

Arabian Nights

Retold by Patrick Healy

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ARABIAN NIGHTS

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The Arabian Nights

The Sultan Schahriar had a wife whom he loved more than all the world, and his greatest happiness was to surround her with splendour, and to give her the finest dresses and the most beautiful jewels. It was therefore with the deepest shame and sorrow that he accidentally discovered, after several years, that she had deceived him completely, and her whole behaviour turned out to have been so bad, that he felt he had to carry out the law of the land, and order the grand-vizier to put her to death. He was so upset that he almost went mad, and he declared that he was quite sure that all women were as wicked as the queen, if you could only find them out, and that the fewer the world contained the better. So every evening he married a new wife and had her strangled the following morning in front of the grand-vizier, whose duty it was to provide these unhappy brides for the Sultan. The poor man fulfilled his task with reluctance, but there was no escape, and every day saw a girl married and a wife dead.

This behavior caused the greatest horror in the town, where nothing was heard but cries. In one house was a father weeping for the loss of his daughter, in another perhaps a mother trembling for the fate of her child and instead of the blessings that had formerly been heaped on the Sultan's head, the air was now full of curses.

The grand-vizier himself was the father of two daughters, of whom the elder was called Scheherazade, and the younger Dinarzade. Dinarzade had no particular gifts to distinguish her from other girls, but her sister was clever and courageous in the highest degree. Her father had given her the best teachers in philosophy, medicine, history and the fine arts, and besides all this, her beauty excelled that of any girl in the kingdom of Persia.

One day, when the grand-vizier was talking to his eldest daughter, who was his delight and pride, Scheherazade said to him, “Father, I have a favour to ask of you. Will you grant it to me?”

“I can refuse you nothing,” he replied, “that is just and reasonable.”

“Then listen,” said Scheherazade. “I am determined to stop this barbarous practice of the Sultan’s, and to save the girls and mothers from the awful fate that hangs over them.”

“It would be an excellent thing to do,” replied the grand-vizier, “but how do you propose to accomplish it?”

“My father,” answered Scheherazade, “it is you who have to provide the Sultan daily with a fresh wife, and I beg you, to allow the honour to fall upon me.”

“Have you lost your senses?” cried the grand-vizier, starting back in horror. “What has put such a thing into your head? You ought to know by this time what it means to be the sultan’s bride!”

“Yes, my father, I know it well,” she replied, “and I am not afraid to think of it. If I fail, my death will be a glorious one, and if I succeed I shall have done a great service to my country.”

“It is of no use,” said the grand-vizier, “I shall never agree. If the Sultan was to order me to plunge a dagger in your heart, I should have to obey. What a task for a father! Ah, if you do not fear death, fear at any rate the grief you would cause me.”

“Once again, my father,” said Scheherazade, “Will you grant me what I ask?”

“What, are you still so obstinate?” exclaimed the grand-vizier. “Why are you so determined to die?”

But the daughter absolutely refused to listen to her father's words, and at last, in despair, the grand-vizier had to agree, and went sadly to the palace to tell the Sultan that the following evening he would bring him Scheherazade.

The Sultan received this news with the greatest astonishment.

“How have you made up your mind,” he asked, “to sacrifice your own daughter to me?”

“Sire,” answered the grand-vizier, “it is her own wish. Even the sad fate that awaits her could not hold her back.”

“Let there be no mistake, vizier,” said the Sultan. “Remember you will have to take her life yourself. If you refuse, I swear that you will lose your head instead.”

“Sire,” replied the vizier. “Whatever the cost, I will obey you. Though a father, I am also your subject.” So the Sultan told the grand-vizier he might bring his daughter as soon as he liked.

The vizier took back this news to Scheherazade, who received it as if it had been the most pleasant thing in the world. She thanked her father warmly for agreeing to her wishes, and, seeing him still bowed down with grief, told him that she hoped he would never regret having allowed her to marry the Sultan. Then she went to prepare herself for the marriage, and begged that her sister Dinarzade should be sent for to speak to her.

When they were alone, Scheherazade said to her, “My dear sister, I want your help in a very important affair. My father is going to take me to the palace to celebrate my marriage with the Sultan. When his Highness receives me, I shall beg him, as a last favour, to let you sleep in our room, so that I may have your company during the last

night I am alive. If, as I hope, he grants me my wish, be sure that you wake me an hour before the dawn, and speak to me in these words, ‘My sister, if you are not asleep, I beg you, before the sun rises, to tell me one of your charming stories.’ Then I shall begin, and I hope by this means to save the people from the terror that hangs over them.” Dinarzade replied that she would do with pleasure what her sister wished.

When the usual hour arrived the grand-vizier took Scheherazade to the palace, and left her alone with the Sultan, who told her to raise her veil and was amazed at her beauty. But seeing her eyes full of tears, he asked what the matter was. “Sire,” replied Scheherazade, “I have a sister who loves me as tenderly as I love her. Grant me the favour of allowing her to sleep this night in the same room, as it is the last time we shall be together.” Schahriar agreed to Scheherazade’s request and Dinarzade was sent for.

An hour before daybreak Dinarzade awoke, and exclaimed, as she had promised, “My dear sister, if you are not asleep, tell me, before the sun rises, one of your charming stories. It is the last time that I shall have the pleasure of hearing you.”

Scheherazade did not answer her sister, but turned to the Sultan. “Will your highness allow me to do as my sister asks?” said she.

“Willingly,” he answered. So Scheherazade began.

The Story of the Merchant and the Genie

There was once upon a time a merchant who possessed great wealth, in land and merchandise, as well as in money. He had to from time to time, to take journeys for his business. One day, having to go a long way from home, he mounted his horse, taking with him a small bag in which he had put a few biscuits and dates, because he had to pass through the desert where there was no food. He arrived without any problems, and, having finished his business, set out on his return. On the fourth day of his journey, the heat of the sun being very great, he turned off the road to rest under some trees. He found at the foot of a large walnut tree a spring of clear and running water. He dismounted, tied his horse to a branch of the tree, and sat by the spring, after having taken from his bag some of his dates and biscuits. When he had finished this simple meal he washed his face and hands in the spring.

When he was doing this he saw an enormous genie, white with rage, coming towards him, with a scimitar in his hand.

“Arise,” he cried in a terrible voice, “and let me kill you as you have killed my son!”

As he uttered these words he gave a frightful yell. The merchant, much terrified at the hideous face of the monster answered him tremblingly, “Alas, good sir, what can I have done to you to deserve death?”

“I shall kill you,” repeated the genie, “as you have killed my son.”

“But,” said the merchant, “how can I have killed your son? I do not know him, and I have never even seen him.”

“When you arrived here did you not sit down on the ground?” asked the genie, “and did you not take some dates from your bag, and while eating them did not you throw the seeds away?”

“Yes,” said the merchant, “I certainly did so.”

“Then,” said the genie, “I tell you, you have killed my son, for while you were throwing away the seeds, my son was passing by, and one of them struck him in the eye and killed him. So I shall kill you.”

“Ah, sir, forgive me!” cried the merchant.

“I will have no mercy on you,” answered the genie.

“But I killed your son quite accidentally, so I beg you to spare my life.”

“No,” said the genie, “I shall kill you as you killed my son,” and so saying, he seized the merchant by the arm, threw him on the ground, and lifted his scimitar to cut off his head.

The merchant, protesting his innocence, cried for his wife and children, and tried pitifully to escape his fate. The genie, with his raised scimitar, waited till he had finished, but was not in the least moved.

Scheherazade, at this point, seeing that it was day, and knowing that the Sultan always rose very early to attend the council, stopped speaking.

“Indeed, sister,” said Dinarzade, “this is a wonderful story.”

“The rest is still more wonderful,” replied Scheherazade, “and you would say so, if the sultan would allow me to live another day, and would allow me to tell it to you the next night.”

Schahriar, who had been listening to Scheherazade with pleasure, said to himself, "I will wait till tomorrow. I can always have her killed when I have heard the end of her story."

All this time the grand-vizier was in a terrible state of anxiety. But he was much delighted when he saw the Sultan enter the council chamber without giving the terrible command that he was expecting.

The next morning, before sunrise, Dinarzade said to her sister, "Dear sister, if you are awake please go on with your story."

The Sultan did not wait for Scheherazade to ask. "Finish," said he, "the story of the genie and the merchant. I am curious to hear the end."

So Scheherazade went on with the story. This happened every morning. The Sultana told a story and the Sultan let her live to finish it.

When the merchant saw that the genie was determined to cut off his head, he said, "One word more, I beg you. Give me just a short time to go home and tell my wife and children farewell. When I have done this I will come back here, and you shall kill me."

"But," said the genie, "if I give you the time you ask for, I am afraid that you will not come back."

"I give you my word of honour," answered the merchant, "that I will come back without fail."

"How long do you require?" asked the genius.

"I ask you for a year," replied the merchant. "I promise you that, twelve months from tomorrow, I shall be waiting under these trees to give myself up to you."

On this the genie left him near the spring and disappeared.

The merchant, having recovered from his fright, mounted his horse and went on his way.

When he arrived home his wife and children received him with the greatest joy. But instead of embracing them he began to weep so bitterly that they soon guessed that something terrible had happened.

“Tell us,” said his wife, “what has happened.”

“Alas!” answered her husband, “I have only a year to live.”

Then he told them what had happened between him and the genie, and how he had given his word to return at the end of a year to be killed. When they heard this sad news they were in despair, and wept much.

The next day the merchant began to settle his affairs, and first of all to pay his debts. He gave presents to his friends, and money to the poor. He set his slaves free, and provided for his wife and children. The year soon passed, and he had to depart. When he tried to say goodbye he was quite overcome with grief. At length he reached the place where he had first seen the genie. He dismounted, and sat down at the edge of the spring, where he awaited the genie.

While he was waiting an old man leading a deer came towards him. They greeted one another, and then the old man said to him, “May I ask, brother, what brought you to this deserted place, where there are so many evil genies about? To see these beautiful trees one would imagine people live here, but it is a dangerous place to stop long in.”

The merchant told the old man why he had to come there. He listened in astonishment.

“This is a most marvelous story. I should like to see when you meet

with the genie.” So saying, he sat down by the merchant.

While they were talking another old man came up, followed by two black dogs. He greeted them, and asked what they were doing in this place. The old man who was leading the deer told him the adventure of the merchant and the genie. The second old man also decided to stay there to see what would happen. He sat down by the others, and was talking, when a third old man arrived. He asked why the merchant who was with them looked so sad. They told him the story, and he also decided to see what would happen between the genie and the merchant, so he waited with the rest.

They soon saw in the distance a thick smoke, like a cloud of dust. This smoke came nearer and nearer, and then, all at once, it vanished, and they saw the genie, who, without speaking to them, approached the merchant, sword in hand, and, taking him by the arm, said, “Get up and let me kill you as you killed my son.”

The merchant and the three old men began to weep and groan.

Then the old man leading the deer threw himself at the monster’s feet and said, “O Prince of the Genies, I beg you to calm yourself and to listen to me. I am going to tell you my story and that of the deer I have with me, and if you find it more marvelous than that of the merchant who you are about to kill, I hope that you will do away with a third part of his punishment?”

The genie considered some time, and then he said, “Very well, I agree to this.”

The Story of the First Old Man and of the Deer

This deer that you see with me is my wife. We have no children of our own. Therefore I adopted the son of a favorite slave, and decided to

make him my heir.

My wife, however, took a great dislike to both mother and child, which she hid from me till too late. When my adopted son was about ten years old I had to go on a journey. Before I went I asked my wife to look after both the mother and child while I was gone which lasted a whole year. During this time she studied magic in order to carry out her wicked scheme. When she had learnt enough she took my son to a distant place and changed him into a calf. Then she gave him to my servant, and told him to look after a calf she had bought. She also changed the slave into a cow, which she sent to my servant.

When I returned I asked about my slave and the child. “Your slave is dead,” she said, “And as for your son, I have not seen him for two months, and I do not know where he is.”

I was saddened to hear of my slave’s death, but as my son had only disappeared, I thought I should soon find him. Eight months, however, passed, and still no news of him and then the feast of Bairam came.

To celebrate it I ordered my servant to bring me a very fat cow to sacrifice. The cow that he brought was my unfortunate slave. I tied her, but just as I was about to kill her she began to low most sadly, and I saw that her eyes were streaming with tears. It seemed to me most extraordinary, and, feeling pity, I ordered the servant to lead her away and bring another. My wife, who was present, laughed at me. “What are you doing?” she cried. “Kill this cow. It is the best we have to sacrifice.”

To please her, I tried again, but again the animal’s lows and tears moved me.

“Take her away,” I said to the servant “and kill her; I cannot.”

The servant killed her, but on skinning her found that she was nothing but bones, although she appeared so fat. I was puzzled.

“Keep her for yourself,” I said to the steward, “and if you have a fat calf, bring that in her place.”

In a short time he brought a very fat calf, which, although I did not know it, was my son. It tried hard to break its rope and come to me. It threw itself at my feet, with its head on the ground, as if it wished to beg me not to take away its life.

I was even more surprised and touched at this action than I had been at the tears of the cow.

“Go,” I said to the servant, “take back this calf, take great care of it, and bring me another in its place instantly.”

As soon as my wife heard me say this she at once cried out, “What are you doing, husband? Do not sacrifice any calf but this.”

“Wife,” I answered, “I will not sacrifice this calf,” and in spite of all her arguments, I remained firm.

I had another calf killed and this one was led away. The next day the servant asked to speak to me in private.

“I have come,” he said, “to tell you some news which I think you will like to hear. I have a daughter who knows magic. Yesterday, when I was leading back the calf which you refused to sacrifice, I noticed that she smiled, and then directly afterwards began to cry. I asked her why she did so.”

“Father,” she answered, “This calf is the son of our master. I smile with joy at seeing him still alive, and I weep to think of his mother, who was sacrificed yesterday as a cow. These changes have been

made by our master's wife, who hated the mother and son."

"At these words," continued the old man, "you can imagine my astonishment. I went immediately with the servant to speak with his daughter myself. When the steward's daughter came I asked her if she could change my son back to his proper shape."

"Yes, I can," she replied, "on two conditions. One is that you will give him to me for a husband, and the other is that you will let me punish the woman who changed him into a calf."

"To the first condition," I answered, "I agree with all my heart. To the second I also agree, I only ask you to spare her life."

"That I will do," she replied. "I will treat her as she treated your son."

Then she took a cup of water and spoke over it some words I did not understand. Then, on throwing the water over him, he became immediately a young man once more.

"My son, my dear son," I exclaimed. "This kind maiden has rescued you from a terrible enchantment, and I am sure that out of gratitude you will marry her."

He agreed joyfully, but before they were married, the young girl changed my wife into a deer, and it is she who you see before you.

Since then my son has become a widower and has gone traveling. I am now going in search of him, and not wishing to give my wife to the care of other people, I am taking her with me. Is this not a most marvelous tale?

"It is indeed," said the genie, "And because of it I give to you the third part of the punishment of this merchant."

When the first old man had finished his story, the second, who was leading the two black dogs, said to the genie, “I am going to tell you what happened to me, and I am sure that you will find my story even more astonishing than the one which you have just been listening to. But when I have told it, will you give me also the third part of the merchant’s punishment?”

“Yes,” replied the genie, “provided that your story is better than that of the deer.”

With this agreement the second old man began in this way.

The Story of the Second Old Man, and of the Two Black Dogs

Great prince of the genies, you must know that we are three brothers; these two black dogs and myself. Our father died, leaving us each a thousand gold coins. With this sum we all three took up the same work, and became merchants. A short time after we had opened our shops, my eldest brother, one of these two dogs, decided to travel to foreign countries to trade merchandise. So he sold all he had and bought merchandise for the voyages he was about to make. He set out, and was away a whole year. At the end of this time a beggar came to my shop. “Good-day,” I said. “Good-day,” he answered. “Is it possible that you do not recognize me?” Then I looked at him closely and saw he was my brother. I made him come into my house, and asked him how he had been.

“Do not question me,” he replied, “See me, you see all I have. It would trouble me to tell of all the misfortunes that have happened to me in a year, and have brought me to this state.”

I shut up my shop, taking him to the bath and giving him my most beautiful robes. I examined my accounts, and found that I had doubled my money. I now had two thousand gold coins. I gave my

brother half, saying, “Now, brother, you can forget your losses.” He accepted them with joy, and we lived together as we had before.

Some time afterwards my second brother wished also to sell his business and travel. My eldest brother and I did all we could to persuade him not to, but it was no use. He joined a caravan and set out. He came back at the end of a year in the same state as his elder brother. I took care of him, and as I had a thousand gold coins to spare I gave them to him, and he re-opened his shop.

One day, my two brothers came to me to propose that we should make a journey and trade. At first I refused to go. “You traveled,” I said, “and what did you gain?” But they came to me repeatedly, and after having refused for five years I at last agreed. But when they had made their preparation, and they began to buy the merchandise we needed, they found they had spent every piece of the thousand gold coins I had given them. I did not scold them. I divided my six thousand gold coins with them, giving a thousand to each and keeping one for myself, and the other three I buried in a corner of my house. We bought merchandise, loaded a ship with it, and set sail.

After two months’ sailing, we arrived at a seaport, where we disembarked and did a great trade. Then we bought the merchandise of the country, and were just going to sail once more, when I was stopped on the shore by a beautiful though poorly dressed woman. She came up to me, kissed my hand, and begged me to marry her, and take her on board. At first I refused, but she begged so hard and promised to be such a good wife to me, that at last I agreed. I got her some beautiful dresses, and after having married her, we embarked and set sail. During the voyage, I discovered so many good qualities in my wife that I began to love her more and more. But my brothers began to be jealous of my good fortune, and set to work to plot against my life. One night when we were sleeping they threw my wife

and myself into the sea. My wife, however, was a fairy, and so she did not let me drown, but carried me to an island. When the day dawned, she said to me,

“When I saw you on the seashore I immediately liked you so I presented myself in the disguise you saw. Now I have rewarded you by saving your life. But I am very angry with your brothers, and I shall not rest till I have taken their lives.”

I thanked the fairy for all that she had done for me, but I begged her not to kill my brothers.

I calmed her down, and in a moment she carried me from the island where we were to the roof of my house, and she disappeared a moment afterwards. I went down, and opened the doors, and dug up the three thousand gold coins which I had buried. I went to the place where my shop was, opened it, and received from my fellow merchants congratulations on my return. When I went home, I saw two black dogs who came to meet me with sorrowful faces. I was much astonished, but the fairy who reappeared said to me, “Do not be surprised to see these dogs. They are your two brothers. I have made them remain for ten years in these shapes.” Then having told me where I could find her, she vanished.

The ten years are nearly passed, and I am on the road to find her. Passing by, I met this merchant and the old man with the deer so I stayed with them.

This is my story, O prince of genies! Do you not think it is a most marvelous one?

“Yes, indeed,” replied the genie, “And I will give up to you the third of the merchant’s punishment.”

Then the third old man made the genie the same request as the other two had done, and the genie promised him the last third of the merchant's punishment if his story was better than both the others.

So he told his story to the genie, but I cannot tell you what it was, as I do not know.

But I do know that it was even more marvelous than either of the others, so that the genie was astonished, and said to the third old man, "I will give up to you the third part of the merchant's punishment. He ought to thank all three of you for having helped him. If it wasn't for you for you, he would be here no longer."

So saying, he disappeared, to the great joy of the company. The merchant did not fail to thank his friends, and then each went on his way. The merchant returned to his wife and children, and passed the rest of his days happily with them.

The Story of the Fisherman

There was once a fisherman so old and so poor that he could scarcely manage to support his wife and three children. He went every day to fish very early, and each day he made a rule not to throw his nets out more than four times. He started out one morning before sunrise and came to the sea-shore. He threw his nets, and as he was drawing them towards the bank he felt a great weight. He thought he had caught a large fish, and he felt very pleased. But a moment afterwards, seeing that instead of a fish he only had in his nets a dead donkey, he was much disappointed.

After he had mended his nets, which the body of the donkey had broken in several places, he threw them a second time. When drawing them in he again felt a great weight, so that he thought they were full of fish. But he only found a large basket full of rubbish. He was much annoyed.

“O Fortune,” he cried, “Do not trouble me, a poor fisherman, who can hardly support his family!”

Having said that, he threw away the rubbish, and after having washed his nets clean of the dirt, he threw them out for the third time. But he only drew in stones, shells, and mud. He was almost in despair.

Then he threw his nets out for the fourth time. When he thought he had a fish he drew them in with a great deal of trouble. There was no fish however, but he found a yellow pot, which by its weight seemed full of something, and he noticed that it was tied and sealed with lead. He was delighted. “I will sell it,” he said. “With the money I shall get for it I shall buy some rice.”

He examined the jar on all sides and shook it to see if it would rattle.

But he heard nothing, and so he thought there must be something precious inside. To find out, he took his knife, and with a little trouble he opened it. He turned it upside down, but nothing came out, which surprised him very much. He set it in front of him, and while he was looking at it, such a thick smoke came out that he had to step back a step or two. This smoke rose up to the clouds, and stretching over the sea and the shore, formed a thick mist, which caused the fisherman much astonishment. When all the smoke was out of the jar it gathered itself together, and became a genie, twice as large as the largest giant. When he saw such a terrible looking monster, the fisherman would like to have run away, but he trembled so with fright that he could not move a step.

“Great king of the genie,” cried the monster, “I will never again disobey you!”

At these words the fisherman took courage.

