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Leg over Leg recounts the life, from birth to middle age, of ‘the Fariyaq,’ alter ego of Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, a pivotal figure in the intellectual and literary history of the modern Arab world. The always edifying and often hilarious adventures of the Fariyaq, as he moves from his native Lebanon to Egypt, Malta, Tunis, England and France, provide the author with grist for wide-ranging discussions of the intellectual and social issues of his time, including the ignorance and corruption of the Lebanese religious and secular establishments, freedom of conscience, women’s rights, sexual relationships between men and women, the manners and customs of Europeans and Middle Easterners, and the differences between contemporary European and Arabic literatures. Al-Shidyaq also celebrates the genius and beauty of the classical Arabic language.

Akin to Sterne and Rabelais in his satirical outlook and technical inventiveness, al-Shidyaq produced in *Leg Over Leg* a work that is unique and unclassifiable. It was initially widely condemned for its attacks on authority, its religious skepticism, and its “obscenity,” and later editions were often abridged. This is the first English translation of the work and reproduces the original Arabic text, published under the author’s supervision in 1855.

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