AN INTRODUCTION BY THE PUBLISHER OF THIS BOOK

To Almighty God be praise, for the blessings with which He has showered us throughout our days. To proceed: Rāfaʾīl Kaḥlā, of Damascus,15 humble seeker of the mercy of his Lord the Preserver and Protector, declares: When I perused this book entitled Leg over Leg, I found it provided a wealth of useful information through its enumeration of many synonymous and lexically associated words in a style clear and admirable, presented in a manner both fascinating and delectable. This is especially so, given that it encompasses all the names of instruments and tools that need to be known and provides a complete reckoning of all types of foods, drinks, perfumes, clothes, furniture, shoes, jewelry, and gems, the like of which is to be found in no other book in this form, while any items that may have been omitted in the relevant chapter—and they are few—have been mentioned by the author in the table enumerating synonyms.16 I also found that a further excellent feature of the book is its inclusion of prose and poetry, sermons and maqāmahs, aphorisms and philosophical critiques, conversations and idioms, double entendres and puns, and amusing dialogues and expressions, so that the reader will never grow bored perusing it, even if he reads it over and over again.

Among the most entertaining of the aforesaid conversations are those to be found in Chapter 9 of Book One, chapters 18 and 20 of Book Three, chapters 2, 6, and 10 of Book Four, and elsewhere, and of the idioms, those to be found in chapters 18 and 20 of Book One,
in the sermon in Book Two, in Chapter 5 of Book Two, as well as in many other places. The puns are almost too many to count; anyone reading the book is asked to turn the pages slowly and focus closely in order to uncover the hidden meanings conveyed through jokes and the other excellent features that have been placed within its separate chapters. Another of the book’s excellent qualities is that, when it mentions something, it says everything there is to say about it, while also taking into consideration every aspect of any similar words.

0.3.3 In sum, I would make so bold as to say that the author, having once opened the door to this strange style of writing, has as quickly shut it again and that hereafter the book will never be challenged, for it has covered all the most celebrated oddities of the language that the reader might want to know. This being the case, when I saw the abundant useful literary items and linguistic rarities that it contained and became convinced that it would appeal to scholars and people of sound taste, I asked God for proper guidance as to its printing and promotion, so that its benefits might be generally enjoyed and it might be easy to obtain.

0.3.4 As to what it contains at the beginning by way of disrespectful comments directed against persons named by the author, I would have preferred that those names “had not been mentioned,” but the author imposed the condition on me—before printing went ahead—that I should leave nothing out of the book, and he has imposed the same on all his readers, a fact to which he alludes in the Proem when he says, “[Beware lest you]... think of using it in abbreviated form.” I decided therefore that the small amount of condemnation that might result from making those names explicit was no reason—when measured against the many benefits that would accrue from the book as a whole—to stop its promotion and acceptance.

0.3.5 Here then, Reader, is a novel and unprecedented treasure for you, a precious gift to be treated with care. Scrutinize it closely when reading it and give it your undivided attention, so that its
veiled meanings may appear, its enigmatic constructions become clear, and do not treat it as you would any other well-known work, for it is an innovation singular beyond compare.

Finally, we apologize to you for certain mistakes that occurred during printing, most of which are limited to the vowelling of little known words and are, anyway, very few. Nor do they occur in all the copies printed, as we managed to catch and correct some. Few books on the oddities of language are completely without such errors and we hope you will be gracious enough to match them against the table of corrigenda and correct them with your pens; the author confesses his shortcomings, confession erases commission, and none is perfect but God alone, from whom we ask forgiveness and aid.