“What is this you are saying, great genie? Tell me your story and how you came to be shut up in that jar.”

At this, the genie looked at the fisherman coldly. “Speak to me more politely,” he said, “before I kill you.”

“Alas! Why should you kill me?” cried the fisherman. “I have just freed you; have you already forgotten that?”

“No,” answered the genie, “But that will not prevent me from killing you, and I am only going to grant you one favour, and that is to choose the manner of your death.”

“But what have I done to you?” asked the fisherman.

“I cannot treat you in any other way,” said the genie, “and if you would know why, listen to my story.

“I rebelled against the king of the genies. To punish me, he shut me up in this jar of copper, and he put on the cover his seal, which is enchantment enough to prevent my coming out. Then he had the jar thrown into the sea. During the first period of my imprisonment I promised that if anyone should free me before a hundred years had passed, I would make him rich even after his death. But that century passed, and no one freed me. In the second century I vowed that I would give all the treasures in the world to the person who saved me but he never came.

“In the third, I promised to make him a king, to be always near him, and to grant him three wishes every day; but that century passed away as the other two had done, and I remained in the same unfortunate situation. At last I grew angry at being a prisoner for so long, and I promised that if anyone would release me I would kill him at once, and would only allow him to choose in what manner he should die. So you see, as you have freed me today, choose in what way you will die.”

The fisherman was very unhappy. “What an unlucky man I am to have freed you! I beg you to spare my life.”

“I have told you,” said the genie, “that it is impossible. Choose quickly; you are wasting time.”

The fisherman began to think of a plan.

“Since I must die,” he said, “Before I choose the manner of my death, you must tell me if you were really in that jar?”

“Yes, I was,” answered the genie.

“I really cannot believe it,” said the fisherman. “That jar could not contain one of your feet even, and how could your whole body go in?”

I cannot believe it unless I see you do it.”

Then the genie began to change himself into smoke, which, as before, spread over the sea and the shore, and which, then collecting itself together, began to go back into the jar slowly till there was nothing left outside. Then a voice came from the jar which said to the fisherman, “Well, unbelieving fisherman, here I am in the jar. Do you believe me now?”

The fisherman instead of answering took the lid of lead and shut it down quickly on the vase.

“Now, O genie,” he cried, “ask forgiveness of me, and choose by what death you will die! But no, it will be better if I throw you into the sea from where I pulled you out, and I will build a house on the shore to warn fishermen who come to throw their nets here, against fishing up such a wicked genie as you are, who wants to kill the man who frees you.”

At these words the genie did all he could to get out, but he could not, because of the enchantment of the lid.

Then he tried to get out by cunning.

“If you will take off the cover,” he said, “I will repay you.”

“No,” answered the fisherman, “if I trust myself to you I am afraid you will treat me as a certain Greek king treated the doctor Douban. Listen and I will tell you.”

The Story of the Greek King and the Physician Douban

In the country of Zouman, in Persia, there lived a Greek king. This king was a leper, and all his doctors had been unable to cure him. One day a very clever physician came to his court.

He was very learned in all languages, and knew a great deal about herbs and medicines.

As soon as he was told of the king's illness he put on his best robe and presented himself before the king. "Sire," said he, "I know that no physician has been able to cure Your Majesty, but if you will follow my instructions, I will promise to cure you without any medicines."

The king listened to this proposal.

"If you are clever enough to do this," he said, "I promise to make you and your descendants rich for ever."

The physician went to his house and made a polo club, the handle of which he hollowed out, and put in it the drug he wished to use. Then he made a ball, and with these things he went the next day to the king.

He told him that he wished him to play at polo. The king mounted his horse and went into the place where he played. There the physician approached him with the bat he had made, saying, "Take this, sire, and strike the ball till you feel your hand and whole body warm. When the remedy that is in the handle of the club is warmed by your hand it will penetrate throughout your body. Then you must return to your palace, bath, and go to sleep, and when you awake tomorrow morning you will be cured."

The king took the club and rode his horse after the ball which he had thrown. He struck it, and then it was hit back by the courtiers who were playing with him. When he felt very hot he stopped playing, and went back to the palace, went into the bath, and did all that the physician had said. The next day when he arose he found, to his great joy and astonishment, that he was completely cured. When he entered his audience chamber all his courtiers, who were eager to see if the wonderful cure had worked, were overwhelmed with joy.

The physician Douban entered the hall and bowed low to the ground. The king, seeing him, called him, made him sit by his side, and showed him every respect.

That evening he presented him with two thousand gold coins. The following day he continued to give him presents.

Now the king had a grand-vizier who was greedy, and envious, and a very bad man. He grew extremely jealous of the physician, and decided to destroy him.

In order to do this he asked to speak in private with the king, saying that he had a most important matter to discuss.

“What is it?” asked the king.

“Sire,” answered the grand-vizier, “It is most dangerous for a king to trust in a man whose loyalty is not proved. You do not know that this doctor is not a traitor come here to kill you.”

“I am sure,” said the king, “that this man is most loyal and good. If he wished to take my life, why did he cure me? Stop speaking against him. I see what it is, you are jealous of him. But do not think that I can be turned against him. I remember well what a vizier said to King Sinbad, his master, to prevent him from putting the prince, his son, to death.”

What the Greek king said made the vizier’s curious, and he said to him, “Sire, please tell me what the vizier said to King Sinbad.”

“He told King Sinbad that one ought not believe everything that a mother-in-law says, and told him this story.”

The Story of the Fisherman

A good man had a beautiful wife, whom he loved passionately, and never left if possible. One day, when he was forced by important business to go away from her, he went to a place where all kinds of birds are sold and bought a parrot. This parrot not only spoke well, but it had the gift of telling all that had been done before it. He brought it home in a cage, and asked his wife to put it in her room, and take great care of it while he was away. Then he departed. On his return he asked the parrot what had happened during his absence, and the parrot told him some things which made him scold his wife.

She thought that one of her slaves must have been telling tales about her, but they told her it was the parrot, and she decided to revenge herself on it.

When her husband next went away for one day, she told a slave to turn under the bird's cage a hand-mill, another to throw water down from above the cage, and a third to take a mirror and turn it in front of its eyes, from left to right by the light of a candle. The slaves did this for part of the night, and did it very well.

The next day when the husband came back he asked the parrot what he had seen. The bird replied, "My good master, the lightning, thunder and rain disturbed me so much all night long, that I cannot tell you what I have suffered."

The husband, who knew that it had neither rained nor thundered in the night, was convinced that the parrot was not speaking the truth, so he took him out of the cage and threw him so roughly on the ground that he killed him. Nevertheless, he was sorry afterwards, for he found that the parrot had spoken the truth.

“When the Greek king,” said the fisherman to the genie, “had finished the story of the parrot, he added to the vizier, “And so, vizier, I shall not listen to you, and I shall take care of the physician, in case I regret as the husband did when he had killed the parrot.” But the vizier was determined. “Sire,” he replied, “the death of the parrot was nothing. But when it is a question of the life of a king it is better to sacrifice the innocent than save the guilty. It is no uncertain thing, however. The physician, Douban, wishes to assassinate you. My loyalty makes me tell this to your Majesty. If I am wrong, I deserve to be punished as a vizier was once punished.” “What had the vizier done,” said the Greek king, “to deserve the punishment?” “I will tell your Majesty, if you will do me the honour to listen,” answered the vizier.”

The Story of the Vizier Who Was Punished

There was once upon a time a king who had a son who was very fond of hunting. He often allowed him to go, but he had ordered his grand-vizier to always to go with him, and never to lose sight of him. One day the huntsman startled a deer, and the prince, thinking that the vizier was behind, gave chase, and rode so hard that he found himself alone. He stopped, and having lost sight of it, he turned to rejoin the vizier, who had not been careful enough to follow him. But he lost his way. While he was trying to find it, he saw on the side of the road a beautiful lady who was crying bitterly. He stopped his horse, and asked her who she was and what she was doing in this place, and if she needed help. “I am the daughter of an Indian king,” she answered, “And while riding in the country I fell asleep and tumbled off. My horse has run away, and I do not know what has become of him.”

The young prince had pity on her, and offered to take her behind him, which he did. As they passed by a ruined building the lady dismounted and went in. The prince also dismounted and followed her. To his great surprise, he heard her saying to someone inside, “Rejoice my children. I am bringing you a nice fat youth.” And other voices replied, “Where is he mamma, that we may eat him at once, as we are very hungry?”

The prince at once saw the danger he was in. He now knew that the lady who said she was the daughter of an Indian king was an ogress, who lived in desolate places, and who by a thousand tricks surprised and devoured passers-by. He was terrified, and threw himself on his horse. The false princess appeared at this moment, and seeing that she had lost her dinner, said to him, “Do not be afraid. What do you want?”

“I am lost,” he answered, “and I am looking for the road.”

“Keep straight on,” said the ogress, “and you will find it.”

The prince could hardly believe his ears, and rode off as hard as he could. He found his way, and arrived safe and sound at his father’s house, where he told him of the danger he had been in because of the grand-vizier’s carelessness. The king was very angry, and had him executed immediately.

“Sire,” went on the vizier to the Greek king, “to return to the physician, Douban. If you do not take care, you will be sorry for having trusted him. Who knows what this remedy, with which he has cured you, may not in time have a bad effect on you?”

The Greek king was very weak, and did not understand the wicked plan of his vizier.

“Well, vizier,” he said, “You are right. Perhaps he did come to take my life. He might do it by the mere smell of one of his drugs. I must see what can be done.”

“The best way, sire, to make your life safe, is to send for him at once, and to cut off his head as soon as he comes,” said the vizier.

“I really think,” replied the king, “that will be the best way.”

He then ordered one of his ministers to fetch the physician, who came at once.

“I have had you sent for,” said the king, “In order to free myself from you by taking your life.”

The physician was astonished when he heard he was to die.

“What crimes have I committed, your majesty?”

“I have learnt,” replied the king, “that you are a spy, and intend to kill me. But I will be first, and kill you. Strike,” he added to an executioner who was by, “and rid me of this assassin.”

At this cruel order the physician threw himself on his knees. “Spare my life,” he cried, “and yours will be spared.”

The fisherman stopped here to say to the genie, “You see what passed between the Greek king and the physician has just passed between us two. The Greek king,” he went on, “had no mercy, and the executioner covered his eyes.”

All those present begged for his life, but in vain.

The physician on his knees, said to the king: “At least let me put my affairs in order, and leave my books to persons who will make good use of them. There is one which I should like to present to your majesty. It is very precious, and ought to be kept carefully in your treasury. It contains many curious things the most important being that when you cut off my head, if your majesty will turn to the sixth page, and read the third line of the left-hand page, my head will answer all the questions you like to ask it.”

The king, eager to see such a wonderful thing, delayed his execution to the next day, and sent him under a strong guard to his house. There the physician put his affairs in order, and the next day there was a great crowd assembled in the hall to see his death. The physician went up to the foot of the throne with a large book in his hand. He carried a basin, on which he spread the covering of the book, and presenting it to the king, said, “Sire, take this book, and when my head is cut off, let it be placed in the basin on the covering of this book and as soon as it is there, the blood will stop flowing. Then open the book and my head will answer your questions. But, sire, I beg your mercy, for I am innocent.”

“Your prayers are useless, and if it were only to hear your head speak when you are dead, you should die.”

So saying, he took the book from the physician’s hands, and ordered the executioner to do his duty.

The head was so cleverly cut off that it fell into the basin, and directly the blood ceased to flow. Then, to the great astonishment of the king, the eyes opened, and the head said, “Your majesty, open the book.” The king did so, and finding that the first page stuck against the second, he put his finger in his mouth, to turn it more easily. He did the same thing till he reached the sixth page, and not seeing any writing on it, “Physician,” he said, “there is no writing.”

“Turn over a few more pages,” answered the head. The king went on turning, still putting his finger in his mouth, till the poison in which each page was dipped took effect. He fell at the foot of his throne.

When the physician’s head saw that the poison had taken effect, and that the king had only a few more minutes to live, “Tyrant,” it cried, “See how cruelty and injustice are punished.”

Scarcely had it uttered these words than the king died, and the head lost also the little life that had remained in it.

That is the end of the story of the Greek king, and now let us return to the fisherman and the genie.

“If the Greek king,” said the fisherman, “had spared the physician, he would not have died. The same thing applies to you. Now I am going to throw you into the sea.”

“My friend,” said the genie, “Do not do such a cruel thing. Do not treat me as Imma treated Ateca.”

“What did Imma do to Ateca?” asked the fisherman.

“Do you think I can tell you while I am shut up in here?” replied the genie. “Let me out, and I will make you rich.”

The hope of being no longer poor made the fisherman give way.

“If you will give me your promise to do this, I will open the lid. I do not think you will dare to break your word.”

The genie promised, and the fisherman lifted the lid. He came out at once in smoke, and then, the first thing he did was to kick the jar into the sea. This frightened the fisherman, but the genie laughed and said, “Do not be afraid; I only did it to frighten you, and to show you that I intend to keep my word. Take your nets and follow me.”

He began to walk in front of the fisherman. They passed in front of the town, and went up a mountain and then down onto a great plain, where there was a large lake lying between four hills.

When they reached the lake the genie said to the fisherman, “Throw your nets and catch fish.”

The fisherman did as he was told, hoping for a good catch, as he saw plenty of fish. What was his astonishment at seeing that there were four quite different kinds, some white, some red, some blue, and some yellow. He caught four, one of each colour. As he had never seen any like them he admired them very much, and he was very pleased to think how much money he would get for them.

“Take these fish and carry them to the Sultan, who will give you more money for them than you have ever had in your life. You can come every day to fish in this lake, but be careful not to throw your nets more than once everyday, otherwise some harm will come to you. If you follow my advice carefully you will find it good.”

Saying these words, he struck his foot against the ground, which opened, and when he had disappeared, it closed immediately.

The fisherman decided to obey the genie exactly, so he did not throw his nets a second time, but walked into the town to sell his fish at the palace.

When the Sultan saw the fish he was much astonished. He looked at them one after the other, and when he had admired them long enough, “Take these fish,” he said to his first vizier, “and given them to the clever cook the Emperor of the Greeks sent me. I think they must be as good as they are beautiful.”

The vizier took them himself to the cook, saying, “Here are four fish that have been brought to the Sultan. He wants you to cook them.”

Then he went back to the Sultan, who told him to give the fisherman four hundred gold pieces. The fisherman, who had never before possessed such a large sum of money at once, could hardly believe his good fortune. He at once took care of the needs of his family, and made good use of it.

But now we must return to the kitchen, which we shall find in great confusion. The cook, when she had cleaned the fish, put them in a pan with some oil to fry them. When she thought them cooked enough on one side she turned them on the other. But scarcely had she done so when the walls of the kitchen opened, and there came out a young and beautiful lady. She was dressed in an Egyptian dress of flowered satin, and she wore earrings, and a necklace of white pearls, and bracelets of gold set with rubies, and she held a small branch of myrtle in her hand.

She went up to the pan, to the great astonishment of the cook, who stood motionless at the sight of her. She struck one of the fish with

her branch, "Fish, fish," said she, "Are you doing your duty?" The fish answered nothing, and then she repeated her question, whereupon they all raised their heads together and answered very clearly, "Yes, yes. If you say, we agree. If you pay your debts, we pay ours. If you fly, we conquer, and we are content."

When they had spoken the girl upset the pan, and entered the opening in the wall, which at once closed, and appeared the same as before.

When the cook had recovered from her fright she lifted up the fish which had fallen into the ashes, but she found them blackened, and not fit to serve up to the Sultan. She began to cry.

"Alas! What shall I say to the Sultan? He will be so angry with me, and I know he will not believe me!"

Whilst she was crying the grand-vizier came in and asked if the fish were ready. She told him all that had happened, and he was much surprised. He sent at once for the fisherman, and when he came said to him, "Fisherman, bring me four more fish like you have brought already, for an accident has happened to them so that they cannot be served up to the Sultan."

The fisherman did not say what the genie had told him, but he excused himself from bringing them that day because it was far away and he promised to bring them next day.

In the night he went to the lake threw his nets, and on drawing them in found four fish, which were like the others, each of a different colour.

He went back at once and carried them to the grand-vizier as he had promised.

He then took them to the kitchen and shut himself up with the cook, who began to cook them as she had done the four others on the

previous day. When she was about to turn them on the other side, the wall opened, the lady appeared, spoke the same words to the fish, received the same answer, and then overturned the pan and disappeared.

The grand-vizier was filled with astonishment. "I shall tell the Sultan all that has happened," said he. And he did so.

The Sultan was very much astounded, and wished to see this marvel for himself. So he sent for the fisherman, and asked him to get four more fish. The fisherman asked for three days, and he then cast his nets into the lake, and again caught four different coloured fish. The sultan was delighted to see he had got them, and gave him again four hundred gold pieces.

As soon as the Sultan had the fish he had them carried to his room with all that was needed to cook them.

Then he shut himself up with the grand-vizier, who began to prepare them and cook them. When they were done on one side he turned them over on the other. Then the wall of the room opened, but instead of the lady a black slave came out. He was enormously tall, and carried a large green stick with which he touched the fish, saying in a terrible voice, "Fish, fish, are you doing your duty?" To these words the fish lifting up their heads replied, "Yes, yes. If you say, we agree. If you pay your debts, we pay ours. If you fly, we conquer, and are content."

The black slave overturned the pan in the middle of the room, and the fish were turned black. Then he stepped back into the wall, which closed round him.

"After having seen this," said the Sultan, "I cannot rest. These fish signify some mystery I must clear up."

He sent for the fisherman. “Fisherman,” he said, “the fish you have brought us have caused me some anxiety. Where did you get them from?”

“Sire,” he answered, “I got them from a lake which lies in the middle of four hills beyond those mountains.”

“Do you know this lake?” asked the Sultan of the grand-vizier.

“No; though I have hunted many times round that mountain, I have never heard of it,” said the vizier.

As the fisherman said it was only three hours’ journey away, the sultan ordered his whole court to mount and ride there, and the fisherman led them.

They climbed the mountain, and then, on the other side, saw the lake as the fisherman had described. The water was so clear that they could see the four kinds of fish swimming about in it. They looked at them for some time, and then the Sultan ordered them to make a camp by the edge of the water.

When night came the Sultan called his vizier, and said to him, “I have decided to clear up this mystery. I am going out alone, and you stay here in my tent, and when my ministers come tomorrow, say I am not well, and cannot see them. Do this each day till I return.”

The grand-vizier tried to persuade the Sultan not to go, but in vain. The Sultan took off his state robe and put on his sword, and when he saw all was quiet in the camp he set off alone.

He climbed one of the hills, and then crossed the great plain, till, just as the sun rose, he saw far in front of him a large building. When he came near to it he saw it was a splendid palace of beautiful black polished marble, covered with steel as smooth as a mirror.

He went to the gate, which stood half open, and went in, as nobody came when he knocked. He passed through a magnificent courtyard and still saw no one, though he called aloud several times.

He entered large halls where the carpets were of silk and the most beautiful Indian furnishings of gold and silver. Then he found himself in a splendid room, with a fountain supported by golden lions. The water out of the lions' mouths turned into diamonds and pearls, and the leaping water almost touched a most beautifully painted dome. The palace was surrounded on three sides by magnificent gardens, little lakes, and woods. Birds sang in the trees, which were netted over to keep them always there.

Still the Sultan saw no one, till he heard a cry, and a voice which said, "Oh that I could die, for I am too unhappy to wish to live any longer!"

The Sultan looked round to discover who it was and at last saw a handsome young man, richly clothed, who was sitting on a throne raised slightly from the ground. His face was very sad.

The sultan approached him and bowed to him. The young man bent his head very low, but did not rise.

"Sire," he said to the Sultan, "I cannot rise and give you the respect that I am sure should be paid to you."

"Sir," answered the Sultan, "I am sure you have a good reason for not doing so, and having heard your cry of distress, I have come to offer you my help. Whose is this palace, and why is it empty?"

Instead of answering the young man lifted up his robe, and showed the Sultan that, from the waist downwards, he was a block of black marble.

The Sultan was horrified, and begged the young man to tell him his

story.

“Willingly I will tell you my sad story,” said the young man.

The Story of the Young King of the Black Isles

“**You must know**, sire that my father was Mahmoud, the king of this country, the Black Isles, so called from the four little mountains which were once islands, while the capital was the place where now the great lake lies. My story will tell you how these changes came about.”

“My father died when he was sixty-six, and I succeeded him. I married my cousin, whom I loved tenderly, and I thought she loved me too.”

“But one afternoon, when I was half asleep, and was being fanned by two of her maids, I heard one say to the other, “What a pity it is that our mistress no longer loves our master! I believe she would like to kill him if she could, for she is an enchantress.”

“I soon found by watching that they were right, and when I wounded a favourite slave of hers for a great crime, she begged that she might build a palace in the garden, where she wept for him for two years.”

“At last I begged her to stop grieving for him, for although he could not speak or move, by her magic she just kept him alive. She turned upon me in a rage, and said over me some magic words, and I instantly became as you see me now, half man and half marble.”

“Then this wicked enchantress changed the city, which was a very populous and flourishing city, into the lake and desert plain you saw. The fish of four colours which are in it are the different races who lived in the town; the four hills are the four islands which give the name to my kingdom. All this the enchantress told me to add to my troubles. And this is not all. Every day she comes and beats me with a whip.”

When the young king had finished his sad story he burst once more into tears, and the Sultan was much moved.

“Tell me,” he cried, “where this wicked woman is, and where is the slave who she just manages to keep alive?”

