

The first letter of the alphabet [according to the order in which the letters are now commonly disposed; and also according to the original order, which see in art. ا ب ج د]: called **ألف**. [This name, like most of the other names of Arabic letters, is traceable to the Phœnician language, in which it signifies "an ox;" the ancient Phœnician form of the letter thus called being a rude representation of an ox's head.] It is, of all the letters, that which is most frequent in speech: and some say that, in **آل**, in the Kur [ch. ii. &c.], it is a name of God. (TA.) Its name is properly fem., as is also that of every other letter; [and hence its pl. is **ألفات**]; but it may be made masc.: so says Ks: Sb says that all the letters of the alphabet are masc. and fem., like as **البان** is masc. and fem. (M.) As a letter of the alphabet, it is abbreviated, [or short, and is written **ا**, as it also is generally when occurring in a word, except at the end, when, in certain cases, it is written **ى**], and is pronounced with a pause after it: and it is also prolonged: (S, K, TA:) [in the latter case, it is written **آ**; and] this is the case when it is made a subst.: and when it is not called a letter, [i.e. when one does not prefix to it the word **حرف**], it is [properly] fem. (S.) Its dim. is **ألفية**, meaning *an a written small, or obscure*, (S, IB,) according to those who make it fem. and who say, **زَيْتٌ زَائِيًا** and **زَيْتٌ ذَائِيًا**; but **زَيْتٌ زَائِيًا** according to those who say, **زَيْتٌ أَوْيَةٌ**. (IB.)—**ألف** [properly so called] is one of the letters of prolongation and of softness and of augmentation; the letters of augmentation being ten, which are comprised in the saying, **أَلْيَوْمَ تَنْسَاهُ** ["to-day thou wilt forget it"]. (S.) There are two species of **الف**; namely, **لينة** [or *soft*], and **متحركة** [or *movent*]; the former of which is [properly] called **ألف**; and the latter, **همزة**, (S, TA;) which is a faucial letter, pronounced in the furthest part of the fauces [by a sudden emission of the voice after a total suppression, so that it resembles in sound a feebly-uttered **ع**, whence the form of the character (◌) whereby it is represented]: but this latter is sometimes tropically called **الف**; and both [as shown above] are of the letters of augmentation. (S in art. او, and TA.) There are also two other species of **الف**; namely, **ألف وصل** [the *alif of conjunction or connexion, or the conjunctive or connexive alif*]; and **ألف قطع** [the *alif of disjunction, or the disjunctive alif*]; every one that is permanent in the connexion of words being of the latter species; and that which is not permanent, [i. e. which is not pronounced, unless it is an *alif of prolongation*], of the former species; and this is without exception augmentative; [but it is sometimes a substitute for a suppressed radical letter, as in **أَبْن**, originally **بَنَى** or **بَنُو**]; whereas the *alif of*

disjunction is sometimes augmentative, as in the case of the interrogative *alif* [to be mentioned below, and in other cases]; and sometimes radical, as in **أَخَذَ** and **أَمَرَ**: (S, TA:) or, according to Ahmad Ibn-Yahya and Mohammad Ibn-Yezced, (T, TA,) the primary **ألفات** are three; the rest being subordinate to these: namely, **ألف أصلية** [radical *alif*], (T, K, TA,) as in **أَكَلَ** and **أَلَفَ** (T) and **أَخَذَ** (K); and **ألف قطعية** [disjunctive *alif*], as in **أَحْمَدُ** (T, K) and **أَحْمَرُ** (T) and **أَحْسَنُ** (T, K); and **ألف وصلية** [conjunctive or connexive *alif*], (T, K,) as in **أَسْتَخْرِجُ** (T) and **أَسْتَخْرِجُ** (T, K).—The **ألف** which is one of the letters of prolongation and of softness is called **الألف الساكنة** [the *quiescent alif*], and **الألف الهادئة** [the *quiescent alif*], which signifies the same: (MF, TA:) it is an aerial letter, (Mughnee, MF, TA,) merely a sound of prolongation after a *fet-hah*; (T, TA;) and cannot have a vowel, (IB, Mughnee, MF,) wherefore it cannot commence a word: (Mughnee:) when they desire to make it movent, if it is converted from **و** or **ى**, they restore it to its original, as in **عَصَوَانٍ** and **رَحِيَانٍ**; and if it is not converted from **و** or **ى**, they substitute for it *hemzeh*, as in **رَسَائِلُ**, in which the *hemzeh* is a substitute for the **ا** in [the sing.] **رِسَالَةٌ**. (IB.) IJ holds that the name of this letter is **لَا**, [pronounced *lá* or *lé*, without, or with, *imáleh*, like the similar names of other letters, as **بَا** and **تَا** and **ثَا** &c.], and that it is the letter which is mentioned [next] before **ى** in reckoning the letters; the **ا** being prefixed to it because it cannot be pronounced at the beginning of its name, as other letters can, as, for instance, **ص** and **ج**; and he adds that the teachers [in schools] err in pronouncing its name **ألف**. (Mughnee.)—The grammarians have other particular appellations for *alifs*, which will be here mentioned. (T, TA.)—**الألف المجهولة** [The *unknown alif*] is such as that in **فَاعِلٌ** [or **فَاعِلٌ**] and **فَاعُولٌ**; i. e., every **ا**, (T, K,) of those having no original [from which they are converted, not being originally **ا** nor **و** nor **ى**, but being merely a formative letter, and hence, app., termed "unknown"], (T,) inserted for the purpose of giving fulness of sound to the *fet-hah* in a verb and in a noun; (T, K;) and this, when it becomes movent, becomes **و**, as in the case of **خَاتَمٌ** and **خَوَاتِمٌ**, becoming **و** in this case because it is movent, and followed by a quiescent **ا**, which **ا** is the **ا** of the pl., and is also *مجهولة*. (T.)—**ألفات البدات** [The *alifs of prolongations*] are such as those [which are inserted for the same purpose of giving fulness of sound to the *fet-hah*] in **دَانَاقٌ**, for **كُنْكَلٌ**, and **خَاتَمٌ**, for **كُنْكَالٌ**, and **دَانَقٌ**. (T, K.) In like manner, **و** is inserted after a *dammeh*, as in **أَنْظُرُ**; and **ى** after a *kesreh*,

