none of it, and moved to such purpose that I reached here on the night of the new moon [from which Ramzan begins]. The holy

¹ i.e. to his wife.

month began on the Sunday. And from that day to this I have been present every morning at Hāmid Ali Khan's mosque to hear the reverend Maulvi Jafar Ali Sahib's reading of the Quran. Every night I go to the Jama Masjid to say the *tarawih* prayer.¹ Sometimes, when I feel so inclined, I go into the Mahtab Garden at sunset and break my fast there and take a draught of cold water. And, oh, how happily the days pass by!

'And now let me tell you the real facts. I took the boys with me to Rampur and they made my life there a misery. I didn't like to send them back on their own. If anything should happen to them on the way, I thought, I should never live it down. So I came away sooner than I had intended; otherwise I should have passed the hot season and the rains there. Now, if I live, and if I can go there alone, I shall return after the rains,² and not come back here for a long, long time. The position is that ever since July 1859—that is, for the last ten months—the Nawwab has been sending me a hundred rupees a month. When I got to Rampur he paid me an additional hundred rupees a month, calling it "hospitality allowance". This meant that as long as I stayed in Rampur I should get two hundred a month, whereas in Delhi I should get only a hundred. Well, my friend, the point is not whether I get two hundred or a hundred. The point is that the Nawwab treats me as his friend and his ustad, and gives me my allowance in that spirit, and not as though I were his employee. It was as a friend too that he always met me, with the deference and warmth which friends observe in their intercourse with one another. I had the boys offer presents when we were received, and that was all. Anyway, I'm fortunate; I must be thankful that my daily bread is well provided for. Why should I complain that it is not enough?'

He goes on to speak of the unjust (as he believed) reduction of his pension all those years ago to a mere 750 rupees a year, but recalls with satisfaction the honour formerly shown him both by the British and by the Mughal King. He goes on:

'And so, my dear friend, things are back to where they were. I sit in my little room with the *khas* screen in place.³ A breeze is blowing; a full pitcher of water is beside me, and I am smoking the hookah and writing you this letter. I felt like talking to you, so I did. . . .'

Ghalib's return to Delhi gave rise to a good deal of speculation, some of which he reports in a letter to Tufta dated March 30, 1860:

'You know that I went to Rampur at the end of January and returned at the

¹ A special prayer of twenty genuflexions performed at night-time during Ramzan.

² —that is, late in October or early in November,—letter of April 29, 1860, to Yusuf Mirza.

³ In the hot season screens of a particular fragrant grass called *khas*, drenched in water, are placed at the doors so that the air is cooled as it passes into the rooms.

end of March. Do you know what people here are saying about me? One lot says, "This man was the ustad of the Nawwab of Rampur and has been to visit him there. If nothing else, the Nawwab must have given him at least five thousand rupees." Another group says, "He went there to look for a job, but he couldn't get one." Another says, "The Nawwab gave him a job, and fixed his salary at two hundred rupees a month. But the Lieutenant-Governor came to Rampur from Allahabad, and when he found out that Ghalib was employed there he told the Nawwab that if he wanted to continue in his favour he must dismiss him; and so the Nawwab gave him the sack". And now you've heard all that, let me tell you the facts. Nawwab Yusuf Ali Khan has been my friend for thirty-one years and my shagird for five or six years. He used to send me money from time to time and now regularly sends me a hundred rupees a month—since July 1859. He had often invited me to Rampur, and now I have been there. I stayed two months, and then came back. If I live, I shall go again after the rains. But by God's grace I shall get my hundred rupees a month whether I am here or there.'

He had suffered one disappointment before he left Rampur. The letter of March 1860 to Bekhabar, already quoted above, tells us that in February he received an official letter rejecting his request for an investigation into his conduct during the Mutiny. Not for the first time, he concluded that he could no longer hope for anything from the British.

It is with some astonishment, therefore, that he writes to Tufta on April 16, 1860:

'I have something remarkable to tell you—something which will occasion you the greatest astonishment and the greatest pleasure. I had given up all hope that the British authorities would renew my pension. The list of pensioners had at last been made out here and sent to higher authority, and the Commissioner here had written of me that I did not merit a pension. The government has acted in despite of his opinion and issued orders for the renewal of my pension. The order has reached here, and has become generally known; and I too have heard of it. Now it is said that payments will begin next month, that is from May 1st. Let us see what instructions have been given about the arrears.'