“Where she lives I do not know,” answered the unhappy prince, “But she goes every day at sunrise to see if the slave can speak to her yet, after she has beaten me.”

“Unfortunate king,” said the Sultan, “I will do what I can to avenge you.”

So he discussed with the young king the best way to bring this about, and they agreed their plan should be put into effect the next day. The Sultan then rested, and the young king began hoping for his freedom. The next day the Sultan arose, and then went to the palace in the garden where the black slave was. He drew his sword and destroyed the little life that remained in him, and then threw the body down a well. He then lay down on the couch where the slave had been, and waited for the enchantress.

She went first to the young king, who she beat with a hundred blows.

Then she came to the room where she thought her wounded slave was, but where the Sultan really lay.

She came near his couch and said, “Are you better today, my dear slave? Speak but one word to me.”

“How can I be better,” answered the Sultan, imitating the language of the Ethiopians, “When I can never sleep for the cries and groans of your husband?”

“What joy to hear you speak!” answered the queen. “Do you wish him

to regain his proper shape?”

“Yes,” said the Sultan; “quickly free him, so that I may no longer hear his cries.”

The queen at once went out and took a cup of water, and said over it some words that made it boil as if it were on the fire. Then she threw it over the prince, who at once regained his own form. He was filled with joy, but the enchantress said, “Hurry away from this place and never come back, or I will kill you.”

So he hid himself to see the end of the Sultan’s plan.

The enchantress went back to the Palace of Tears and said, “Now I have done what you wished.”

“What you have done,” said the Sultan, “Is not enough to cure me. Every day at midnight all the people whom you have changed into fish lift their heads out of the lake and cry for vengeance. Go quickly, and give them their proper shape.”

The enchantress hurried away and said some words over the lake.

The fish then became men, women, and children, and the houses and shops were once more filled. The Sultan’s followers, who had camped by the lake, were astonished to see themselves in the middle of a large and beautiful town.

As soon as she had removed the spell the queen went back to the palace.

“Are you quite well now?” she said.

“Come near,” said the Sultan. “Nearer still.”

She obeyed. Then he sprang up, and with one blow of his sword he cut

her in two.

Then he went and found the prince.

“Rejoice,” he said, “Your cruel enemy is dead.”

The prince thanked him again and again.

“And now,” said the Sultan. “I will go back to my capital, which I am glad to find is so near yours.”

“So near mine!” said the King of the Black Isles.

“Do you know it is a whole year’s journey from here? You came here in a few hours because it was enchanted. But I will accompany you on your journey.”

“It will give me much pleasure if you will accompany me,” said the Sultan, “and as I have no children, I will make you my heir.”

The Sultan and the prince set out together, the Sultan with rich presents from the King of the Black Isles.

The day after he reached his capital the Sultan assembled his court and told them all that had happened to him, and told them how he was going to adopt the young king as his heir.

Then he gave each man presents.

As for the fisherman, as he was the first cause of the saving of the young prince, the Sultan gave him much money, and made him and his family happy for the rest of their days.

The Story of the Three Monks

In the reign of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, there lived in Baghdad a porter who, in spite of his humble position, was an intelligent and sensible man. One morning he was sitting in his usual place with his basket before him, waiting to be hired, when a tall young lady, came up to him and said, "Pick up your basket and follow me." The porter, who was greatly pleased by her appearance and voice, jumped up at once, placed his basket on his head, and accompanied the lady, saying to himself as he went, "Oh, happy day! Oh, lucky meeting!"

The lady soon stopped before a closed door, at which she knocked. It was opened by an old man with a long white beard, to whom the lady gave some money but said nothing. The old man, who seemed to understand what she wanted, vanished into the house, and returned bringing a large jar of wine, which the porter placed in his basket. Then the lady waved to him to follow, and they went on their way.

The next place she stopped at was a fruit and flower shop. Here she bought a large quantity of apples, apricots, peaches, lilies, jasmine, and all sorts of sweet-smelling plants. From this shop she went to a butcher's, a grocer's, and a poultry shop till at last the porter exclaimed in despair, "My good lady, if you had only told me you were going to buy enough food for a town, I would have brought a camel." The lady laughed, and told him she had not finished yet, but after choosing various kinds of scents and spices from another store, she halted before the door of a magnificent palace, and knocked gently. The lady who opened it was of such beauty that the eyes of the man were quite dazzled, and he was the more astonished as he saw clearly that she was no slave. The lady who had led him there stood watching him with amusement, till the other lady exclaimed, "Why

don't you come in, my sister? This poor man is so heavily weighed down that he is ready to drop.”

When they were both inside the door was locked, and they all three entered a large court, surrounded by a gallery. At one end of the court was a platform, and on the platform stood an amber throne supported by four ebony columns, covered in pearls and diamonds. In the middle of the court stood a marble basin filled with water from the mouth of a golden lion.

The porter looked about him, noticing and admiring everything; but his attention was specially attracted by a third lady sitting on the throne, who was even more beautiful than the other two. By the respect shown to her by the others, he judged that she must be the eldest, and he was right. This lady's name was Zobeida, the second lady was Sadie, and the first was Amina. At a word from Zobeida, Sadie and Amina took the basket from the porter, who was glad enough to be relieved from its weight, and when it was emptied, paid him well. But instead of taking up his basket and going away, the man still lingered, till Zobeida inquired what he was waiting for, and if he expected more money. “Oh, madam,” replied he, “you have already given me too much, and I fear I may be rude for not leaving at once. But, if you will pardon my saying so, I was astonished at seeing such beautiful ladies by themselves. A company of women without men is, however, as dull as a company of men without women.” And after telling some stories to prove his point, he ended by begging them to let him stay and make a fourth at their dinner.

The ladies were rather amused at the man confidence and after some discussion it was agreed that he should be allowed to stay, as his company might be entertaining. “But listen, friend,” said Zobeida, “if we grant your request, it is only on condition that you behave with the utmost politeness, and that you keep the secret of our way of life.”

Then they all sat down to table, which had been covered by Amina with the dishes she had bought.

After the first few mouthfuls Amina poured some wine into a golden cup. She first drank herself, according to the Arab custom, and then filled it for her sisters. When it came to the porter's turn he kissed Amina's hand, and sang a song,. The three ladies were pleased with the song, and then sang themselves, so that the dinner was a merry one, and lasted much longer than usual.

At last, seeing that the sun was about to set, Sadia said to the porter, "Rise and go. It is now time for us to separate."

"Oh, madam," replied he, "How can you ask me to leave you in the state I am in? Between the wine I have drunk, and the pleasure of seeing you, I should never find the way to my house. Let me remain here till morning, and when I have recovered my senses I will go when you like."

"Let him stay," said Amina. "It is only fair, as he has given us so much amusement."

"If you wish it, my sister," replied Zobeida; "but if he does, I must make a new condition. Porter," she continued, turning to him, "if you remain, you must promise to ask no questions about anything you may see. If you do, you may perhaps hear what you don't like."

This being settled, Amina brought in supper, and lit up the hall with a number of sweet smelling candles. They then sat down again at the table, and began with fresh appetites to eat, drink, sing, and recite verses. In fact, they were all enjoying themselves when they heard a knock at the outer door, which Sadie rose to open. She soon returned saying that three monks, all blind in the right eye, and all with their heads, faces, and eyebrows clean shaved, begged for admittance, as

they were newly arrived in Baghdad, and night had already fallen. "They seem to have pleasant manners," she added, "but you have no idea how funny they look. I am sure we should find their company entertaining."

Zobeida and Amina were concerned about admitting the new comers, and Sadie knew the reason for their hesitation. But she pleaded with the others so strongly that Zobeida was at last forced to agree. "Bring them in, then," said she, "But make them understand that they are not to speak about what does not concern them, and be sure to make them read the writing over the door." For on the door was written in letters of gold, "Whoever meddles in affairs that are no business of his, will hear truths that will not please him."

The three monks bowed low on entering, and thanked the ladies for their kindness and hospitality. The ladies replied with words of welcome, and they were all about to seat themselves when the eyes of the monks fell on the porter, whose dress was not so very unlike their own, though he still had all his hair. "This," said one of them, "is apparently one of our brothers."

The porter, although half asleep from the wine he had drunk, heard the words, cried angrily to the monk, "Sit down and mind your own business. Did you not read the writing over the door? Not everybody has to live in the same way."

"Do not be so angry, my good man," replied the monk, "We should be very sorry to anger you." So the quarrel was forgotten, and supper began. When the monks had satisfied their hunger, they offered to play to their hostesses, if there were any instruments in the house. The ladies were delighted at the idea, and Sadie went to see what she could find. She returned in a few moments with two different kinds of flutes and a tambourine. Each monk took the one he preferred, and

began to play a well-known tune, while the ladies sang the words of the song. These words were the happiest and liveliest possible, and every now and then the singers had to stop to laugh. In the midst of all their noise, a knock was heard at the door.

Now early that evening the Caliph secretly left the palace, accompanied by his grand-vizier, Giafar, and Mesrour, chief of the servants. All three were wearing the clothes of merchants. Passing down the street, the Caliph had been attracted by the music and the sound of laughter, and had ordered his vizier to go and knock at the door of the house, as he wished to enter. The vizier replied that the ladies who lived there seemed to be entertaining their friends and he thought his master would do well not to enter. But the Caliph had decided to see for himself, and insisted on being obeyed.

The knock was answered by Sadie, with a candle in her hand, and the vizier, who was surprised at her beauty, bowed low before her, and said respectfully, “Madam, we are three merchants who have just arrived from Moussoul, and, because of misfortune which happened this very night, only reached our inn to find that the doors were closed to us till tomorrow morning. Not knowing what to do, we wandered in the streets till we happened to pass your house. When, seeing lights and hearing the sound of voices, we decided to ask you to give us shelter till the dawn. If you will grant us this favour, we will, with your permission, do all in our power to help you spend the time pleasantly.”

Sadie answered the merchant that she must first ask her sisters; and after having talked over the matter with them, she returned to tell him that he and his two friends would be welcome to join their company. They entered and bowed politely to the ladies and their guests. Then Zobeida came forward and said, “You are welcome here, but I hope you will allow me to ask one thing of you. Have as many eyes as you

like, but no tongues. Ask no questions about anything you see, however strange it may appear to you.”

”Madam,” replied the vizier, “you shall be obeyed. We have quite enough to please and interest us without troubling ourselves with things that are not our business.” Then they all sat down, and drank to the health of the new comers.

While the vizier, Giafar, was talking to the ladies the Caliph was thinking about who they could be, and why the three monks had each lost his right eye. He was burning to ask the reason for it all, but was silenced by Zobeida’s request, so he tried to take his part in the conversation, which was very lively. The subject of discussion being the many different sorts of pleasures that there were in the world. After some time the monks got up and performed some unusual dances, which delighted the rest of the company.

When they had finished Zobeida rose from her seat, and, taking Amina by the hand, she said to her, “My sister, our friends will excuse us if we seem to forget their presence and fulfill our nightly task.” Amina understood her sister’s meaning, and collecting the dishes, glasses, and musical instruments, she carried them away, while Sadie swept the hall and put everything in order. Having done this she begged the monks to sit on a sofa on one side of the room, and the Caliph and his friends to place themselves opposite. As to the porter, she requested him to come and help her and her sister.

Shortly after Amina entered carrying a seat, which she put down in the middle of the empty space. She next went over to the door of a closet and signed to the porter to follow her. He did so, and soon reappeared leading two black dogs by a chain, which he brought into the centre of the hall. Zobeida then got up from her seat between the monks and the Caliph and walked slowly across to where the porter

stood with the dogs. "We must do our duty," she said with a deep sigh, pushing back her sleeves, and, taking a whip from Sadie, she said to the man, "Take one of those dogs to my sister Amina and give me the other."

The porter did as he was bid, but as he led the dog to Zobeida it uttered piercing howls, and gazed up at her with a sad look. But Zobeida took no notice, and whipped the dog till she was out of breath. She then took the chain from the porter, and, raising the dog on its hind legs, they looked into each other's eyes sorrowfully till tears began to fall from both. Then Zobeida took her handkerchief and wiped the dog's eyes tenderly, after which she kissed it, then, putting the chain into the porter's hand she said, "Take it back to the closet and bring me the other."

The same thing was done with the second dog, and all this time the whole company looked on with astonishment. The Caliph in particular could hardly control himself, and made signs to the vizier to ask what it all meant. But the vizier pretended not to see, and turned his head away.

Zobeida remained for some time in the middle of the room, till at last Sadie went up to her and begged her to sit down, as she also had her part to play. At these words Amina fetched a lute from a case of yellow satin and gave it to Sadie, who sang several songs to its accompaniment. When she was tired she said to Amina, "My sister, I can do no more; come, please take my place."

Amina then broke into a song, which she sang with so much feeling that she was quite overcome, and sank gasping on a pile of cushions, tearing open her dress as she did so to give herself some air. To the amazement of all present, her neck, instead of being as smooth and white as her face, was a mass of scars.

The monks and the Caliph looked at each other, and whispered together, unheard by Zobeida and Sadie, who were looking after their fainting sister.

”What does it all mean?” asked the Caliph.

”We know no more than you,” said the monk to whom he had spoken.

”What! You do not belong to the house?”

”My lord,” answered all the monks together, “we came here for the first time an hour before you.”

They then turned to the porter to see if he could explain the mystery, but the porter was no wiser than they were themselves. At length the Caliph could contain his curiosity no longer, and declared that he would force the ladies to tell them the meaning of their strange conduct. The vizier, foreseeing what would happen, begged him to remember the condition their hostesses had made, and added in a whisper that if his Highness would only wait till morning he could as Caliph summon the ladies to appear before him. But the Caliph, who was not used to being told no, rejected this advice, and it was decided after a little more talking that the question should be asked by the porter. Suddenly Zobeida turned round, and seeing their excitement she said, “What is the matter? What are you all discussing?”

”Madam,” answered the porter, “these gentlemen ask you to explain to them why you should first whip the dogs and then cry over them, and also how it happens that the fainting lady is covered with scars. They have requested me, Madam, to ask on their behalf.”

”Is it true, gentlemen,” asked Zobeida, standing up straight, “that you have ordered this man to ask me that question?”

”It is,” they all replied, except Giafar, who was silent.

”Is this,” continued Zobeida, growing angrier every moment, “Is this what I receive for the hospitality I have shown you? Have you forgotten the one condition on which you were allowed to enter the house? Come quickly,” she added, clapping her hands three times, and the words were hardly uttered when seven black slaves, each armed with a sabre, burst in and stood over the seven men, throwing them on the ground, and preparing themselves, on a sign from their mistress, to cut off their heads.

The seven men all thought their last hour had come, and the Caliph regretted bitterly that he had not taken the vizier’s advice. But they made up their minds to die bravely, all except the porter, who loudly asked Zobeida why he was to suffer for other people’s faults, and declared that these misfortunes would never have happened if it had not been for the monks, who always brought bad luck. He ended by begging Zobeida not to confuse the innocent with the guilty and to spare his life.

In spite of her anger, there was something so funny in the groans of the porter that Zobeida could not stop herself from laughing. But putting him aside she addressed the others a second time, saying, “Answer me, who are you? Unless you tell me truly you have not another moment to live. I can hardly think you are men of any position, whatever country you belong to. If you were, you would have had more consideration for us.”

The Caliph was convinced that she had only to learn his name and position for all the danger to be over. So he whispered to the vizier, who was next to him, to reveal their secret. But the vizier, wiser than his master, wished to conceal from the public the embarrassment they had received merely answered, “After all, we have only got what we deserved.”

Meanwhile Zobeida had turned to the three monks and inquired if, as they were all blind, they were brothers.

”No, madam,” replied one, “We are no blood relations at all, only brothers because of our way of life.”

”And you,” she asked, addressing another, “were you born blind in one eye?”

”No, madam,” replied he, “I became blind through a most surprising adventure, such as probably has never happened to anybody. After that I shaved my head and eyebrows and put on the robes in which you see me now.”

Zobeida put the same question to the other two monks, and received the same answer.

”But,” added the third, “it may interest you, madam, to know that we are not men of low birth, but are all three sons of kings, whom the world holds in high respect.”

At these words Zobeida’s anger cooled down, and she turned to her slaves and said, “You can give them a little more liberty, but do not leave the hall. Those that will tell us their stories and their reasons for coming here shall be allowed to leave unhurt and those who refuse....” And she paused, but in a moment the porter, who understood that he had only to tell his story to set himself free from this terrible danger, immediately spoke,

”Madam, you know already how I came here, and what I have to say will soon be told. Your sister found me this morning in the place where I always stand waiting to be hired. She told me follow her to various shops, and when my basket was quite full we returned to this house, when you had the goodness to permit me to remain, for which I

shall be forever grateful. That is my story.”

He looked anxiously to Zobeida, who nodded her head and said, “You can go and take care we never meet again.”

”Oh, madam,” cried the porter, “Let me stay yet a little while. It is not fair that the others should have heard my story and that I should not hear theirs,” and without waiting for permission he seated himself on the end of the sofa occupied by the ladies, while the rest crouched on the carpet, and the slaves stood against the wall.

Then one of the monks, speaking to Zobeida as the main lady, began his story.

The Story of the First Monk, Son of a King

In order, madam, to explain how I came to lose my right eye, and to become a monk, you must first know that I am the son of a king. My father's only brother reigned over the neighbouring country, and had two children, a daughter and a son, who were of the same age as myself.

As I grew up, and was allowed more freedom, I went every year to pay a visit to my uncle's court, and usually stayed there about two months. In this way my cousin and I became very close. The very last time I saw him he seemed more delighted to see me than ever, and gave a great feast in my honour. When we had finished eating, he said to me, "My cousin, you would never guess what I have been doing since your last visit to us! As soon as you left I set a number of men to work on a building that I designed. It is now completed, and ready to be lived in. I should like to show it to you, but you must first promise two things; to be faithful to me, and to keep my secret."

Of course I did not dream of refusing him anything he asked, and made the promise without the least hesitation. He then told me wait a moment, and vanished, returning shortly with a richly dressed lady of great beauty. However he did not tell me her name and I thought it was better not to ask. We all three sat down at a table and chatted, drinking each other's health. Suddenly the prince said to me, "Cousin, we have no time to lose. Be so kind as to take this lady to a certain spot, where you will find a dome-like tomb, newly built. You cannot miss it. Go in, both of you, and wait till I come. I shall not be long."

As I had promised I prepared to do as I was told, and giving my hand to the lady, I took her, by the light of the moon, to the place the prince had spoken of. We had barely reached it when he joined us himself,

carrying a small cup of water, a pickaxe, and a little bag containing plaster.

With the pickaxe he at once began to destroy the empty sepulchre in the middle of the tomb. One by one he took the stones and piled them up in a corner. When he had knocked down the whole sepulchre he started to dig up the earth. Beneath where the sepulchre had been I saw a trap-door. He raised the door and I caught sight of the top of a spiral staircase. Then he said, turning to the lady, "Madam, this is the way that will lead you down to the spot which I told you of."

The lady did not answer, but silently descended the staircase, the prince following her. At the top, however, he looked at me. "My cousin," he exclaimed, "I do not know how to thank you for your kindness. Farewell."

"What do you mean?" I cried. "I don't understand."

"No matter," he replied, "go back by the path that you came."

He would say no more, and, greatly puzzled, I returned to my room in the palace and went to bed. When I woke, and considered my adventure, I thought that I must have been dreaming, and sent a servant to ask if the prince was dressed and could see me. But on hearing that he had not slept at home I was much alarmed, and hurried to the cemetery, where, unluckily, the tombs were all so alike that I could not discover which was the one I was in search of, though I spent four days looking for it.

You must know that all this time the king, my uncle, was absent on a hunting expedition, and as no one knew when he would be back, I at last decided to return home, leaving the ministers to make my excuses. I longed to tell them what had become of the prince, about whom they were very anxious, but the promise I had made kept me

silent.

On my arrival at my father's palace, I was astonished to find a large number of guards in front of the gate of the palace. They surrounded me as soon as I entered. I asked the officers in command the reason for this strange behaviour, and was horrified to learn that the army had mutinied and put to death the king, my father, and had placed the grand-vizier on the throne. By his orders I was placed under arrest.

Now this rebel vizier had hated me from my boyhood, because once, when shooting at a bird with a bow, I had shot out his eye by accident. Of course I not only sent a servant at once to offer him my regrets and apologies, but I also made them in person. It was all of no use. He had only hatred towards me, and wasted no time showing it. Having once got me in his power I felt he would show no mercy, and I was right. Mad with fury he came to me in my prison and tore out my right eye. That is how I lost it.

The vizier, however, did not stop there. He shut me up in a large case and ordered his executioner to carry me into a desert, to cut off my head, and then to throw my body to the vultures. The case, with me inside it, was placed on a horse, and the executioner, accompanied by another man, rode into the country until they found a spot suitable for the purpose. But their hearts were not so hard as they seemed, and my tears and prayers affected them.

"Give up the kingdom at once," said the executioner at last, "And take care never to come back, for you will not only lose your head, but make us lose ours." I thanked him gratefully, and tried to comfort myself for the loss of my eye by thinking of the other misfortunes I had escaped.

After all I had gone through, and my fear of being recognized by some enemy, I could only travel very slowly and cautiously, generally

resting in some remote place by day, and walking as far as I was able by night. But at last I arrived in the kingdom of my uncle, of whose protection I was sure.