as in **شِمَالٌ**. (TA.) An *alif* of this species is also called **ألف الإشباع** [The *alif added to give fulness of sound to a fet-hah* preceding it]: and so is the *alif* in **مَنَا** used in imitation [of a noun in the accus. case; as when one says, **رَأَيْتُ رَجُلًا** (pronounced **رَجُلًا**) "I saw a man," and the person to whom these words are addressed says, **مَنَا** *Whom?*]. (Mughnee.)—**ألف الصلة** [The *alif of annexation, or the annexed alif*], is that which is an annex to the *fet-hah* of a rhyme, (T, K,) and to that of the fem. pronoun **هَا**: in the former case as in **بَانَتْ سَعَادٌ وَأَمْسَى حَبْلُهَا أَنْقَطَا** in which **ا** is made an annex to the *fet-hah* of the **ع** [of the rhyme]; and in the saying in the Kur [xxxiii. 10], **وَتَنْظُنُونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا**, in which the **ا** after the last **ن** is an annex to the *fet-hah* of that **ن**; and in other instances in the final words of verses of the Kur-án, as **قَوَائِرَا** and **سَلْسَبِلَا** [in lxxvi. 15 and 18]: in the other case as in **ضَرَبَتْهَا** and **مَرَرْتُ بِهَا**. (T.) The difference between it and **ألف الوصل** is, that the latter is in the beginnings of nouns and verbs, and the former is in the endings of nouns [and verbs]. (T, K.) It is also called **ألف الإطلاق** [The *alif of unbinding*, because the vowel ending a rhyme prevents its being *مُقَدَّر*, i. e. "bound" by the preceding consonant]; (Mughnee;) and **ألف الفاصلة** [the *alif of the final word of a verse of poetry or of a verse of the Kur-án or of a clause of rhyming prose*]. (TA.) [This last appellation must not be confounded with that which here next follows.]—**الألف الفاصلة** [The *separating alif*] is the **ا** which is written after the **و** of the pl. to make a separation between that **و** and what follows it, as in **شَكُرُوا** (T, K) and **كَفَرُوا**, and in the like of **يَغْزُوا** and **يَدْعُوا** [and **يَرْضُوا**]; but when a pronoun is affixed to the verb, this **ا**, being needless, does not remain: (T:) also the **ا** which makes a separation between the **ن** which is a sign of the fem. gender and the heavy [or doubled] **ن** [in the corroborated form of the aor. and imperative], (T, K,) because a triple combination of **ن** is disliked, (T,) as in **يَفْعَلْنَ** and **لَا تَفْعَلْنَ** and **أَفْعَلْنَ** (T, K) and **لَا تَفْعَلْنَ**. (T.)—**ألف الثنون الخفيفة** [The *alif of the light, or single, noon in the contracted corroborated form of the aor. and imperative*], as in the phrase in the Kur [xcvi. 15], **تَسْفَعُ بِالنَّاصِيَةِ** [explained in art. **سَفَع**], (T, K,) and the phrase [in xii. 32], **وَلْيَكُونَا مِنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ** [And he shall assuredly be of those in a state of vileness, or ignominy], in both of which instances the pause is made with **ا** [only, without *tenween*, so that one says **تَسْفَعَا** and **لْيَكُونَا**, and this seems to be indicated in Expositions of the Kur-án as the proper pronunciation of these two words in the phrases here cited, the former of which, and the first word of the latter,