At the end of the same month of April he is able to report to Sarur:

'My position, in general terms, is this, that my relations . . . with the authorities . . . have been restored. I had sent by post to the Lieutenant-Governor of the North Western Provinces a copy of *Dastambu*. I have received . . . a reply from him in Persian, praising its style and accepting the sincerity of my devotion and love. Then I had sent an ode celebrating the spring and telling his praises. I have had an acknowledgement of this, in which I am addressed in my former style of "Khan Sahib, our most kind well-wisher and friend", written on paper

sprinkled with gold dust. Then I had sent a panegyric in praise of Mr Robert Montgomery, Lieutenant-Governor of the Panjab, through the . . . Commissioner of Delhi. In reply to this too came a letter, through the Commissioner, expressing his pleasure.'

Subsequent letters show that Ghalib's information proved to be reliable, and that furthermore the arrears due to him for the whole period since May 1857 were granted him. They also show how little was left of them once he had settled, for the time being, with his creditors. There are several letters which give the details, but the fullest is that to Tufta dated May 6, 1860:

'I've just had your letter, and am writing this reply immediately after reading it. How do you make out that three years' arrears amounts to some thousands of rupees? My pension is seven hundred and fifty rupees a year. Three years at this rate comes to two thousand, two hundred and fifty. I had been given a grant in aid of a hundred. This was deducted, and another hundred and fifty was accounted for by miscellaneous items. That left two thousand. My agent in these matters is a baniya, to whom I owe a debt of long standing. He kept the two thousand, and asked me to settle accounts with him. The principal and interest worked out at Rs. 1493. We calculated other miscellaneous debts at the same rate and they came to a few rupees over eleven hundred. So the 1500 and the 1100 made 2600—six hundred more than the two thousand. He wants me to pay him his 1500, and keep the 507. I want him to share the 2000 half and half, arguing that the miscellaneous debts come to 1100, leaving 900. He came with the money two days ago—on the 4th—and up to yesterday we hadn't reached a settlement. I'm not hurrying matters. One or two other moneylenders are involved. The thing will take a week to settle. . . .'

What exactly was settled we do not know, but we find him writing two months later, on July 8, 1860, to Ala ud Din Ahmad Khan Alai: 'After paying off all my debts I was left with four hundred rupees still to pay, and only eighty-seven rupees, eleven annas in hand.'

Not only was the lump sum swallowed up in this way; a change was introduced in the method of payment which involved him in further debt. He writes to Tufta on July 20, 1860:

'At the end of June orders were received from the Panjab authorities directing that established pensioners should in future be paid not monthly but twice-yearly. I was obliged to go to the moneylender and borrow money on interest, so that I should have something to supplement my income from Rampur. I shall be paying interest on the loan over the next six months, and that means a substantial loss.

We know the rite in hour of the dead
Called the 'six-monthly'—all observe it here.
But see *my* case: men, while I still live on,
Celebrate *my* six-monthly twice a year.'

In actual fact the changed method of payment was not introduced right away, as a letter of September 1860 to Sarur shows:

'I am getting my money month by month; but this will last only three months more—September, October and November. As from December 1860 it will be paid twice-yearly. Moreover there is going to be a cut of 4 per cent. At this rate I shall lose two and a half rupees a month.'

There has been much speculation about what led the British authorities to restore Ghalib's pension. Ghalib himself had hoped that the Nawwab of Rampur could influence them in this direction, and his efforts may indeed have played a part, for Ghalib's statement in one of his letters that the restoration of the pension was not the Nawwab's doing, but God's, does not necessarily contradict this. Ikram argues that the efforts of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan probably played a decisive part. He writes:

'Maulana Abul Kalam Azad says that Sir Sayyid exerted every effort to get Ghalib's pension restored . . . and there are signs which support this statement. . . . On his return journey [from Rampur] he stopped at Muradabad, and Sir Sayyid, who was at that time Sadr us Sudur¹ there, went to the inn where he was staying and brought him to his own house. It is reasonable to assume that during his stay he told all his troubles to Sir Sayyid, and that Sir Sayyid used the influence which he had acquired after the Mutiny to remedy them. Possibly because Sir Sayyid was a government employee, or perhaps from some other consideration, it was not considered advisable to speak of these efforts. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's statement also seems plausible because it was in March 1860 that Ghalib stayed with Sir Sayyid and the restoration of the pension was made only a month or two later, in May, 1860.'