I found him in great trouble about the disappearance of his son but his own grief did not prevent him sharing mine. We cried together, for the loss of one was the loss of the other, and then I made up my mind that it was my duty to break the promise I had made to the prince. I therefore lost no time in telling my uncle everything I knew, and I noticed that even before I had ended he seemed a little happier.

”My dear nephew,” he said, “Your story gives me some hope. I was aware that my son was building a tomb, and I think I can find the spot. But as he wished to keep the matter secret, let us go alone and seek the place ourselves.”

He then told me to disguise myself, and we both slipped out of a garden door which opened on to the cemetery. It did not take long for us to arrive at the scene of the prince’s disappearance, or to discover the tomb I had looked for in vain before. We entered it, and found the trap-door which led to the staircase, but we had great difficulty in raising it, because the prince had fastened it down underneath with the plaster he had brought with him.

My uncle went first, and I followed him. When we reached the bottom of the stairs we stepped into a sort of ante-room, filled with such a dense smoke that it was hardly possible to see anything. However, we passed through the smoke into a large chamber, which at first seemed quite empty. The room was brilliantly lighted, and in another moment we could see a sort of platform at one end, on which were the bodies of the prince and a lady, both half-burned.

This horrible sight turned me faint, but, to my surprise, my uncle did not show so much surprise as anger.

”I knew,” he said, “that my son was very fond of this lady, whom it was impossible he should ever marry. I tried to change his mind, and presented to him the most beautiful princesses, but he cared for none of them. Now, as you see, they have now been united by a horrible death in an underground tomb.” But, as he spoke, his anger melted into tears, and again I wept with him.

When he recovered he drew me to him. “My dear nephew,” he said, “You have come to me to take his place, and I will do my best to forget that I ever had a son who could act in so wicked a manner.” Then he turned and went up the stairs.

We reached the palace without anyone having noticed our absence, when, shortly after, a clashing of drums, and cymbals, and the blare of trumpets burst upon our astonished ears. At the same time a thick cloud of dust on the horizon told of the approach of a great army. My heart sank when I saw that the commander was the vizier who had killed my father, and had come to seize the kingdom of my uncle.

The capital was completely unprepared to withstand a siege, and seeing that resistance was useless, at once opened its gates. My uncle fought hard for his life, but was soon overpowered, and when he fell I managed to escape through a secret passage, and found safety with an officer I knew I could trust.

Pursued by misfortune, and terribly sad, there seemed to be only one means of safety left to me. I shaved my beard and my eyebrows, and put on the robes of a monk, in which it was easy for me to travel without being known. I avoided the towns till I reached the kingdom of the famous and powerful Caliph, Haroun-al-Raschid, where I had no further reason to fear my enemies. It was my intention to come to Baghdad and to throw myself at the feet of his Highness, who would, I felt certain, be touched by my sad story, and would grant me his help

and protection.

After a journey which lasted some months I arrived at last at the gates of this city. It was sunset, and I paused for a little to look about me, and to decide which way to turn my steps. I was still considering this when I was joined by this other monk, who stopped to greet me. “You, like me, appear to be a stranger,” I said. He replied that I was right, and before he could say more the third monk came up. He, also, was newly arrived in Baghdad, and being brothers in misfortune, we decided join together, and to share whatever fate might have in store.

By this time it had grown late, and we did not know where to spend the night. But our lucky star guided us to this door, and we asked for shelter, which was given to us at once with the best grace in the world.

This, madam, is my story.

”I am satisfied,” replied Zobeida; “you can go when you like.”

The monk, however, begged to stay and to hear the histories of his two friends and of the three other persons of the company, which he was allowed to do.

The Story of the Second Monk, Son of a King

“**Madam,**” said the young man, speaking to Zobeida, “If you wish to know how I lost my right eye, I shall have to tell you the story of my whole life.”

I was scarcely more than a baby, when the king my father, realizing I was unusually quick and clever for my age, began to think about my education. I was taught first to read and write. I also learnt history, and was instructed in poetry geography, mathematics and in all the outdoor activities in which every prince should excel. But what I liked best of all was writing Arabic characters, and in this I soon surpassed my masters, and gained a reputation that reached as far as India itself.

Now the Sultan of the Indies, curious to see a young prince with such talents, sent an ambassador to my father, with rich presents, and a warm invitation to visit his court. My father, who was deeply anxious to have the friendship of so powerful a monarch, accepted gladly, and in a short time I had set out for India with the ambassador, accompanied only by a small group because of the length of the journey. However, as was my duty, I took with me ten camels, carrying rich presents for the Sultan.

We had been travelling for about a month, when one day we saw a cloud of dust moving swiftly towards us; and as soon as it came near, we found that the dust concealed a band of fifty robbers. Our men were only half as many, so there was no use in fighting. We tried to impress them by informing them who we were, and where we were going. The robbers, however, only laughed, and declared that was none of their business. Without saying more they attacked us brutally. I defended myself even though I was wounded. At last, seeing that resistance was hopeless, and that the ambassador and all our followers

were made prisoners, I jumped on my horse and rode away as fast as I could, till the poor animal fell dead from a wound in his side. I managed to jump off without any injury, and looked about to see if I was pursued. But for the moment I was safe, for, I imagined, the robbers were all quarrelling over their loot.

I found myself in a country that was quite new to me, and did not dare to return to the main road in case I should again fall into the hands of the robbers. Luckily my wound was only a slight one, and after bandaging it up as well as I could, I walked on for the rest of the day, till I reached a cave at the foot of a mountain, where I passed the night in peace, making my supper off some fruits I had gathered on the way.

I wandered about for a whole month without knowing where I was going, till at last I found myself on the outskirts of a beautiful city. My delight at the idea of mixing once more with human beings was somewhat lessened at the thought of the miserable object I must seem. My face and hands had been burned nearly black; my clothes were all in rags, and my shoes were in such poor condition that I had been forced to throw them away.

I entered the town, and stopped at a tailor's shop to ask where I was. The man begged me to sit down, and in return I told him my whole story. The tailor listened with attention, but his reply, instead of giving me comfort, only increased my trouble.

"Beware," he said, "Of telling any one what you have told me, for the prince who rules the kingdom is your father's greatest enemy, and he will be pleased indeed to find you in his power."

I thanked the tailor for his advice, and said I would do whatever he advised. Then, being very hungry, I gladly ate the food he put before me, and accepted his offer of a bed in his house.

In a few days I had quite recovered from the hardships I had experienced, .Then the tailor, knowing that it was the custom for the people of our country to learn a trade or profession so as to provide for themselves in times of misfortune, asked if there was anything I could do for my living. I replied that I had been educated as a grammarian and a poet, but that my great gift was writing.

”All that is of no use here,” said the tailor. “Take my advice, put on a short coat, and as you seem hardy and strong, go into the woods and cut firewood, which you will sell in the streets. In this way you will earn your living, and be able to wait till better times come. The axe and the rope shall be my present.”

This advice was very distressing to me, but I had no choice. So the next morning I set out with a group of poor wood-cutters, the tailor had introduced me to. Even on the first day I cut enough wood to sell for a fair sum of money, and very soon I became more expert, and had made enough money to repay the tailor all he had lent me.

I had been a wood-cutter for more than a year, when one day I wandered further into the forest than I had ever done before, and reached a green glade, where I began to cut wood. I was chopping at the root of a tree, when I saw an iron ring fastened to a trapdoor. I soon cleared away the earth, and pulling up the door, found a staircase, which I quickly made up my mind to go down, carrying my axe with me for protection. When I reached the bottom I discovered that I was in a huge palace, as brilliantly lighted as any palace above ground that I had ever seen, with a long gallery supported by pillars of jasper, decorated with gold. Down this gallery a lady came to meet me, of such beauty that I forgot everything else, and thought only of her.

I bowed low.

”Who are you? Who are you?” she said. “A man or a genie?”

”A man, madam,” I replied; “I have nothing to do with genies.”

”How did you come here?” she asked again with a sigh. “I have been in this place now for twenty five years, and you are the first man who has visited me.”

Feeling braver because of her beauty and gentleness, I replied, “Before, madam, I answer your question, allow me to say how grateful I am for this meeting, which is not only a comfort to me in my own sadness, but may perhaps allow me to make your situation happier,” and then I told her who I was, and how I had come there.

”Alas, prince,” she said, with a deeper sigh than before, “You have guessed rightly in supposing me an unwilling prisoner in this beautiful place. I am the daughter of the king of the Ebony Isle, you surely must have heard of. My father wanted me to be married to a prince who was my own cousin, but on my wedding day, I was snatched up by a genie, and brought here. For a long while I did nothing but weep, and would not let the genie to come near me. But time passed, and I have now got used to him. And if clothes and jewels could make me happy, I have plenty. Every tenth day, for twenty five years, I have received a visit from him. But in case I should need his help at any other time, I have only to touch a charm that stands at the entrance of my room. There are still five days to his next visit, and I hope that during that time you will be my guest.”

I was too much dazzled by her beauty to dream of refusing her offer, and so the princess showed me to the bath, and clothes were provided for me. Then a feast of the most delicious dishes was served.

The next day, when we were at dinner, I begged the princess to escape, and return with me to the world.

”What you ask is impossible,” she answered; “But stay here with me instead, and we can be happy. All you will have to do is to take yourself to the forest every tenth day, when I am expecting my master the genie. He is very jealous, as you know, and will not allow a man to come near me.”

“Princess,” I replied, “I see it is only fear of the genius that makes you act like this. For myself, I fear him so little that I mean to break his charm into pieces! Awful though you think him, he shall feel my power.”

The princess, who realized the consequences of such foolishness, begged me not to touch the charm. “If you do, it will be the ruin of both of us,” said she; “I know genies much better than you.” But the wine I had drunk had confused my brain. I gave one kick to the charm, and it fell into a thousand pieces.

Hardly had my foot touched the talisman when the air became as dark as night. A fearful noise was heard, and the palace shook. In an instant I understood what I had done. “Princess!” I cried, “What is happening?”

”Alas!” she exclaimed, “Flee, or you are lost.”

I followed her advice and dashed up the staircase, leaving my axe behind me. But I was too late. The palace opened and the genie appeared, who, turning angrily to the princess, asked angrily,

”What is the matter that you have sent for me like this?”

”A pain in my heart,” she replied hastily, “Made me seek the aid of this little bottle. Feeling faint, I slipped and fell against the charm which broke. That is really all.”

”You are a liar!” cried the genie. “How did this axe and those shoes

get here?”

”I never saw them before,” she answered, “And you came in such a hurry that you may have picked them up on the road without knowing it.” The genie only replied by insults and blows. I could hear the shrieks and groans of the princess, and having by this time taken off my clothes and put on those in which I had arrived the previous day, I lifted the trap, found myself once more in the forest, and returned to my friend the tailor, with a light load of wood and a heart full of shame and sorrow.

The tailor, who had been uneasy at my long absence, was, delighted to see me, but I kept silent about my adventure, and as soon as possible went to my room to regret in secret my foolishness. A short time later my host entered, and said, “There is an old man downstairs who has brought your axe and shoes, which he picked up on the road, and now returns to you, as he found out from one of your friends where you lived. You had better come down and speak to him yourself.” At hearing this I paled, and my legs trembled under me. The tailor noticed my confusion, and was just going to ask why when the door of the room opened, and the old man appeared, carrying with him my axe and shoes.

”I am a genie,” he said, “The son of the daughter of Eblis, prince of the genies. Is this axe yours, and these shoes?” Without waiting for an answer, he seized hold of me, and darted up into the air with the quickness of lightning, and then, with equal swiftness, dropped down towards the earth. When he touched the ground, he tapped it with his foot. It opened, and we found ourselves in the enchanted palace, in the presence of the beautiful princess of the Ebony Isle. But how different she looked from what she was when I had last seen her. She was lying on the ground covered with blood, and weeping bitterly.

”Traitor!” cried the genie, “Is this man your lover?”

She lifted up her eyes slowly, and looked sadly at me. “I have never seen him before,” she answered slowly. “I do not know who he is.”

”What!” exclaimed the genie, “You owe all your sufferings to him, and yet you dare to say he is a stranger to you!”

”But if he really is a stranger to me,” she replied, “Why should I tell a lie and cause his death?”

”Very well,” said the genie, drawing his sword, “Take this, and cut off his head.”

”Alas,” answered the princess, “I am too weak even to hold the sabre. And even if I had the strength, why should I put an innocent man to death?”

”Your refusal tells me you are guilty,” said the genie and then turning to me, he added, “And you, do you know her?”

”How should I?” I replied. “How should I, when I have never seen her before?”

”Cut her head off,” then, “If she is a stranger to you I shall believe you are speaking the truth, and will set you free.”

I flung the sabre to the floor.

”I should not deserve to live,” I said to the genie, “If I were such a coward as to kill a lady who is not only unknown to me, but who is at this moment half dead herself. Do with me what you like. I am in your power. But I refuse to obey your cruel command.”

”I see,” said the genie, “that you have both made up your minds to defy me, but I will give you a sample of what you may expect.” So

saying, with one sweep of his sabre he cut off a hand of the princess, who was just able to lift the other to wave me farewell. Then I lost consciousness for several minutes.

When I came to myself I begged the genie to put an end to my sufferings. The genie, however, paid no attention to my prayers, but said, “That is the way in which a genie treats the woman who has betrayed him. If I chose, I could kill you also, but I will be merciful, and content myself with changing you into a dog, an ass, a lion, or a bird, whichever you prefer.”

“Oh genie!” I cried, “Spare my life, be generous, and spare it altogether. Grant my prayer, and pardon my crime, as the best man in the whole world forgave his neighbour who was eaten up with envy of him.” The genie seemed interested in my words, and said he would like to hear the story of the two neighbours, and as I think, madam, it may please you, I will tell it to you also.

The Story of the Envious Man and of Him Who Was Envied

In a small town, there were two men who lived in neighboring houses. However they had not been there very long before one man took such a hatred of the other, and envied him so bitterly, that the poor man decided to find another home, hoping that when they no longer met every day his enemy would forget all about him. So he sold his house and the little furniture it contained, and moved into the capital of the country, which was luckily not far away. About half a mile from this city he bought a nice little place, with a large garden and a small garden, in the centre of which stood an old well.

In order to live a quieter life, the good man put on the robe of a monk, and divided his house into a number of small rooms, where other monks soon came to live. The fame of his virtue gradually spread abroad, and many people came to visit him and ask for his prayers.

Of course it was not long before his reputation reached the ears of the man who envied him, and this wicked man made up his mind to never to rest till he had in some way hurt the monk whom he hated. So he left his house and his business to look after themselves, and traveled to the new monastery, where he was welcomed with all the warmth imaginable. The excuse he gave for his appearance was that he had come to ask the head monk questions on a private matter of great importance. "What I have to say must not be overheard," he whispered, "Ask that your monks stay in their rooms, and meet me in the courtyard."

The monk did as he was asked without delay, and as soon as they were alone together the envious man began to tell a long story, edging, as they walked to and fro, always nearer to the well. When they were

quite close, he seized the monk and dropped him in. He then ran off triumphantly, without having been seen by anyone, and congratulating himself that the object of his hatred was dead, and would trouble him no more.

But in this he was mistaken! The old well had long been inhabited (unknown to mere human beings) by a group of fairies and genies, who caught the monk as he fell, so that he was not hurt. The monk himself could see nothing, but he took for granted that something strange had happened, or he must certainly have been smashed against the bottom of the well and been killed. He lay quite still, and in a moment he heard a voice saying, "Can you guess who this man is that we have saved from death?"

"No," replied several other voices.

And the first speaker answered, "I will tell you. This man, from pure goodness of heart, left the town where he lived and came to live here, in the hope of curing one of his neighbors of the envy he felt towards him. But his character soon won him the admiration of all, and the envious man's hatred grew, till he came here with the deliberate intention of causing his death. And this he would have done, without our help, the very day before the Sultan has arranged to visit this holy monk, and to ask his prayers for the princess, his daughter."

"But what is the matter with the princess that she needs the monk's prayers?" asked another voice.

"She has fallen into the power of the genie Maimoum, the son of Dimdim," replied the first voice. "But it would be quite simple for this holy chief of the monks to cure her if he only knew! In his monastery there is a black cat which has a tiny white tip on its tail. Now to cure the princess the monk must pull out seven of these white hairs, burn three, and with their smoke perfume the head of the

princess. This will save her so completely that Maimoum, the son of Dimdim, will never dare to approach her again.”

The fairies and genies ceased talking, but the monk did not forget a word they had said. When morning came he noticed a place in the side of the well which was broken, and where he could easily climb out.

The monks, who could not imagine what had become of him, were amazed at his reappearance. He told them of the attempt on his life made by his guest of the previous day, and then went into his room. He was soon joined here by the black cat of which the voice had spoken. He took him on his knee and pulled seven white hairs out of his tail, and put them on one side till they were needed.

The sun had not long risen before the Sultan, who was anxious to do everything that might save the princess, arrived at the gate of the monastery, and was welcomed by the monks with great respect. The Sultan lost no time in declaring the reason for his visit, and taking the chief of the monks to one side, he said to him, “Good monk, you have guessed perhaps what I have come to ask you?”

”Yes, sire,” answered the monk. “If I am not mistaken, it is the illness of the princess which has brought me this honour.”

”You are right,” returned the Sultan, “And you will give me great joy if you can, by your prayers, save my daughter from the strange illness that has taken possession of her.”

“Let her come here, and I will see what I can do.”

The Sultan, full of hope, sent orders at once that the princess was to set out as soon as possible, accompanied by her usual staff of attendants. When she arrived, she was so thickly veiled that the monk

could not see her face, but he asked for a hot coal to be held over her head, and laid the seven hairs on the burning coal. The instant they were burnt, terrible cries were heard, but no one could tell from who they came. Only the monk guessed that they were made by Maimoum the son of Dimdim, who felt the princess escaping him.

All this time she had seemed unconscious of what she was doing, but now she raised her hand to her veil and uncovered her face. "Where am I?" she said in a bewildered manner; "And how did I get here?"

The Sultan was so delighted to hear these words that he not only embraced his daughter, but kissed the hand of the monk. Then, turning to his attendants who stood round, he said to them, "What reward shall I give to the man who has given me back my daughter?"

They all replied that he deserved the hand of the princess in marriage.

"That is my own opinion," said he, "And from this moment I declare him to be my son-in-law."

Shortly after these events, the grand-vizier died, and his position was given to the monk. But he did not hold it for long, for the Sultan became ill, and as he had no sons, the soldiers and priests declared the monk the new sultan, to the great joy of all the people.

One day, when the monk, who had now become Sultan, was making a royal journey with his court, he noticed the envious man standing in the crowd. He made a sign to one of his viziers, and whispered in his ear, "Fetch me that man who is standing out there, but take great care not to frighten him." The vizier obeyed, and when the envious man was brought before the Sultan, the king said to him, "My friend, I am delighted to see you again." Then turning to an officer, he added, "Give him a thousand pieces of gold out of my treasury, and twenty wagon-loads of merchandise out of my private stores, and let an

escort of soldiers accompany him home.” He then took leave of the envious man, and went on his way.

Now when I had ended my story, I wanted to show the genie how it concerned him. “O genie,” I said, “you see that this Sultan was not content with merely forgiving the envious man for the attempt on his life; he gave rewards and riches to him.”

But the genie had made up his mind, and could not be softened. “Do not imagine that you are going to escape so easily,” he said. “You will have to learn what happens to people who interfere with me.”

As he spoke he seized me violently by the arm. The roof of the palace opened to make way for us, and we flew up so high into the air that the earth looked like a little cloud. Then, as before, he came down with the swiftness of lightning, and we touched the ground on a mountain top.

Then he gathered a handful of earth, and murmured some words over it, after which he threw the earth in my face, saying as he did so, “Take the form of a monkey.” This done, he vanished, and I was in the likeness of a monkey, and in a country I had never seen before.

However there was no use in stopping where I was, so I came down the mountain and found myself in a flat plain which was surrounded by the sea. I traveled towards it, and was pleased to see a ship anchored about half a mile from shore. There were no waves, so I broke off the branch of a tree, and dragging it down to the water’s edge, sat across it, while, using two sticks for oars, I rowed myself towards the ship.

The deck was full of people, who watched my progress with interest, but when I seized a rope and swung myself on board, I found that I had only escaped death at the hands of the genie to die because of the

sailors, who believed I should bring bad luck to the ship and the merchants. “Throw him into the sea!” cried one. “Knock him on the head with a hammer,” exclaimed another. “Let me shoot him with an arrow,” said a third. Certainly somebody would have had his way if I had not thrown myself at the captain’s feet and grasped tight hold of his robe. He appeared touched by my action and patted my head, and declared that he would take me under his protection, and that no one should do me any harm.

At the end of about fifty days we dropped anchor before a large town, and the ship was immediately surrounded by a number of small boats filled with people, who had come either to meet their friends or from simple curiosity. Among others, one boat contained several officials, who asked to see the merchants on board, and informed them that they had been sent by the Sultan in welcome, and to ask them each to write a few lines on a roll of paper. “In order to explain this strange request,” continued the officers, “It is necessary that you should know that the grand-vizier, who recently passed away, was celebrated for his beautiful handwriting, and the Sultan is anxious to find a similar talent in his successor. So far the search has been a failure, but his Highness has not yet given up hope.”

One after another the merchants set down a few lines upon the roll, and when they had all finished, I came forward, and snatched the paper from the man who held it. At first they all thought I was going to throw it into the sea, but they became quiet when they saw I held it with great care, and great was their surprise when I made signs that I too wished to write something.

”Let him do it if he wants to,” said the captain. “If he only makes a mess of the paper, you may be sure I will punish him for it. But if, as I hope, he really can write, for he is the cleverest monkey I ever saw, I will adopt him as my son. The one I lost had not nearly so much

sense!”

No more was said, and I took the pen and wrote the six sorts of writing in use among the Arabs, and each sort contained an original verse in praise of the Sultan. Not only was my handwriting completely superior to that of the merchants, but it is hardly too much to say that none so beautiful had ever before been seen in that country. When I had ended the officials took the roll and returned to the Sultan.

As soon as the monarch saw my writing he did not even look at the writing of the merchants, but ordered his officials to take the finest horse in his stables, together with the most magnificent robes they could find, and to put it on the person who had written those lines, and bring him to court.

The officials began to laugh when they heard the Sultan’s command, but as soon as they could speak they said, “Excuse our laughter your highness, but those lines were not written by a man but by a monkey.”

”A monkey!” exclaimed the Sultan.

”Yes, sire,” answered the officials. “They were written by a monkey in our presence.”

”Then bring me the monkey,” he replied, “as fast as you can.”

The Sultan’s officials returned to the ship and showed the royal order to the captain.

Then they put on me the beautiful robe and rowed me to land, where I was placed on the horse and led to the palace. Here the Sultan was awaiting me in great excitement surrounded by his officials.

All the way along the streets I had been the object of curiosity to an

enormous crowd, which had filled every doorway and every window, and it was amidst their shouts and cheers that I was taken into the presence of the Sultan.

I approached the throne on which he was seated and made three low bows, to the surprise of everyone, who could not understand how it was possible that a monkey should be able to distinguish a Sultan from other people and know how to pay him the proper respect.

When it was over the Sultan sent everyone away, except the chief of the servants and a little slave. He then passed into another room and ordered food to be brought, making signs to me to sit at table with him and eat. I rose from my seat, kissed the ground, and took my place at the table.

Before the dishes were removed I made signs that writing materials, which stood in one corner of the room, should be laid in front of me. I then took a peach and wrote on it some lines in praise of the Sultan, who was speechless with astonishment; but when I did the same thing on a glass from which I had drunk he murmured to himself, “Why, a man who could do as much would be cleverer than any other man, and this is only a monkey!”

After supper a chess set was brought, and the Sultan signed to me to know if I would play with him. I kissed the ground and laid my hand on my head to show that I was ready to show myself worthy of the honour. He beat me the first game, but I won the second and third.

The Sultan was so amazed by all my talents that he wished me to show some of them to other people. So turning to the chief of the servants he said, “Go and ask my daughter, Queen of Beauty, to come here. I will show her something she has never seen before.”

The chief of the servants bowed and left the room, bringing in a few

moments later the princess, Queen of Beauty. Her face was uncovered, but the moment she set foot in the room she threw her veil over her head. "Sire," she said to her father, "what can you be thinking of to summon me like this into the presence of a man?"

"I do not understand you," replied the Sultan. "There is nobody here but the servant, who is your own servant, the little slave, and myself, yet you cover yourself with your veil and scold me for having sent for you, as if I had committed a crime."

"Sire," answered the princess, "I am right and you are wrong. This monkey is really no monkey at all, but a young prince who has been turned into a monkey by the wicked spells of a genie, son of the daughter of Eblis."

As will be imagined, these words took the Sultan by surprise, and he looked at me. As I was unable to speak, I placed my hand on my head to show that it was true.

"But how do you know this, my daughter?" asked he.

"Sire," replied Queen of Beauty, "the old lady who took care of me in my childhood was a skilful magician, and she taught me seventy rules of her magic, by means of which I could, in the twinkling of an eye, send your city into the middle of the ocean. Her magic also teaches me to recognize at first sight all persons who are enchanted, and tells me by whom the spell was made."

"My daughter," said the Sultan, "I really had no idea you were so clever."

"Sire," replied the princess, "there are many extraordinary things it is good to know, but one should never boast of them."

"Well," asked the Sultan, "can you tell me what must be done to

break the spell?"

"Certainly, and I can do it."

"Then restore him to his former shape," cried the Sultan. "You could give me no greater pleasure, for I wish to make him my grand-vizier, and to give him to you for your husband."

"As your Highness pleases," replied the princess.

Queen of Beauty rose and went to her chamber, from which she fetched a knife with some magic words on the blade. She then told the Sultan, the chief of the servants, the little slave, and myself to go down into a secret court of the palace, and placed us beneath a room which ran all round, she herself standing in the centre of the court. Here she traced a large circle and in it wrote several words in Arab characters.

When the circle and the writing were finished she stood in the middle of it and repeated some magic words. Slowly the air grew dark, and we felt as if the earth was about to crumble away, and our fright was by no means lessened at seeing the genie, son of the daughter of Eblis, suddenly appear in the form of a huge lion.

"Dog," cried the princess when she first caught sight of him, "you think to frighten me by daring to present yourself before me in this hideous shape."

"And you," replied the lion, "have not feared to break our agreement that we should never interfere with each other."

"Wicked genie!" exclaimed the princess, "it is you who first broke that agreement."

"I will teach you not to give me so much trouble," said the lion, and

opening his huge mouth he stepped forward to swallow her. But the princess expected this and was ready. She jumped to one side, and seizing one of the hairs of his mane repeated two or three words over it. In an instant it became a sword, and with a sharp blow she cut the lion's body into two pieces. These pieces vanished no one knew where, and only the lion's head remained, which was at once changed into a scorpion. Quickly the princess took the form of a snake and fought the scorpion, who, finding he was losing, turned himself into an eagle and flew away. But in a moment the snake had become an eagle more powerful still, who soared up in the air and after him, and then we lost sight of them both.

We all remained where we were shaking with fear, when the ground opened in front of us and a black and white cat leapt out, its hair standing on end, and crying frightfully. At its heels was a wolf, which had almost seized it, when the cat changed itself into a worm, and, entering the skin of a pomegranate which had tumbled from a tree, hid itself in the fruit. The pomegranate swelled till it grew as large as a pumpkin, and raised itself on to the roof of the room, from which it fell into the court and was broken into bits. While this was taking place the wolf, which had transformed himself into a cock, began to swallow the seed of the pomegranate as fast as he could. When all were gone he flew towards us, flapping his wings as if to ask if we saw any more, when suddenly his eye fell on one which lay on the bank of the little canal that flowed through the court; he moved quickly towards it, but before he could touch it the seed rolled into the canal and became a fish. The cock flung himself in after the fish and took the shape of a pike, and for two hours they chased each other up and down under the water, uttering horrible cries, but we could see nothing. At length they rose from the water in their proper forms, but hurling such flames of fire from their mouths that we feared the palace would catch fire. Soon, however, we had much greater cause for alarm, as the genie, having escaped the princess, flew towards us.

We would have been finished if the princess, seeing our danger, had not attracted the attention of the genie to herself. As it was, the Sultan's beard was burnt and the chief of the servant was burned to a cinder, while a spark made me lose sight of one eye. Both I and the Sultan had given up all hope of a rescue, when there was a shout of "Victory, victory!" from the princess, and the genie lay at her feet a great heap of ashes.

Exhausted though she was, the princess at once ordered the little slave, who alone was uninjured, to bring her a cup of water, which she took in her hand. First repeating some magic words over it, she threw it into my face saying, "If you are only a monkey by enchantment, take the form of the man you were before." In an instant I stood before her the same man I had formerly been, though having lost the sight of one eye.

I was about to fall on my knees and thank the princess but she did not give me time. Turning to the Sultan, her father, she said, "Sire, I have gained the battle, but it has cost me dear. The fire has penetrated to my heart, and I have only a few moments to live. This would not have happened if I had only noticed the last pomegranate seed and eaten it like the rest. It was the last struggle of the genie, and up to that time I was quite safe. But having let this chance slip I was forced to use fire, and in spite of all his experience I showed the genie that I knew more than he did. He is dead and in ashes, but my own death is approaching fast." "My daughter," cried the Sultan, "How sad I am! I am only surprised I am alive at all! The servant is destroyed by the flames, and the prince who you have saved has lost the sight of one eye." He could say no more, for sobs choked his voice, and we all wept together.

Suddenly the princess shrieked, "I burn, I burn!" and she died.

I have no words, madam, to tell you of my feelings at this terrible

sight. I would rather have remained a monkey all my life than let the princess die in this shocking manner. As for the Sultan, he was so sad, and his subjects, who had dearly loved the princess, shared his grief.

As soon as the Sultan recovered from the severe illness which he had suffered from after the death of the princess he sent for me and plainly, though politely, informed me that my presence would always remind him of his loss, and he begged that I would instantly leave his kingdom, and never return to it. I was, of course, forced to obey, and not knowing what was to become of me I shaved my beard and eyebrows and put on the robe of a monk. After wandering through several countries, I decided to come to Baghdad and request an audience with the Caliph.

And that, madam, is my story.

The other monk then told his story.

The Story of the Third Monk, Son of a King

My story, said the third monk, is quite different from those of my two friends. It was fate that caused them to lose their right eyes, but mine was lost by my own foolishness.

My name is Agib, and I am the son of a king called Cassib, who reigned over a large kingdom, whose capital was one of the finest seaports in the world.

When I succeeded to my father's throne my first care was to visit the provinces on the mainland, and then to sail to the numerous islands which lay off the shore, in order to gain the hearts of my people. These voyages gave me such a taste for sailing that I soon decided to explore more distant seas, and ordered that a fleet of large ships be got ready without delay. When they were properly prepared I began my expedition.

For forty days the weather was good, but the next night a terrific storm arose, which blew us everywhere for ten days, till the captain said that he had lost his way. Therefore a sailor was sent up the mast to try to catch a sight of land, and reported that nothing was to be seen but the sea and sky, except for a huge mass of blackness.

On hearing this, the pilot grew white, and he cried, "Oh, sir, we are lost, lost!" When he had recovered himself a little, and was able to explain the cause of his terror, he replied, that the following day about noon we should come near that mass of darkness, which, said he, is the famous Black Mountain. This mountain is made of a magnet, which attracts to itself all the iron and nails in your ship; and as we are helplessly drawn nearer, the force of attraction will become so great that the iron and nails will fall out of the ships and cling to the mountain, and the ships will sink to the bottom with all that are in

them. This is why the side of the mountain towards the sea appears so black.

“Also,” continued the pilot, “the mountain sides are very rugged, but on the summit stands a brass dome supported on pillars, and bearing on top the figure of a brass horse, with a rider on his back. This rider wears a breastplate of lead, on which strange signs and figures are engraved, and it is said that as long as this statue remains on the dome, ships will always perish at the foot of the mountain.”

At noon next day, as the pilot had said, we were so near to the Black Mountain that we saw all the nails and iron fly out of the ships and crash against the mountain with a horrible noise. A moment later the ships fell apart and sank, the crews with them. I alone managed to grasp a floating plank, and floated ashore, without even a scratch. I found myself at the bottom of some very narrow steps which led straight up the mountain. Indeed, even the steps themselves were so narrow and so steep that, if the lightest breeze had arisen, I should certainly have been blown into the sea.

When I reached the top I found the brass dome and the statue exactly as the captain had described, but was too tired with all I had gone through to do more than glance at them, and, laying myself down under the dome, was asleep in an instant. In my dreams an old man appeared to me and said, “Listen, Agib! As soon as you are awake dig up the ground underfoot, and you shall find a bow of brass and three arrows of lead. Shoot the arrows at the statue, and the rider shall tumble into the sea, but the horse will fall down by your side, and you must bury him in the place from which you took the bow and arrows. This being done the sea will rise and cover the mountain, and on it you will see the figure of a metal man seated in a boat, having an oar in each hand. Step on board and let him take you away. However if you want to see your kingdom again, make sure that you do not say

God's name

Having said these words the vision left me, and I woke. I sprang up and dug the bow and arrows out of the ground, and with the third shot the horseman fell with a great crash into the sea, which instantly began to rise, so rapidly, that I had hardly time to bury the horse before the boat approached me. I stepped silently in and sat down, and the metal man pushed off, and rowed without stopping for nine days, after which land appeared on the horizon. I was so overcome with joy at this sight that I forgot all the old man had told me, and cried out, "God be praised! God be praised!"

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when the boat and man sank beneath me, and left me floating on the surface. All that day and the next night I swam and floated, making as well as I could for the land which was nearest to me. At last my strength began to fail, and I gave myself up for lost, when the wind suddenly rose, and a huge wave threw me onto a flat shore. Then, I spread my clothes out to dry in the sun, and lay myself down on the warm ground to rest.

The next morning I dressed myself and began to look about me. There seemed to be no one but myself on the island, which was covered with fruit trees and watered with streams, but seemed a long distance from the mainland which I hoped to reach. Before long, I saw a ship headed towards the island, and not knowing whether it would contain friends or enemies, I hid myself in the thick branches of a tree.

The sailors came ashore and ten slaves landed, carrying spades and pickaxes. In the middle of the island they stopped, and after digging some time, lifted up what seemed to be a trapdoor. They then returned to the ship two or three times for furniture and food and finally were accompanied by an old man, leading a handsome boy of fourteen or fifteen years of age. They all disappeared down the trapdoor, and after

remaining below for a few minutes came up again, but without the boy, and let down the trapdoor, covering it with earth as before. This done, they boarded the ship and set sail.

As soon as they were out of sight, I came down from my tree, and went to the place where the boy had been buried. I dug up the earth till I reached a large stone with a ring in the centre. This showed a flight of stone steps which led to a large room richly furnished and lighted by candles. On a pile of cushions sat the boy. He looked up, startled and frightened at the sight of a stranger in such a place, and to calm him, I at once spoke.” Don’t worry. I am a king, and the son of a king, and will do you no harm. On the contrary, perhaps I have been sent here to save you from this tomb, where you have been buried alive.”

Hearing my words, the young man recovered himself, and when I had ended, he said, “The reasons, Prince, that have caused me to be buried in this place are so strange that they will surprise you. My father is a rich merchant, owning much land and many ships, and does much business in precious stones, but he never stopped complaining that he had no child to inherit his wealth.

”One day he dreamed that the following year a son would be born to him, and when this actually happened, he asked all the wise men in the kingdom about the future of the baby. They all said the same thing. I was to live happily till I was fifteen, when a terrible danger awaited me, from which I would probably not escape. If, however, I should succeed in doing so, I should live to a great old age. And, they added, when the statue of the brass horse on the top of the mountain of magnet is thrown into the sea by Agib, the son of Cassib, then beware, for fifty days later your son shall fall by his hand!

”This prophecy terrified my father so much, that he never got over it.

A short time ago, I had my fifteenth birthday. It was only yesterday that the news reached him that ten days ago the statue of brass had been thrown into the sea, and he at once set about hiding me in this underground chamber, which was built for the purpose, promising to bring me out when the forty days have passed. For myself, I have no fears, as Prince Agib is not likely to come here to look for me.”

I listened to his story, laughing at the idea that I would ever want to cause the death of this harmless boy. I begged him to take me in his father’s ship to my own country. I took special care not to let him know that I was the Agib whom he feared.

The day passed with us chatting pleasantly. I took on the duties of a servant, held the basin and water for him when he washed, prepared the dinner and set it on the table. He soon grew to love me, and for thirty-nine days we spent as pleasant an existence as could be expected underground.

The morning of the fortieth dawned, and the young man when he woke gave thanks in an outburst of joy that the danger was passed. “My father may be here at any moment,” said he, “so make me, please, a bath of hot water, that I may bathe, and change my clothes, and be ready to meet him.”

So I brought the water as he asked, and washed and rubbed him, after which he lay down again and slept a little. When he opened his eyes for the second time, he asked me to bring him a melon so that he might eat and refresh himself.

I soon chose a fine melon out of those which remained, but could find no knife to cut it with. “Look on the shelf over my head,” said he, “and I think you will see one.” It was so high above me, that I had some difficulty in reaching it, and tripping in the covering of the bed, I slipped, and fell right upon the young man, the knife going straight

into his heart.

At this awful sight I cried aloud in my grief and pain. I threw myself on the ground and tore my hair with sorrow. Then, fearing to be punished as his murderer by the unhappy father, I raised the great stone which blocked the staircase, and left the underground chamber.

Scarcely had I finished when, looking out to sea, I saw the ship heading for the island, and, feeling that it would be useless for me to say I was innocent, I again hid myself among the branches of a tree that grew near by.

The old man and his slaves pushed off in a boat as soon as the ship touched land, and walked quickly towards the entrance to the underground chamber. But when they were near enough to see that the earth had been disturbed, they paused. In silence they all went down and called to the youth by name. Then for a moment I heard no more. Suddenly there was a fearful scream, and the next instant the slaves came up the steps, carrying with them the body of the old man, who had fainted from sorrow! Laying him down at the foot of the tree in which I had taken shelter, they did their best to wake him, but it took a long while. When at last he woke, they left him to dig a grave, and then laying the young man's body in it, they threw in the earth.

After this, the slaves brought up all the furniture that remained below, and put it on the ship, and carried the father to the ship and sailed away.

So once more I was quite alone, and for a whole month I walked around the island, seeking some chance of escape. At last one day I realized that my prison had grown much larger, and that the mainland seemed to be nearer. I was excited at this thought, which was almost too good to be true. I watched a little longer. There was no doubt about it, and soon there was only a tiny stream for me to cross.

Even when I was safe on the other side I had a long distance to go on the mud and sand before I reached dry ground, and was very tired. Far in front of me I caught sight of a castle of red copper, which, at first sight, I thought was a fire. After some miles of hard walking stood before it, and gazed at it in astonishment, for it seemed to me the most wonderful building I had ever seen. While I was still staring at it, there came towards me a tall old man, accompanied by ten young men, all handsome, and all blind in the right eye.

Now, the sight of ten men walking together, all blind in the right eye, is as uncommon as that of a copper castle, and I was thinking about what it all meant when they greeted me warmly, and asked what had brought me there. I replied that my story was long, but that if they would take the trouble to sit down, I should be happy to tell it to them. When I had finished, the young men asked me to go with them to the castle, and I joyfully accepted their offer. We passed through what seemed to me an endless number of rooms, and came at last into a large hall, furnished with ten small blue sofas for the ten young men, which served as beds as well as chairs and with another sofa in the middle for the old man. As none of the sofas could hold more than one person, they asked me sit on the carpet, and to ask no questions about anything I should see.

After a little while the old man rose and brought in supper, which I ate hungrily. Then one of the young men asked me to repeat my story, which had astonished them all. When I had ended, the old man was told to “do his duty,” as it was late, and they wished to go to bed. At these words he rose, and went to a closet, from which he brought out ten covered basins. He set one before each of the young men, together with a lighted candle.

When the covers were taken off the basins, I saw they were filled with ashes and coal dust. The young men mixed these all together, and

covered their heads and faces with it. They then cried, “This is the result of our laziness, and of our wicked lives.”

This lasted nearly the whole night, and when it stopped they washed themselves carefully, put on fresh clothes and lay down to sleep.

All this time I hadn't asked any questions, though my curiosity almost seemed to burn a hole in me. However, the following day, when we went out to walk, I said to them, “Gentlemen, I must disobey your wishes, for I can keep silent no more. You do not appear stupid, yet what you do seems mad. Whatever happens to me I must ask, ‘Why you cover your faces with black, and how it is you are all blind of one eye?’” But they only answered that such questions were none of my business, and that I should not ask.

During that day we chatted about other things, but when night came, and the same ceremony was repeated, I begged them to let me know the meaning of it all.

”It is for your own sake,” replied one of the young men, “that we have not granted your request, and to save you from our unfortunate fate. If, however, you wish to share our destiny we will tell you.”

I answered that whatever the consequence might be I wished to have my curiosity satisfied, and that I would take the responsibility for what happened. He then told me that, even when I had lost my eye, I should be unable to remain with them, as their number was complete, and could not be added to. But to this I replied that, even though I should be sad to leave such honest gentlemen, I would not change my mind.

On hearing my determination my ten hosts then took a sheep and killed it, and handed me a knife, which they said I should find useful later. “We must sew you into this sheep-skin,” said they, “and then

leave you. A bird of monstrous size, called a roc, will appear in the air. Thinking you are a sheep, he will snatch you up and carry you into the sky. Don't be afraid, for he will bring you safely down and lay you on the top of a mountain. When you are on the ground cut the skin with the knife and throw it off. As soon as the roc sees you he will fly away in fear, but you must walk on till you come to a castle covered with plates of gold, and jewels. Enter at the gate, which always stands open, but do not ask us to tell you what we saw or what happened to us there, for that you will learn for yourself. We may only say, that it cost each of us our right eye.”

After the young men had sewed the sheep-skin on me they left me, and returned to the hall. In a few minutes the roc appeared, and carried me off to the top of the mountain in his huge claws as lightly as if I had been a feather. This great white bird is so strong that he has been known to carry even an elephant to his nest in the hills.

The moment my feet touched the ground I took out my knife and cut the threads that tied me, and the sight of me in my proper clothes so alarmed the roc that he spread his wings and flew away. Then I set out to find the castle.

I found it after wandering about for half a day, and never could I have imagined anything so amazing. The gate led into a square court, into which opened a hundred doors, ninety-nine of them being of rare woods and one of gold. Through each of these doors I caught glimpses of splendid gardens.