However that may be, Hali's account (in his life of Sir Sayyid) of Ghalib's stay at Muradabad on this occasion is interesting. It shows amongst other things that any sense of estrangement that may have arisen over the *Ain i Akbari* incident some years earlier was now ended. He writes:

'Sir Sayyid used to say that when he was in Muradabad, Ghalib had gone to visit . . . Nawwab Yusuf Ali Khan at Rampur. "I did not know he had gone there, but during his return journey to Delhi I heard that he had stopped at Muradabad and was staying at an inn. I at once went there and brought him

¹ A judicial post of some importance.

and his luggage and all his companions to my house." It would seem that when Sir Sayyid had refused to print Ghalib's introduction [to *Ain i Akbari*], the two men had kept at a distance and felt a certain reserve towards each other, and that this was why Ghalib had not informed him of his coming to Muradabad. Anyway, when Ghalib arrived at Sir Sayyid's house from the inn and got out of the palanquin, he had a bottle [of wine] in his hand. He took it into the house and put it down in a place where anyone who passed could see it. Sir Sayyid later picked it up and put it in a store-room. When Ghalib found the bottle missing he got very upset. Sir Sayyid said, "Don't worry, I've put it in a safe place." Ghalib replied, "Show me where, my friend." Sir Sayyid then took him to the store-room and produced the bottle. Ghalib took the bottle from him and held it up to look at it, and then said with a smile, "There's some missing, my friend. Tell me truly, who's had it? Perhaps that's why you took it away to the store-room. Hāfiz was right:

These preachers show their majesty in mosque
and pulpit
But once at home it is far other things they do.'

Sir Sayyid laughed and made no reply, and in this way the sense of strain between them that had lasted for several years was removed. Ghalib stayed on for a day or two and then returned to Delhi.'

When the arrears of his pension were swallowed up in paying off his accumulated debts, Sarur suggested that he should write an ode in praise of the Nizam of Hyderabad and allow him to have it presented on Ghalib's behalf by an intermediary at the Nizam's court. The proposal depressed him, and he replied in an undated letter showing how fate had always frowned on him in these matters:

'First let me write of some matters which you will at first sight think irrelevant. I was five years old when my father died, and nine when my uncle died. In place of the income from his estate, I and my blood relations were to be granted ten thousand rupees a year from the estate of Nawwab Ahmad Bakhsh. He refused to give more than three thousand a year, of which my own personal share amounted to seven hundred and fifty. I pointed out this misappropriation to the British government. Colebrooke Sahib Bahadur (the Resident of Delhi) and Stirling Sahib Bahadur, Secretary to the government at Calcutta, were in agreement with me that my rights must be restored. But the Resident was dismissed and the Secretary met an untimely death.

'After a lapse of many years the King of Delhi appointed me to a pension of fifty rupees a month, and the heir apparent to one of four hundred rupees a year. Two years later, the heir apparent died.

'Wajid Ali Shah, King of Oudh's court appointed a sum of five hundred rupees a year to be paid me in reward for my odes of praise. He too did not

survive more than two years, by which I mean that though he still survives, his kingdom was destroyed, and destroyed within those two years. The kingdom of Delhi was a little more tenacious of life. I drew my daily bread from it for seven years before it was destroyed. There are no stars so baneful as those that kill my patrons and destroy my benefactors. Now if I turn to the ruler of the Deccan [the Nizam's dominions, Hyderabad], mark my words, my intermediary will die, or fall from office, or if neither of these things happens, then his efforts on my behalf will be fruitless and the ruler will give me nothing. And if by any chance he does, then his state will be levelled in the dust and put under the asses' plough.

'And suppose I put all that aside and make up my mind to write a panegyric. Well, I can make up my mind to it, but not carry it through. Fifty to fifty-five years of practice have given me a certain talent, but I have no strength left in me. I sometimes look at the prose and verse which I wrote in former days; I know that it is mine, but I am lost in wonderment that I could write such prose and compose such verse. Abdul Qādir Bedil spoke as though with my tongue when he wrote:

My story echoes round the world—and I am
nothing.

My life is ending, and my heart and mind are spent. My hundred rupees from Rampur and my sixty rupees' pension suffice amply for my maintenance. Fluctuations of prices are always with us. For better or for worse, the work of this world goes on. Caravan upon caravan is ready to depart. See, Munshi Nabi Bakhsh [Haqir] was younger than I, but he died last month. Where shall I find the strength to write a panegyric? And if I make up my mind to it, how shall I find the leisure? And if I write it, and send it to you, and you send it to the Deccan, when will our intermediary find an opportunity of presenting it? And if he does, what will be the response? Do you think I shall live to see all these stages passed? "Verily we are for God, and Verily to Him we shall return. There is no god but God, and none who may be worshipped but He, and nothing exists but God, and God was when no other thing was, and God is now just as He was."'

All the same, the restoration of his pension and of his standing with the British must have been a source of much satisfaction to him. Another welcome event of the same time was a move to re-issue his Urdu diwan. Here he inadvertently landed himself in difficulties. He explains in a letter to Aram dated April, 1860:

'Let me tell you the facts about my diwan being printed at Meerut. Then you can have your say. I was still in Rampur when I received a letter headed "Petition of Azīm ud Din Ahmad, of Meerut". May God strike me if I know who this Azīm ud Din is or what profession he follows. Anyway, I read the