Entering one of the doors which was standing open I found myself in an enormous hall where forty young ladies, magnificently dressed, and of perfect beauty, were seated. As soon as they saw me they rose and welcomed me. One brought me splendid garments, while another filled a basin with scented water and poured it over my hands, and the

rest busied themselves with preparing refreshments. After I had eaten and drunk the most delicate food and wonderful wines, the ladies crowded round me and begged me to tell them all my adventures.

By the time I had finished night had fallen, and the ladies lighted up the castle with such a huge number of candles that even day could hardly have been brighter. We then sat down to supper, after which some sang and others danced. I was so well entertained that I did not notice how the time was passing, but at last one of the ladies approached and told me it was midnight, and that, as I must be tired, she would show me to the room that had been prepared for me. Then, wishing me good-night, I was left to sleep.

I spent the next thirty-nine days in much the same way as the first, but at the end of that time the ladies appeared in my room one morning to ask how I had slept, and instead of looking cheerful and smiling they were in floods of tears. "Prince," said they, "we must leave you, and never was it so hard to part from any of our friends. Most likely we shall never see you again, but perhaps we may yet look forward to another meeting."

"Ladies," I replied, "what is the meaning of these strange words. Please tell me?"

"Understand," answered one of them, "that we are all princesses; each a king's daughter. We live in this castle together, in the way that you have seen, but at the end of every year secret duties call us away for forty days. The time has now come; but before we depart, we will leave you our keys, so that you may not lack entertainment during our absence. But one thing we would ask you. If you wish to remain happy, never open the Golden door. If that door is unlocked, we must say farewell for ever."

I promised to obey them, and after hugging me tenderly, they went

away.

Every day I opened two or three new doors, behind which were so many unusual things that I had no chance of feeling bored even though I missed the ladies. Sometimes it was an orchard, whose fruit were far larger any that grew in my father's garden. Sometimes it was a garden planted with roses, jasmine, daffodils, hyacinths, anemones, and a thousand other flowers I did not know the names of. Or it would be an aviary, with all kinds of singing birds, or a treasury full of precious stones. Whatever I might see, was perfect.

Thirty-nine days passed more quickly than I could have imagined possible, and the following morning the princesses were to return to the castle. But alas! I had explored every corner, except the room of the Golden Door, and I had no longer anything to entertain myself with. I stood before the forbidden place for some time, gazing at its beauty, and then I had a happy thought. I believed that if I unlocked the door I didn't need to enter the room. It would be enough for me to stand outside and view whatever hidden wonders might be inside.

I turned the key and a pleasant smell rushed out, and I fell fainting into the room. As soon as I woke I went for a few moments into the air to shake of the effects of the perfume, and then entered. I found myself in a large room, lighted by candles, standing in golden candlesticks, while gold and silver lamps hung from the ceiling.

Though many wonderful treasures lay around me, I paid them no attention, because in one corner, stood a great black horse. The handsomest and best-shaped animal I had ever seen. His saddle and bridle were of gold. One side of his trough was filled with clean barley and sesame, and the other with rose water. I led the animal into the open air, and then jumped on his back, shaking the reins as I did so, but as he never stirred, I touched him lightly with a whip I had

picked up in his stable. No sooner did he feel the stroke, than he spread his wings (which I had not noticed before), and flew up with me straight into the sky. When he had reached a great height, he next flew back to earth, and landed on the terrace of a castle, throwing me out of the saddle as he did so, and giving me such a blow with his tail, that he knocked out my right eye.

Shocked at what had happened to me, I rose to my feet, thinking as I did so of what had happened to the ten young men. The horse soared off up into the clouds. I left the terrace and wandered on till I came to a hall, which I knew to have been the one from which the roc had taken me, by the ten blue sofas against the wall.

The ten young men were not present when I first entered, but came in soon after, accompanied by the old man. They greeted me kindly, and even though they were sympathetic it was what they had expected. “All that has happened to you,” they said, “we also have experienced, and we should be enjoying the same happiness still, had we not opened the Golden Door while the princesses were absent. You have been no wiser than us, and have suffered the same punishment. Leave now and go to the Court of Baghdad, where you shall meet with him that can decide your destiny.” They told me the way I was to travel, and I left them.

On the road I shaved my beard and eyebrows, and put on a monks robe. I have had a long journey, but arrived this evening in the city, where I met my brother monks at the gate. We were curious to see we were all blind of the same eye, but we had no time to discuss our experiences.

He finished, and it was Zobeida’s turn to speak: “Go wherever you want,” she said, speaking to all three. “I forgive you all, but you must leave immediately out of this house.”

The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor

In the times of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid there lived in Baghdad a poor porter named Hindbad, who on a very hot day was sent to carry a heavy load from one end of the city to the other. Before he had accomplished half the distance he was so tired that, finding himself in a quiet street where the pavement was sprinkled with rose water, and a cool breeze was blowing, he set his burden upon the ground, and sat down to rest in the shade of a grand house. Very soon he decided that he could not have chosen a pleasanter place; a delicious perfume came from the open windows and mingled with the scent of the rose water which steamed up from the hot pavement. Within the palace he heard some music, beautifully played, and the melodious songs of nightingales and other birds, and by this, and the appetizing smell of many dainty dishes of which he presently became aware, he realized that a celebration was going on. He wondered who lived in this magnificent house which he had never seen before, the street in which it stood being one which he seldom passed. To satisfy his curiosity he went up to some splendidly dressed servants who stood at the door, and asked one of them the name of the master of the mansion.

“What,” replied he, “Do you live in Baghdad, and not know that here lives the noble Sinbad the Sailor, that famous traveler who sailed over every sea upon which the sun shines?”

The porter, who had often heard people speak of the immense wealth of Sinbad, could not help feeling envious of one whose life seemed to be as happy as his own was miserable. Looking up to the sky he exclaimed aloud,

“Consider, Mighty Creator of all things, the differences between Sinbad’s life and mine. Every day I suffer a thousand hardships and

misfortunes, and have hard work to get even enough bad barley bread to keep myself and my family alive, while the lucky Sinbad spends money right and left and lives so well! What has he done that you should give him this pleasant life? What have I done to deserve so hard a fate?"

So saying he stamped upon the ground like one beside himself with misery and despair. Just at this moment a servant came out of the palace, and taking him by the arm said, "Come with me, the noble Sinbad, my master wishes to speak to you."

Hindbad was surprised at this, and feared that his hasty words might have upset the Sinbad, so he tried to excuse himself saying that he could not leave the burden which had been given to him in the street. However the servant promised him that it should be taken care of, and urged him to obey the call so that at last the porter was obliged to enter.

He followed the servant into a vast room, where a great number of people were seated round a table covered with all sorts of delicacies. In the place of honour sat a tall, man with a long white beard. Behind his chair, stood a crowd of attendants eager to serve him. This was the famous Sinbad himself. The porter, more than ever alarmed at the sight of so much magnificence, tremblingly bowed to the noble company. Sinbad, making a sign to him to approach, had him seated at his right hand, and himself heaped delicious food upon his plate, and poured out for him excellent wine, and presently, when the banquet came to an end, spoke to him, asking his name and occupation.

"My lord," replied the porter, "I am called Hindbad."

"I am glad to see you here," continued Sinbad. "And I will answer for the rest of the company that they are equally pleased, but I wish you

to tell me what it was that you said just now in the street.” For Sinbad, passing by the open window before the feast began, had heard his complaint and therefore had sent for him.

At this question Hindbad was covered with confusion, and hanging down his head, replied, “My lord, I confess that, overcome by weariness and a bad mood, I misspoke. I beg you pardon me.”

“Oh!” replied Sinbad, “do not imagine that I am so unjust as to blame you. On the contrary, I understand your situation and can pity you. Only you appear to be mistaken about me, and I wish to explain. You imagine that I have acquired all the wealth and luxury that you see me enjoy without difficulty or danger, but this is far indeed from being the case. I have only reached this happy state after having for years suffered every possible kind of hardship and danger.

“Yes, my noble friends,” he continued, addressing the company, “I assure you that my adventures have been strange enough to deter even the most greedy men from seeking wealth by voyaging across the seas. Since you have, perhaps, heard confused accounts of my seven voyages, and the dangers and wonders that I have met with by sea and land, I will now give you a full and true account of them, which I think you will be well pleased to hear.”

As Sinbad was relating his adventures chiefly because of the porter, he ordered, before beginning his tale, that the burden which had been left in the street should be carried by some of his own servants to the place for which Hindbad had set out at first, while he remained to listen to the story.

First Voyage

I had inherited considerable wealth from my parents, and being young and foolish I at first wasted it upon every kind of pleasure, but soon, finding that riches quickly disappear if managed as badly as I was managing mine, and remembering also that to be old and poor is miserable indeed, I began to consider how I could make the best of what still remained to me. I sold all my household goods by public auction, and joined a company of merchants who traded by sea, embarking with them at Basra on a ship

We set sail towards the East Indies by the Persian Gulf, having the coast of Persia upon our left hand and upon our right the shores of Arabia. I was at first much troubled by sea sickness, but speedily recovered my health, and since that time haven't been troubled by it again.

From time to time we landed at various islands, where we sold or exchanged our merchandise, and one day, when the wind dropped suddenly, we found ourselves becalmed close to a small island like a green meadow, which only rose slightly above the surface of the water. Our sails were lowered, and the captain gave permission to all who wished to land for a while and amuse themselves. I was among the number, but when after strolling about for some time we lighted a fire and sat down to enjoy the meal which we had brought with us, we were startled by a sudden and violent trembling of the island, while at the same moment those left upon the ship cried out for us to come back on board for our lives, since what we had thought was an island was nothing but the back of a sleeping whale. Those who were nearest to the boat threw themselves into it, others sprang into the sea, but before I could save myself the whale plunged suddenly into the depths of the ocean, leaving me clinging to a piece of the wood which we had

brought to make our fire. Meanwhile a breeze had sprung up, and in the confusion, no one missed me and I was left alone in the middle of the sea. All that day I floated up and down, now this way, now that, and when night fell I despaired for my life; but, weary and exhausted as I was, I clung to the piece of wood, and great was my joy when the morning light showed me that I had drifted onto an island.

The cliffs were high and steep, but luckily for me some tree-roots stuck out in places, and with their help I climbed up at last, and stretched myself upon the grass at the top, where I lay, till the sun was high overhead. By that time I was very hungry, but after some searching I came upon some herbs, and a spring of clear water, and much refreshed I set out to explore the island. Presently I reached a great plain where a grazing horse was tied up, and as I stood looking at it I heard voices talking apparently underground, and in a moment a man appeared who asked me how I came upon the island. I told him my adventures, and heard in return that he was one of the grooms of Mihrage, the king of the island, and that each year they came to feed their master's horses on that plain. He took me to a cave where his companions were assembled, and when I had eaten the food they set before me, they told me I was lucky to have met them when I did, since they were going back to their master the following day, and without their aid I could certainly never have found my way to the inhabited part of the island.

Early the next morning we set out, and when we reached the capital I was graciously received by the king, to whom I related my adventures, upon which he ordered that I should be well cared for and provided with such things as I needed. Being a merchant I looked for other merchants, and particularly those who came from foreign countries, as I hoped in this way to hear news from Baghdad, and find out some means of returning there because the capital was situated upon the sea-shore, and visited by ships from all parts of the world. In

the meantime I heard many curious things, and answered many questions concerning my own country, for I talked willingly with all who came to me. Also to spend the time waiting I explored a little island named Cassel, which belonged to King Mihrage, and which was supposed to be inhabited by a spirit named Deggial. Indeed, the sailors assured me that often at night the playing of timbals could be heard upon it. However, I saw nothing strange upon my voyage, except some fish that were two hundred metres long, but were fortunately more afraid of us than even we were of them, and fled from us if we made a noise to frighten them. Other fishes there were only a metre long and had heads like owls.

One day after my return, as I went down to the quay, I saw a ship which had just dropped anchor, and was unloading her cargo. Drawing nearer I noticed that my own name was marked upon some of the packages, and after having carefully examined them, I felt sure that they were indeed those which I had put on board our ship at Basra. I then recognized the captain of the vessel, but as I was certain that he believed me to be dead, I went up to him and asked who owned the packages that I was looking at.

“There was on board my ship,” he replied, “a merchant of Baghdad named Sinbad. One day he and several of my other passengers landed upon what we supposed to be an island, but which was really an enormous whale floating asleep upon the waves. No sooner did it feel upon its back the heat of the fire which had been started, than it plunged into the depths of the sea. Several of the people who were upon it perished in the water, and among them this unlucky Sinbad. This merchandise is his, but I have decided to sell it for the benefit of his family if I should ever meet with them.”

“Captain,” said I, “I am that Sinbad whom you believe to be dead, and these are my possessions!”

When the captain heard these words he cried out in amazement, “Oh no! In these days there is not an honest man to be met with. I saw with my own eyes Sinbad drown, and now you tell me that you are him! You look like an honest man, and yet to get something that does not belong to you, you are ready to invent this horrible lie.”

“Have patience, and do me the favour to hear my story,” said I.

“Speak then,” replied the captain, “I’m listening.”

So I told him of my escape and of my fortunate meeting with the king’s grooms, and how kindly I had been received at the palace. Very soon I began to see that I had made some impression upon him, and after the arrival of some of the other merchants, who showed great joy at once more seeing me alive, he said that he also recognized me.

He exclaimed, “Heaven be praised that you have escaped from so great a danger. As to your goods, I beg you take them, and sell them as you please.” I thanked him, and praised his honesty, begging him to accept several boxes of merchandise to show my gratitude, but he would take nothing. Of the best of my goods I prepared a present for King Mihrage, who was at first amazed, having known that I had lost everything. However, when I had explained to him how my goods had been miraculously returned to me, he graciously accepted my gifts, and in return gave me many valuable things. I then left him, and exchanging my merchandise for sandal and aloes wood, camphor, nutmegs, cloves, pepper, and ginger, I embarked upon the same vessel and traded so successfully upon our homeward voyage that I arrived in Basra with about one hundred thousand gold coins. My family received me with as much joy as I felt upon seeing them once more. I bought land and slaves, and built a great house in which I decided to live happily, and in the enjoyment of all the pleasures of life to forget my past sufferings.

Here Sinbad paused, and commanded the musicians to play again, while the feasting continued until evening. When the time came for the porter to depart, Sinbad gave him a purse containing one hundred gold coins, saying, "Take this, Hindbad, and go home, but tomorrow come again and you shall hear more of my adventures."

The porter left quite overcome by so much generosity, and you may imagine that he was well received at home, where his wife and children thanked their lucky stars that he had found such a friend.

The next day Hindbad, dressed in his best, returned to the voyager's house, and was warmly welcomed. As soon as all the guests had arrived the banquet began as before, and when they had feasted long and merrily, Sinbad spoke:

"My friends, I beg that you will give me your attention while I relate the adventures of my second voyage, which you will find even more astonishing than the first."

Second Voyage

I had decided, as you know, on my return from my first voyage, to spend the rest of my days quietly in Baghdad, but very soon I grew tired of such an idle life and longed once more to find myself upon the sea.

I bought, therefore, such goods as were suitable for the places I intended to visit, and embarked for the second time in a good ship with other merchants whom I knew to be honorable men. We went from island to island, often making excellent bargains, until one day we landed at a spot which, though covered with fruit trees and having plentiful springs of excellent water, appeared to have neither houses nor people. While my companions wandered here and there gathering flowers and fruit I sat down in a shady place, and, having enjoyed the food and the wine I had brought with me, I fell asleep.

How long I slept I don't know, but when I opened my eyes and got to my feet I saw with horror that I was alone and that the ship was gone. I rushed to and fro, uttering cries of despair, and when from the shore I saw the vessel under full sail just disappearing over the horizon, I wished bitterly enough that I had been content to stay at home in safety. But since wishes could do me no good, I presently took courage and looked about me for a means of escape. When I had climbed a tall tree I first of all looked towards the sea; but, finding nothing hopeful there, I turned landward, and my curiosity was excited by a huge dazzling white object, so far off that I could not make out what it might be.

Descending from the tree I hastily collected what remained of my food and set off as fast as I could go towards it. As I drew near it seemed to me to be a white ball of immense size and height, and when

I could touch it, I found it marvelously smooth and soft. As it was impossible to climb it, for it had no foot-hold, I walked round about it seeking some opening, but there was none. I counted, however, that it was at least fifty paces round. By this time the sun was near setting, but quite suddenly it fell dark, something like a huge black cloud came swiftly over me, and I saw with amazement that it was a bird of extraordinary size which was hovering near. Then I remembered that I had often heard the sailors speak of a wonderful bird called a roc, and it occurred to me that the white object which had so puzzled me must be its egg.

Sure enough the bird settled slowly down upon it, covering it with its wings to keep it warm, and I cowered close beside the egg in such a position that one of the bird's feet, which was as large as the trunk of a tree, was just in front of me. Taking off my turban I bound myself securely to it with the linen in the hope that the roc, when it took flight next morning, would take me away with it from the island. And this was precisely what did happen. As soon as the dawn appeared the bird rose into the air carrying me up and up till I could no longer see the earth, and then suddenly it descended so swiftly that I almost lost consciousness. When I became aware that the roc had settled and that I was once again upon solid ground, I hastily unbound my turban from its foot and freed myself, and not a moment too soon; for the bird, pouncing upon a huge snake, killed it with a few blows from its powerful beak, and seizing it up rose into the air once more and soon disappeared from my view. When I had looked about me I began to doubt if I had gained anything by leaving the island.

The valley in which I found myself was deep and narrow, and surrounded by mountains which towered into the clouds, and were so steep and rocky that there was no way of climbing up their sides. As I wandered about, seeking some way of escaping from this trap, I observed that the ground was covered with diamonds, some of them

of an astonishing size. This sight gave me great pleasure, but my delight was lessened when I saw also numbers of horrible snakes so long and so large that the smallest of them could have swallowed an elephant with ease. Fortunately for me they seemed to hide in caverns of the rocks by day, and only came out by night, probably because of their enemy the roc.

All day long I wandered up and down the valley, and when it grew dusk I crept into a little cave, and having blocked up the entrance to it with a stone, I ate part of my little store of food and lay down to sleep, but all through the night the serpents crawled to and fro, hissing horribly, so that I could scarcely close my eyes for terror. I was thankful when the morning light appeared, and when I judged by the silence that the serpents had returned to their dens I came tremblingly out of my cave and wandered up and down the valley once more, kicking the diamonds contemptuously out of my path, for I felt that they were indeed useless things to a man in my situation. At last, overcome with weariness, I sat down upon a rock, but I had hardly closed my eyes when I was startled by something which fell to the ground with a thud close beside me.

It was a huge piece of fresh meat, and as I stared at it several more pieces rolled over the cliffs in different places. I had always thought that the stories the sailors told of the famous valley of diamonds, and of the clever way which some merchants had devised for getting at the precious stones, were mere travellers' tales invented to give pleasure to the hearers, but now I realized that they were surely true. These merchants came to the valley at the time when the eagles, which keep their eyries in the rocks, had hatched their young. The merchants then threw great lumps of meat into the valley. These, falling with so much force upon the diamonds, were sure to take up some of the precious stones with them, when the eagles pounced upon the meat and carried it off to their nests to feed their hungry young.

Then the merchants, scaring away the parent birds with shouts and outcries, would get their treasures. Until this moment I had looked upon the valley as my grave, for I had seen no possibility of getting out of it alive, but now I took courage and began to devise a means of escape. I began by picking up all the largest diamonds I could find and storing them carefully in the small bag which had held my food; this I tied to my belt. I then chose a piece of meat, and with the aid of my turban bound it firmly to my back; this done I laid down upon my face and awaited the coming of the eagles. I soon heard the flapping of their mighty wings above me, and had the satisfaction of feeling one of them seize upon my piece of meat, and me with it, and rise slowly towards his nest, into which he presently dropped me. Luckily for me the merchants were on the watch, and setting up their usual outcries they rushed to the nest scaring away the eagle. Their amazement was great when they discovered me, and also their disappointment. They then started abusing me for having robbed them of their usual profit. Speaking to the one who seemed most upset I said: "I am sure, if you knew all that I have suffered, you would show more kindness towards me, and as for diamonds, I have enough here of the very best for you and me and all your company." So saying, I showed them to him. The others all crowded round me, wondering at my adventures and admiring the way by which I had escaped from the valley, and when they had led me to their camp and examined my diamonds, they told me that in all the years that they had carried on their trade they had seen no stones to be compared with them for size and beauty.

I found that each merchant chose a particular nest. So I begged the one who owned the nest, to which I had been carried to take as much as he would of my treasure, but he contented himself with one stone, and not even the largest, telling me that with such a gem his fortune was made, and he didn't need to work again. I stayed with the merchants for several days, and then as they were journeying

homewards I gladly accompanied them. Our way lay across high mountains filled with frightful serpents, but we had the good luck to escape them and came at last to the seashore. Thence we sailed to the isle of Rohat

On this same island we saw the rhinoceros, an animal which is smaller than the elephant and larger than the buffalo. The rhinoceros fights with the elephant, and goring him with his horn carries him off upon his head, but becoming blinded with the blood of his enemy, he falls helpless to the ground, and then comes the roc, and clutches them both up in his talons and takes them to feed his young. This doubtless astonishes you, but if you do not believe my tale go to Rohat and see for yourself. For fear of wearying you I don't tell many other wonderful things which we saw on that island. Before we left I exchanged one of my diamonds for much good merchandise by which I profited greatly on our homeward way. At last we reached Basra, and then I hastened to Baghdad, where my first action was to donate large sums of money to the poor, after which I settled down to enjoy the riches I had gained with so much work and pain.

Having told the adventures of his second voyage, Sinbad again gave a hundred gold coins to Hindbad, inviting him to come again on the following day and hear about his third voyage. The other guests also departed to their homes, but all returned at the same hour next day, including the porter, whose former life of hard work and poverty had already begun to seem to him like a bad dream. Again after the feast was over Sinbad began the account of his third voyage.

Third Voyage

After a very short time the pleasant easy life I led made me quite forget the dangers of my two voyages. Moreover, as I was young, I soon became restless. So once more purchasing myself with the rarest and best merchandise of Baghdad, I sent it to Basra, and set sail with other merchants for distant lands. We had visited many ports and made much profit, when one day upon the open sea we were caught by a terrible wind which blew us completely off course, and lasting for several days finally drove us into a harbour on a strange island.

”I would rather have come to anchor anywhere than here,” said our captain. “This island and others nearby it are inhabited by hairy savages, who are certain to attack us, and whatever these dwarfs may do we dare not resist, since they attack in such large numbers, and if one of them is killed the rest will fall upon us, and speedily kill us all.”

These words caused great anxiety among all on the ship, and only too soon we were to find out that the captain spoke the truth. There appeared a huge number of hideous savages, less than a metre tall and covered with reddish fur. Throwing themselves into the waves they surrounded our vessel. Chattering meanwhile in a language we could not understand, and clutching at ropes, they swarmed up the ship’s side with such speed and agility that they almost seemed to fly.

You may imagine our terror as we watched them, neither daring to stop them nor able to speak a word to deter them from their purpose, whatever it might be. Hoisting the sails, and cutting the cable of the anchor, they sailed our vessel to an island which lay a little further off, where they drove us ashore; then taking possession of her, they made off to the place from which they had come, leaving us helpless

upon a shore avoided with horror by all seaman for a reason which you will soon learn.

Turning away from the sea we wandered miserably inland, finding as we went various fruits which we ate, feeling that we might as well live as long as possible though we had no hope of escape. Presently we saw in the far distance what seemed to us to be a splendid palace, but when we reached it we saw that it was a castle, lofty, and strongly built. Pushing back the heavy ebony doors we entered the courtyard, but upon entering the great hall beyond it we paused, frozen with horror, at the sight which greeted us. On one side lay a huge pile of bones; human bones, and on the other numberless spits for roasting! Overcome with despair we sank trembling to the ground, and lay there speechless. The sun was setting when a loud noise aroused us. The door of the hall was violently burst open and a horrible giant entered. He was as tall as a palm tree, and perfectly black, and had one eye, like a burning coal in the middle of his forehead. His teeth were long and sharp and he grinned horribly, while his lower lip hung down upon his chest, and he had ears like elephant's ears, which covered his shoulders, and nails like the claws of some fierce bird.

At this terrible sight our senses left us and we lay like dead men. When at last we came to ourselves the giant sat examining us attentively with his fearful eye. Presently when he had looked at us enough he came towards us, and stretching out his hand took me by the back of the neck, turning me this way and that, but feeling that I was mere skin and bone he set me down again and went on to the next, whom he treated in the same fashion. At last he came to the captain, and finding him the fattest of us all, he took him up in one hand and stuck him upon a spit and proceeded to start a huge fire at which he presently roasted him. After the giant had eaten he lay down to sleep, snoring like the loudest thunder, while we lay shivering with horror the whole night through, and when day broke he awoke and

went out, leaving us in the castle.

When we believed him to be really gone we started up moaning about our horrible fate. Though we were many and our enemy was alone it did not occur to us to kill him, and indeed we should have found that a hard task, and no plan could we think of to save ourselves. So at last, we spent the day in wandering up and down the island eating such fruits as we could find, and when night came we returned to the castle, having looked in vain for any other place of shelter. At sunset the giant returned, dined on one of our unhappy friends, slept and snored till dawn, and then left us as before. Our condition seemed to us so frightful that several of my companions thought it would be better to leap from the cliffs and die in the waves at once, rather than await so miserable an end, but I had a plan of escape which I now explained to them, and which they at once agreed to attempt.

”Listen, my brothers,” I added. “You know that plenty of driftwood lies along the shore. Let us make several rafts, and carry them to a suitable place. If our plot succeeds, we can wait patiently for the chance of some passing ship which would rescue us from this fatal island. If it fails, we must quickly take to our rafts; frail as they are; we have more chance of saving our lives with them than we have if we remain here.”

All agreed with me, and we spent the day in building rafts, each capable of carrying three persons. At nightfall we returned to the castle, and very soon in came the giant, and one more of our number was sacrificed. But the time of our revenge was at hand! As soon as he had finished his horrible dinner he lay down to sleep as before. When we heard him begin to snore I, and nine of the boldest of my friends, rose softly, and took each a spit, which we made red-hot in the fire, and then at a given signal we plunged them into the giant’s eye, completely blinding him. Uttering a terrible cry, he sprang to his

feet clutching in all directions to try to seize one of us, but we had all fled different ways as soon it was done, and thrown ourselves flat upon the ground in corners where he was not likely to touch us with his feet.

After a vain search he fumbled about till he found the door, and fled out of it howling frightfully. As for us, when he was gone we quickly prepared to leave the castle, and, standing beside our rafts, we waited to see what would happen. Our idea was that if, when the sun rose, we saw nothing of the giant, and no longer heard his howls, which still came faintly through the darkness, growing more and more distant, we should conclude that he was dead, and that we might safely stay upon the island and need not risk our lives upon the frail rafts. But alas! Morning light showed us our enemy approaching us, supported on either hand by two giants nearly as large and fearful as himself, while a crowd of others followed close upon their heels. Hesitating no longer we clambered upon our rafts and rowed with all our might out to sea. The giants, seeing us escaping them, seized up huge pieces of rock, and walking into the water hurled them after us with such good aim that all the rafts except the one I was upon were sunk, and their unfortunate crews drowned, without our being able to do anything to help them. Indeed I and my two companions had all we could do to keep our own raft beyond the reach of the giants, but by rowing hard we at last reached the open sea. Here, the winds and waves tossed us to and fro all that day and night, but the next morning we found ourselves near an island, upon which we gladly landed.

There we found delicious fruits, and having satisfied our hunger we presently lay down to rest upon the shore. Suddenly we were awoken by a loud rustling noise, and getting up, saw that it was caused by an immense snake which was gliding towards us over the sand. So swiftly it came that it had seized one of my comrades before he had time to flee, and in spite of his cries and struggles speedily crushed

the life out of him in its mighty coils and proceeded to swallow him. By this time my other companion and I were running for our lives to some place where we might hope to be safe from this new horror, and seeing a tall tree we climbed up into it, having first provided ourselves with fruit off the surrounding bushes. When night came I fell asleep, only to be awakened once more by the terrible snake, which after hissing horribly round the tree at last climbed up it, and finding my sleeping friend who was just below me It swallowed him also, and crawled away leaving me half dead with terror.

When the sun rose I crept down from the tree with hardly a hope of escaping the dreadful fate which taken my friends. But life is sweet, and I was determined to do all I could to save myself. All day long I worked with frantic speed and collected quantities of dry brushwood, reeds and thorns, which I tied with sticks, and making a circle of them under my tree I piled them firmly one upon another until I had a kind of tent in which I crouched like a mouse in a hole when she sees the cat coming. You may imagine what a fearful night I passed, for the snake returned eager to devour me, and glided round and round my frail shelter seeking an entrance. Every moment I feared that it would succeed in pushing aside some of the sticks but happily for me they held together, and when it grew light the snake left, puzzled and hungry, to his den. Shaking with fright I came out of my tent and crawled down to the sea, feeling that it would be better to plunge from the cliffs and end my life at once than pass such another night of horror. But to my joy and relief I saw a ship sailing by, and by shouting wildly and waving my turban I managed to attract the attention of her crew.

A boat was sent to rescue me, and very soon I found myself on board surrounded by a curious crowd of sailors and merchants eager to know how I found myself on that terrible island. After I had told my story they provided me with the best food the ship had, and the

captain, seeing that I was in rags, generously gave me one of his own coats. After sailing about for some time and touching at many ports we came at last to the island of Salahat. Here we anchored, and as I stood watching the merchants offloading their goods and preparing to sell or exchange them, the captain came up to me and said,

”I have here, brother, some merchandise belonging to a passenger of mine who is dead. Will you do me the favour to trade with it, and when I meet with his family I shall be able to give them the money, though it will be only fair that you shall have a share for your trouble.”

I agreed gladly, for I did not like standing by doing nothing. Whereupon he pointed the boxes out to me, and sent for the person whose duty it was to keep a list of the goods that were upon the ship. When this man came he asked in what name the merchandise was to be registered.

”In the name of Sinbad the Sailor,” replied the captain.

At this I was greatly surprised, but looking carefully at him I recognized him to be the captain of the ship upon which I had made my second voyage, though he had changed much since that time. As for him, believing me to be dead it was no wonder that he had not recognized me.

”So, captain,” said I, “the merchant who owned those boxes was called Sinbad?”

”Yes,” he replied. “He was so named. He came from Baghdad, and joined my ship at Basra, but by misfortune he was left behind upon a desert island where we had landed to fill up our water containers, and it was not until four hours later that he was missed. By that time the wind had become too strong, and it was impossible to go back for

him.”

”You suppose him to have perished then?” said I.

”Alas! Yes,” he answered.

”Why, captain!” I cried, “Look well at me. I am that Sinbad who fell asleep upon the island and awoke to find himself abandoned!”

The captain stared at me in amazement, but was presently convinced that I was indeed speaking the truth, and rejoiced greatly at my escape.

”I am glad to have that piece of carelessness off my conscience at any rate,” said he. “Now take your goods, and the profit I have made for you and may you prosper in future.”

I took them gratefully, and as we went from one island to another I bought cloves, cinnamon, and other spices. In one place I saw a tortoise which was twenty metres long, also a fish that was like a cow and had skin so thick that it was used to make shields. Another I saw that was like a camel in shape and colour. So after some time, we came back to Basra, and I returned to Baghdad with so much money that I could not count it. I gave much of it to the poor, and bought more land to add to what I already possessed, and thus ended my third voyage.

When Sinbad had finished his story he gave another hundred gold coins to Hindbad, who then departed with the other guests, but next day when they had all reassembled, and the banquet was ended, their host continued his adventures.

Fourth Voyage

Rich and happy as I was after my third voyage, I could not stay at home. My love of trading, and the pleasure I took in anything that was new and strange, made me begin my journey through some of the Persian provinces, having first sent off stores of goods to await my coming in the different places I intended to visit. I took ship at a distant seaport, and for some time all went well, but at last, being caught in a violent hurricane, our vessel became a total wreck in spite of all our good captain could do to save her, and many of our company perished in the waves. I, with a few others, had the good fortune to be washed ashore clinging to pieces of the wreck. The storm had driven us near an island and scrambling up we lay ourselves down quite exhausted, to wait for morning.

At daylight we wandered inland, and soon saw some huts. As we drew near their black inhabitants emerged in great numbers, surrounded us, and taken prisoner we were led to their houses, I with five others was taken into a hut, where we were made to sit upon the ground, and certain herbs were given to us, which the blacks made signs to us to eat. Seeing that they themselves did not touch them, I was careful only to pretend to taste it but my companions, being very hungry, foolishly ate up all that was given them. Very soon I had the horror of seeing them become perfectly mad. Though they chattered non stop I could not understand a word they said, nor did they listen when I spoke to them. The savages now produced large bowls full of rice prepared with cocoanut oil, of which my crazy friends ate eagerly, but I only tasted a few grains, understanding clearly that the object of our captors was to fatten us speedily for their own eating, and this was exactly what happened. My unlucky companions having become crazy, felt neither anxiety nor fear, and ate greedily all that was offered them. So they were soon fat and that was the end of them, but

I grew thinner day by day, for I ate only a little. However, as I wasn't worth eating, I was allowed to wander about freely, and one day, when all the blacks had gone off upon some expedition leaving only an old man to guard me, I managed to escape from him and fled into the forest, running faster the more he cried to me to come back, until I had completely outdistanced him.

For seven days I hurried on, resting only when the darkness stopped me, and living mainly upon coconuts, and on the eighth day I reached the seashore and saw a party of white men gathering pepper, which grew abundantly. I advanced towards them and they greeted me in Arabic, asking who I was and where I came from. I was delighted to hear them speak my language, and I willingly answered their questions, telling them how I had been shipwrecked, and captured by the blacks. "But these savages devour men!" they said. "How did you escape?" I repeated to them what I have just told you, at which they were astonished. I stayed with them until they had collected as much pepper as they wished, and then they took me back to their own country and presented me to their king, by whom I was warmly welcomed. I had to tell of my adventures, which surprised him much, and when I had finished he ordered that I should be supplied with food and clothing and treated well.

The island on which I found myself was full of people, and had much wonderful merchandise. A great deal of business went on in the capital, so I soon began to feel at home and contented. Moreover, the king treated me with special favour, and because of this everyone tried to make life pleasant for me. One thing which I thought very strange was that, from the most important people to the least, all men rode their horses without bridle or stirrups. I one day asked his majesty why he did not use them, to which he replied, "You speak of things which I have never heard of!" This gave me an idea. I found a clever workman, and made him cut out a saddle, which I covered with

good leather. I then got a blacksmith to make me a bit and a pair of spurs after a pattern that I drew for him, and when all these things were completed I presented them to the king and showed him how to use them. When I had saddled one of his horses he mounted it and rode about quite delighted with it, and to show his gratitude he rewarded me with large gifts. After this I had to make saddles for all the officers of the king's household, and as they all gave me rich presents I soon became very wealthy and quite an important person in the city.

One day the king sent for me and said, "Sinbad, I am going to ask a favour of you. Both I and my subjects value you, and wish you to live amongst us. Therefore I ask that you marry a rich and beautiful lady whom I will find for you, and forget your own country."

As the king's will was law I accepted the charming bride he presented to me, and lived happily with her. Nevertheless I had every intention of escaping at the first opportunity, and going back to Baghdad. Things were going well for me when it happened that the wife of one of my neighbours, with whom I had a friendship, fell ill, and presently died. I went to his house to offer my condolences, and found him in despair.

"Heaven keep you," said I, "and let you have a long life!"

"Alas!" he replied, "What is the good of saying that when I have only an hour left to live!"

"Come, come!" said I, "Surely it is not as bad as all that. I trust that you will live for many years."

"I hope," answered he, "that your life may be long, but as for me, all is finished. I have set my house in order, and to-day I shall be buried with my wife. This has been the law upon our island from the earliest

ages; the living husband goes to the grave with his dead wife, the living wife with her dead husband. As our fathers did, and so must we do. The law does not change and we must obey!”

As he spoke the friends and relations of the unhappy pair began to arrive. The body, in rich robes and sparkling with jewels, was laid upon an open board, and the procession started, taking its way to a high mountain at some distance from the city. The wretched husband, clothed from head to foot in a black robe, following mournfully.

When the grave was reached the corpse was lowered, just as it was, into a deep pit. Then the husband, bidding farewell to all his friends, stretched himself upon another board, upon which were laid seven little loaves of bread and a pitcher of water. He also was let down-down-down to the depths of the horrible cavern, and then a stone was laid over the opening, and the melancholy company made its way back to the city.

To all the others it was a thing to which they had been accustomed from their youth but I was so horrified that I could not help telling the king what I thought of it.

”Sir,” I said, “I am more astonished than I can express to you at the strange custom which exists in your country of burying the living with the dead. In all my travels I have never before met with so cruel and horrible a law.”

”What would you have, Sinbad?” he replied. “It is the law for everybody. I myself should be buried with the Queen if she were the first to die.”

”But, your Majesty,” said I, “Does this law applies to foreigners also?”

”Why, yes,” replied the king smiling, in a very heartless manner, “If they have married in the country.”

When I heard this I went home much depressed, and from that time forward my mind was never easy. If only my wife’s little finger ached I imagined she was going to die, and sure enough before very long she fell really ill and in a few days passed away. My dismay was great, for it seemed to me that to be buried alive was even a worse fate than to be devoured by cannibals. Nevertheless there was no escape. The body of my wife, dressed in her richest robes and with all her jewels, was laid upon the board. I followed it, and after me came a great procession, headed by the king and all his nobles, and in this order we reached the mountain.

Here I made one more frantic effort to seek the pity of the king and those who stood by, hoping to save myself even at this last moment, but it was of no use. No one spoke to me. They even appeared to rush in their dreadful task, and I speedily found myself descending into the gloomy pit, with my seven loaves and pitcher of water beside me. Almost before I reached the bottom the stone was rolled into its place above my head, and I was left to my fate. A small ray of light shone into the cavern through some crack, and when I had the courage to look about me I could see that I was in a vast cavern, covered with bones and bodies of the dead. In vain I shrieked aloud with rage and despair, scolding myself for the love of profit and adventure which had brought me to such a situation, but at last, growing calmer, I took up my bread and water, I made my way towards the end of the cavern, where the air was fresher.

Here I lived in darkness and misery until my food was all gone, but just as I was nearly dead from starvation the rock was rolled away overhead and I saw that a board was being lowered into the cavern, and that the corpse upon it was a man. In a moment my mind was

made up. The woman who followed had nothing to expect but a slow death; I would be helping if I shortened her misery. Therefore when she descended, mad from terror, I was ready armed with a huge bone, one blow from which left her dead and I got the bread and water which gave me a hope of life. Several times I did this desperate act, and I don't know not how long I had been a prisoner when one day I thought that I heard something near me, which breathed loudly. Turning to the place from which the sound came. I dimly saw a shadowy form which fled at my movement. Squeezing itself through a crack in the wall I pursued it as fast as I could, and found myself in a narrow crack among the rocks, along which I was just able to force my way. I followed it for what seemed to me many miles, and at last saw before me a glimmer of light which grew clearer every moment until I emerged upon the sea shore with a joy which I cannot describe. When I was sure that I was not dreaming, I realized that it was doubtless some little animal which had found its way into the cavern from the sea, and when disturbed had fled, showing me a means of escape which I could never have discovered for myself.

The mountains sloped straight down to the sea, and there was no road across them. Being sure of this I returned to the cavern, and gathered a rich treasure of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and jewels of all kinds which covered the ground. These I made up into bundles, and stored them into a safe place upon the beach, and then waited hopefully for the passing of a ship. I had looked out for two days, before a single sail appeared, so it was with much delight that I at last saw a vessel not very far from the shore, and by waving my arms and uttering loud cries succeeded in attracting the attention of her crew. A boat was sent off to me and in answer to the questions of the sailors as to how I came to be in such a terrible situation, I replied that I had been shipwrecked two days before, but had managed to scramble ashore with the bundles which I pointed out to them. Luckily for me they believed my story, and without even looking at the place where they

found me, took up my bundles, and rowed me back to the ship. Once on board, I soon saw that the captain was too busy to pay much attention to me, though he generously made me welcome, and would not even accept the jewels with which I offered to pay my fare. Our voyage was prosperous, and after visiting many lands, and collecting in each place good merchandise, I found myself at last in Baghdad once more with riches of every description. Again I gave large sums of money to the poor, after which I visited my friends and relations, with whom I passed my time in feasting and merriment.

Here Sinbad paused, and all his hearers declared that the adventures of his fourth voyage had pleased them better than anything they had heard before. They then left, followed by Hindbad, who had once more received a hundred gold coins, and with the rest had been asked to return next day for the story of the fifth voyage.

When the time came all were in their places, and when they had eaten and drunk of all that was set before them Sinbad began his tale.

Fifth Voyage

Not even all that I had gone through could make me contented with a quiet life. I soon tired of its pleasures, and longed for change and adventure. Therefore I set out once more, but this time in a ship of my own, which I built at the nearest seaport. I wished to be able to call at whatever port I chose, taking my own time. However, as I did not intend carrying enough goods for a full cargo, I invited several merchants of different nations to join me. We set sail with the first favourable wind, and after a long voyage on the open seas we landed upon an unknown island which proved to be uninhabited. We decided, however, to explore it, but had not gone far when we found a roc's egg, as large as the one I had seen before and evidently very nearly hatched, for the beak of the young bird had already pierced the shell. In spite of all I could say to persuade them not to, the merchants who were with me fell upon it with their hatchets, breaking the shell, and killing the young roc. Then lighting a fire upon the ground they hacked pieces from the bird, and proceeded to roast them while I stood by horrified.

Scarcely had they finished their meal, when the air above us was darkened by two mighty shadows. The captain of my ship, knowing by experience what this meant, cried out to us that the parent birds were coming, and urged us to get on board with all speed. This we did, and the sails were hoisted, but before we had made any way the rocs reached their nest and hovered about it, uttering frightful cries when they discovered the remains of their young one. For a moment we lost sight of them, and were thankful that we had escaped, when they reappeared and soared into the air directly over our vessel. We saw that each held in its claws an immense rock ready to crush us. One bird released its hold and the huge block of stone hurtled through the air, but thanks to the quick thinking of the captain, who turned our

ship in another direction, it fell into the sea close beside us. We had hardly time to breathe before the other rock fell with a mighty crash right in the midst of our unfortunate ship, smashing it into a thousand fragments, and crushing, or hurling into the sea, passengers and crew. I myself went down with the rest, but had the good fortune to rise unhurt, and by holding on to a piece of driftwood with one hand and swimming with the other I kept myself afloat and was presently washed up by the tide on to an island. Its shores were steep and rocky, but I scrambled up safely and threw myself down to rest upon the green grass.

When I had recovered I began to look around the spot in which I found myself, and truly it seemed that I had reached a garden of delights. There were trees everywhere, and they were laden with flowers and fruit, while a crystal stream wandered in and out under their shadow. When night came I slept sweetly in a cozy nook, though when I remembered that I was alone in a strange land I sometimes woke up and looked around me in alarm, and then I wished that I had stayed at home at ease. However, the morning sunlight restored my courage, and I once more wandered among the trees, but always with some anxiety as to what I might see next. I had gone some distance into the island when I saw an old man bent and feeble sitting upon the river bank, and at first I took him to be some ship-wrecked seaman like myself. Going up to him I greeted him in a friendly way, but he only nodded his head at me in reply. I then asked what he did there, and he made signs to me that he wished to get across the river to gather some fruit, and seemed to beg me to carry him on my back. Pitying his age and feebleness, I picked him up, and wading across the stream I bent down that he might more easily reach the bank, and told him get down. But instead of allowing himself to stand upon his feet (even now it makes me laugh to think of it!), this creature who had seemed to me so feeble leaped nimbly upon my shoulders, and hooking his legs round my neck gripped me so tightly that I was

almost choked, and so overcome with terror that I fell in a faint to the ground. When I recovered my enemy was still in his place, though he had released his hold enough to allow me to breathe, and seeing me awake he kicked me first with one foot and then with the other, until I was forced to get up and stagger about with him under the trees while he gathered and ate the juiciest fruits. This went on all day, and even at night, when I threw myself down half dead with weariness. The terrible old man held on tight to my neck and at dawn kicked me with his heels, until I awoke and resumed my weary march with rage and bitterness in my heart.

It happened one day that I passed a tree under which lay several dry gourds, and picking one up I amused myself with scooping out its contents and pressing into it the juice of several bunches of grapes which hung from every bush. When it was full I left it in the fork of a tree. A few days later, carrying the hateful old man that way, I snatched at my gourd as I passed it and had the satisfaction to drink some excellent wine so good and refreshing that I even forgot my situation, and began to sing and dance.

The old monster was not slow to see the effect which my wine had produced and that I carried him more lightly than usual, so he stretched out his skinny hand and seizing the gourd first tasted its contents cautiously, then drank to the very last drop. The wine was strong and the gourd big, so he also began to sing after a fashion, and soon I had the delight of feeling the iron grip of his legs relax, and with one vigorous effort I threw him to the ground, from which he never moved again. I was so rejoiced to have at last got rid of this horrid old man that I ran leaping and bounding down to the sea shore, where, by the greatest good luck, I met with some seamen who had anchored off the island to enjoy the delicious fruits, and to renew their supply of water.

They heard the story of my escape with amazement, saying, “You fell into the hands of the Old Man of the Sea, and it is a wonder that he did not strangle you as he has everyone else upon whose shoulders he has managed to sit himself. This island is well known as the scene of his evil deeds, and no merchant or sailor who lands upon it cares to go far away from his friends.” After we had talked for a while they took me back with them on board their ship, where the captain received me kindly, and we soon set sail, and after several days reached a large and prosperous looking town where all the houses were built of stone. Here we anchored, and one of the merchants, who had been very friendly to me on the way, took me ashore with him and showed me a lodging set apart for strange merchants. He then provided me with a large sack, and pointed out to me a party of others equipped in the same way.

“Go with them,” said he, “and do as they do, but beware of losing sight of them, for if you stray your life would be in danger.”

With that he supplied me with food and water, and said farewell. I set out with my new companions. I soon learnt that our purpose was to fill our sacks with coconuts, but when after some time I saw the trees and their immense height and the slippery smoothness of their trunks, I did not at all understand how we were to do it. The tops of the palm trees were all alive with monkeys, big and little, which skipped from one to the other with surprising agility, seeming to be curious about us and disturbed at our appearance. I was at first surprised when my companions after collecting stones began to throw them at the lively creatures, which seemed to me quite harmless. But very soon I saw the reason for it and joined them, for the monkeys, annoyed and wishing to pay us back, began to tear the nuts from the trees and hurl them at us with angry gestures, so that after very little work our sacks were filled with the fruit which we could not otherwise have obtained.

As soon as we had as many as we could carry we went back to the town, where my friend bought my share and advised me to continue the same work until I had earned money enough to carry me to my own country. This I did, and before long had a considerable sum of money. Just then I heard that there was a trading ship ready to sail, and leaving my friend I went on board, carrying with me a good store of coconuts. We sailed first to the islands where pepper grows, and then to Comari where the best aloes wood is found. Here I exchanged my nuts for pepper and good aloes wood, and went fishing for pearls with some of the other merchants. My divers were so lucky that very soon I had a large number and those very large and perfect. With all these treasures I came joyfully back to Baghdad, where I sold them for large sums of money, of which I gave a tenth to the poor, and after that I rested from my labours and comforted myself with all the pleasures that my riches could give me.

Having thus ended his story, Sinbad ordered that one hundred gold coins should be given to Hindbad, and the guests then left but after the next day's feast he began the account of his sixth voyage as follows.

Sixth Voyage

It must be a marvel to you how, after having five shipwrecks and unheard of perils, I could again set sail. I am even surprised myself when I look back, but after a year of rest I prepared to make a sixth voyage, regardless of the begging of my friends and relations, who did all they could to keep me at home. Instead of going by the Persian Gulf, I traveled a considerable way overland and finally embarked at a distant Indian port with a captain who meant to make a long voyage. And truly he did so, for we met stormy weather which drove us completely off our course, so that for many days the captain did not know where we were, nor where we were going. When he did at last discover our position we had no reason for rejoicing, for the captain, throwing his turban upon the deck and tearing his beard, declared that we were in the most dangerous spot upon the whole wide sea, and had been caught by a current which was at that minute sweeping us to destruction. It was too true! In spite of all the sailors could do we were driven with frightful speed towards the foot of a mountain, which rose sheer out of the sea. Our ship was smashed to pieces upon the rocks, not, however, until we had managed to scramble on shore, carrying with us the most precious of our possessions. When we had done this the captain said to us, "Now we are here we may as well begin to dig our graves at once, since from this fatal spot no shipwrecked seaman has ever returned."

This speech discouraged us greatly, and we began to cry over our sad fate.

The mountain formed the sea boundary of a large island, and the narrow strip of rocky shore upon which we stood was covered with the wreckage of a thousand ships. The bones of the unfortunate seamen shone white in the sunshine, and we shuddered to think how

soon our own would be added to the pile. All around, too, lay vast quantities of the most precious merchandise, and treasures. It struck me as a very strange thing that a river of clear fresh water, which gushed out from the mountain not far from where we stood, instead of flowing into the sea as rivers generally do, turned off sharply, and flowed out of sight under a natural archway of rock, and when I went to examine it more closely I found that inside the cave the walls were thick with diamonds, and rubies, and masses of crystal, and the floor was covered with ambergris. Here, then, upon this terrible shore we surrendered ourselves to our fate, for there was no possibility of climbing the mountain, and if a ship had appeared it could only have shared our doom. The first thing our captain did was to divide equally amongst us all the food we possessed, and then the length of each man's life depended on the time he could make his share last. I myself could live upon very little.

Nevertheless, by the time I had buried the last of my companions my food was so little that I hardly thought I should live long enough to dig my own grave, which I set about doing. But luckily for me the luck took me to stand once more beside the river where it plunged out of sight in the depths of the cavern, and as I did so an idea struck me. This river which hid itself underground doubtless emerged again at some distant spot. Why should I not build a raft and trust myself to its swiftly flowing waters? If I perished before I could reach the light of day once more I should be no worse off than I was now, for death stared me in the face. While there was always the possibility that, as I was born under a lucky star, I might find myself safe and sound in some better place. I decided at any rate to risk it, and speedily built myself a strong raft of driftwood with strong rope. I then made up many packages of rubies, emeralds, rock crystal, ambergris, and precious stuffs, and tied them to my raft. Then I sat on it, having two small oars that I had made, and untied the rope which held it to the bank. Once out in the current my raft flew swiftly under the archway,

and I found myself in total darkness, carried smoothly forward by the rapid river. On I went as it seemed to me for many nights and days. Once the channel became so small that I had a narrow escape of being crushed against the rocky roof, and after that I took the precaution of lying flat upon my precious boxes. Though I only ate what was absolutely necessary to keep myself alive, the moment came when, after swallowing my last piece of food, I began to wonder if I must after all die of hunger. Then, worn out with anxiety and fatigue, I fell into a deep sleep, and when I again opened my eyes I was once more in the light of day. A beautiful country lay before me, and my raft, which was tied to the river bank, was surrounded by friendly looking black men. I rose and greeted them, and they spoke to me in return, but I could not understand a word of their language. Feeling perfectly bewildered by my sudden return to life and light, I murmured to myself in Arabic, "Close your eyes, and while you sleep Heaven will change your fortune from evil to good."

One of the natives, who understood this, then came forward saying, "My brother, do not be surprised to see us. This is our land, and as we came to get water from the river we noticed your raft floating down it, and one of us swam out and brought you to the shore. We have waited for you to awaken. Tell us now where you come from and why you were going by that dangerous way?"

I replied that nothing would please me better than to tell them, but that I was starving, and would rather eat something first. I was soon provided with all I needed, and having satisfied my hunger I told them all that had happened to me. They were lost in wonder at my tale when it was interpreted to them, and said that adventures so surprising must be told to their king only by the man to whom they had happened. So, finding me a horse, they put me on it, and we set out, followed by several strong men carrying my raft upon their shoulders. We marched into the city of Serendib, where the natives

presented me to their king, whom I greeted in the Indian fashion, kneeling at his feet and kissing the ground, but the monarch told me to rise and sit beside him, asking first what my name was.

”I am Sinbad,” I replied, “whom men call ‘the Sailor,’ for I have voyaged much upon many seas.”

”And how did you come here?” asked the king.

I told my story, and his surprise and delight were so great that he ordered my adventures to be written in letters of gold and placed in the grand library of his kingdom.

Presently my raft was brought in and the boxes opened in front of him, and the king declared that in all his treasury there were no such rubies and emeralds as those which lay in great heaps before him. Seeing that he looked at them with interest, I offered them to him, but he answered me smiling:

”No, Sinbad. Heaven forbid that I should envy your riches. I will add to them, for I do not want you to leave my kingdom without some gift.” He then commanded his officers to provide me with a suitable accommodation, and sent slaves to serve me and carry my raft and my boxes to my new place. You may imagine that I praised his generosity and gave him grateful thanks, also I presented myself everyday in his court, and for the rest of my time I amused myself by visiting the interesting parts of the city. The capital city is placed at the end of a beautiful valley, formed by the highest mountain in the world, which is in the middle of the island. I climbed to its very summit. Here are found rubies and many precious things, and rare plants grow abundantly, with cedar trees and cocoa palms. On the seashore and at the mouths of the rivers the divers seek pearls, and in some valleys diamonds are plentiful. After many days I asked the king that I might return to my own country, to which he kindly agreed. Moreover, he

loaded me with rich gifts, and when I went to leave him he gave me a royal present and a letter to our King, saying, "I ask you give these to the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, and tell him of my friendship."

I accepted the task respectfully, and soon embarked on the ship which the king himself had chosen for me. The king's letter was written in blue characters upon a rare and precious skin of yellowish colour, and these were the words on it: "The King of the Indies, before whom walk a thousand elephants, who lives in a palace, of which the roof blazes with a hundred thousand rubies, and whose treasure house contains twenty thousand diamond crowns, to the Caliph Haroun al Raschid sends greeting. Though the gift we present to you is unworthy, we beg you to accept it as a mark of the respect and friendship which we have for you, and of which we gladly send you.

The present consisted of a vase carved from a single ruby, six inches high and as thick as my finger. This was filled with the best pearls, large, and of perfect shape and colour. Secondly, a huge snake skin, with scales as large as a gold coin, which would keep from sickness those who slept upon it. Then quantities of aloes wood, camphor, and pistachio-nuts; and lastly, a beautiful slave girl, whose robes glittered with precious stones.

After a long and prosperous voyage we landed at Basra, and I quickly went to reach Baghdad, and taking the king's letter I presented myself at the palace gate, followed by the beautiful slave, and various members of my own family, carrying the treasure.

As soon as I had stated my business I was taken into see the Caliph. After I had paid my respects, I gave the letter and the king's gift, and when he had examined them he demanded to know whether the Prince of Serendib was really as rich and powerful as he claimed to be.

"Your Majesty," I replied, again bowing humbly before him, "I can

assure your Majesty that he has in no way exaggerated his wealth and grandeur. Nothing can equal the magnificence of his palace. When he goes abroad his throne is prepared upon the back of an elephant, and on either side of him ride his ministers, his favourites, and courtiers. On his elephant's neck sits an officer, his golden lance in his hand, and behind him stands another bearing a pillar of gold, at the top of which is an emerald as long as my hand. A thousand men in cloth of gold, mounted upon richly decorated elephants, go before him, and as the procession moves forward the officer who guides his elephant cries aloud, 'Behold the mighty monarch, the powerful and valiant Sultan of the Indies, whose palace is covered with a hundred thousand rubies, who possesses twenty thousand diamond crowns. Behold a king greater than Solomon and Mihrage in all their glory!'"

"Then the one who stands behind the throne answers, 'This king, so great and powerful, must die, must die, must die!'"

"And the first takes up the chant again, 'All praise to Him who lives for evermore.'"

"Further, my lord, in Serendib no judge is needed, because his people come to him for justice."

The Caliph was well satisfied with my report.

"From the king's letter," said he, "I judged that he was a wise man. It seems that he is worthy of his people, and his people of him."

So saying he sent me away with rich presents, and I returned in peace to my own house.

When Sinbad had done speaking, his guests left. Hindbad received a hundred gold coins, but all returned the next day to hear the story of the seventh voyage. Sinbad thus began.

Seventh and Last Voyage

After my sixth voyage I was quite determined that I would go to sea no more. I was now old enough to appreciate a quiet life, and I had taken enough risks. I only wished to end my days in peace. One day, however, when I was entertaining a number of my friends, I was told that an officer of the Caliph wished to speak to me, and when he was admitted he asked me follow him into the presence of the Caliph Haroun al Raschid, which I did. After I had bowed to him, the Caliph said, "I have sent for you, Sinbad, because I need your services. I have chosen you to deliver a letter and a gift to the King of Serendib in return for his message of friendship."

The Caliph's order fell upon me like a thunderbolt.

"Your Majesty," I answered, "I am ready to do all that your Majesty commands, but I humbly beg you to remember that I am utterly exhausted by all my previous voyages. Indeed, I have made a vow never again to leave Baghdad."

With this I told him of some of my strangest adventures, to which he listened patiently.

"I admit," said he, "that you have indeed had some extraordinary experiences, but I do not see why they should stop you from doing as I wish. You have only to go straight to Serendib and give my message. Then you are free to come back and do as you like. But you must go. My honour and dignity demand it."

Seeing that I had no choice, I declared myself willing to obey, and the Caliph, delighted, gave me a thousand gold coins for the expenses of the voyage. I was soon ready to start, and taking the letter and the present I embarked at Basra, and sailed quickly and safely to

Serendib. Here, when I had explained my mission, I was warmly welcomed, and brought to the king, who greeted me with joy.

”Welcome, Sinbad,” he cried. “I have thought of you often, and rejoice to see you once more.”

After thanking him for the honour that he did me, I displayed the Caliph’s gifts. First a bed decorated with cloth of gold, which cost a thousand gold coins. Fifty robes of rich embroidery, a hundred of the finest white linen from Cairo, Suez, Cufa, and Alexandria. Then more beds of different styles, and an agate vase carved with the figure of a man aiming an arrow at a lion, and finally a costly table, which had once belonged to King Solomon. The King of Serendib received all this with great satisfaction, and now my task being accomplished I was anxious to depart. However, it was some time before the king would think of letting me go. At last, however, he let me go with many presents, and I lost no time in going on board a ship, which sailed at once. For four days all went well. On the fifth day we had the misfortune to meet pirates, who seized our vessel, killing all who resisted, and making prisoners of those who were sensible enough to surrender at once. When they had taken all we possessed, they forced us to put on rags and sailing to a distant island there sold us for slaves. I fell into the hands of a rich merchant, who took me home with him and clothed and fed me well. After some days he sent for me and questioned me as to what I could do.

I answered that I was a rich merchant who had been captured by pirates, and therefore I knew no trade.

”Tell me,” said he, “Can you shoot with a bow?”

I replied that this had been one of the pastimes of my youth, and that surely with practice my skill would come back to me.

Upon this he provided me with a bow and arrows, and mounting me with him upon his own elephant went to a vast forest which lay far from the town. When we had reached the wildest part of it we stopped, and my master said to me: "This forest swarms with elephants. Hide yourself in this great tree, and shoot at all that pass you. When you have succeeded in killing one come and tell me."

He gave me a supply of food, and returned to the town, and I sat myself high up in the tree and kept watch. That night I saw nothing, but just after sunrise the next morning a large herd of elephants came crashing and trampling by. I lost no time in shooting several arrows, and at last one of the great animals fell to the ground dead, and the others ran off, leaving me free to come down from my hiding place and run back to tell my master of my success, for which I was praised and rewarded with good things. Then we went back to the forest together and dug a mighty trench in which we buried the elephant I had killed, in order that when it became a skeleton my master might return and secure its tusks.

For two months I hunted and no day passed without my killing, an elephant. Of course I did not always place myself in the same tree, but sometimes in one place, sometimes in another. One morning as I watched the approach of the elephants I was surprised to see that, instead of passing the tree I was in, as they usually did, they paused, and completely surrounded it, trumpeting horribly, and shaking the very ground with their heavy tread, and when I saw that their eyes were fixed upon me I was terrified, and my arrows dropped from my trembling hand. I had indeed good reason for my terror when, an instant later, the largest of the animals wound his trunk round the trunk of my tree, and with one mighty effort tore it up by the roots, bringing me to the ground entangled in its branches. I thought now that my last hour was surely come; but the huge creature, picking me up gently enough, set me upon its back, where I clung, and followed

by the whole herd turned and crashed off into the dense forest. It seemed to me a long time before I was once more set upon my feet by the elephant, and I stood as if in a dream watching the herd, which turned and trampled off in another direction, and were soon hidden in the dense undergrowth. Then, recovering myself, I looked about me, and found that I was standing upon the side of a great hill, covered as far as I could see on either side with bones and tusks of elephants. "This then must be the elephants' burying place," I said to myself, "and they must have brought me here that I might stop killing them, seeing that I want nothing but their tusks. Here lie more than I could carry away in a lifetime."

I turned and made for the city as fast as I could go. After a day and a night I reached my master's house, and was received by him with joyful surprise.

"Ah! Poor Sinbad," he cried, "I was wondering what could have become of you. When I went to the forest I found the tree newly uprooted, and the arrows lying beside it, and I feared I should never see you again. Tell me how you escaped death."

I soon satisfied his curiosity, and the next day we went together to the Ivory Hill, and he was overjoyed to find that I had told him nothing but the truth. When we had loaded our elephant with as many tusks as it could carry and were on our way back to the city, he said, "My brother, since I can no longer treat you as a slave because you have made me so rich take your freedom and may Heaven protect you. You must know that these wild elephants have killed numbers of our slaves every year. No matter what good advice we gave them, they were caught sooner or later. You alone have escaped these animals. Therefore you must be under the special protection of Heaven. Now through you the whole town will be enriched without further loss of life, therefore you shall not only receive your freedom, but I will also

give a fortune to you.”

To which I replied, “Master, I thank you, and wish you all good fortune. For myself I only ask freedom to return to my own country.”

”It is well,” he answered, “the monsoon will soon bring the ivory ships here. Then I will send you on your way.”

So I stayed with him till the time of the monsoon, and every day we added to our store of ivory till all his warehouses were overflowing with it. By this time the other merchants knew the secret, but there was enough for all. When the ships at last arrived my master himself chose the one in which I was to sail, and put on board for me a great amount of the best food and also much ivory, and all the most precious curiosities of the country, for which I could not thank him enough, and so we parted. I left the ship at the first port we came to, not feeling at ease upon the sea after all that had happened to me and having traded my ivory for much gold, and bought many rare and costly presents, I loaded my pack animals, and joined a caravan of merchants. Our journey was long and tedious, but I accepted it patiently, thinking that at least I did not have to fear storms, nor pirates, nor giant snakes, nor any of the other dangers from which I had suffered before, and at last we reached Baghdad. My first care was to present myself before the Caliph, and tell him of my trip. He told me that my long absence had worried him greatly, but he had nevertheless hoped for the best. As to my adventure among the elephants he heard it with amazement, declaring that he could not have believed it had not my truthfulness been well known to him.

By his orders this story and the others I had told him were written in letters of gold, and placed in the Grand library among his treasures. I left him, well satisfied with the honours and rewards he gave upon me; and since that time I have rested from my work, and given myself

up to my family and my friends.

Thus Sinbad ended the story of his seventh and last voyage, and turning to Hindbad he added:

”Well, my friend, and what do you think now? Have you ever heard of anyone who has suffered more, or had more narrow escapes than I have? Is it not fair that I should now enjoy a life of ease and tranquility?”

Hindbad drew near, and kissing his hand respectfully, replied, “Sir, you have indeed known fearful dangers. My troubles have been nothing compared to yours. Moreover, the generous use you make of your wealth proves that you deserve it. May you live long and happily in the enjoyment of it.”

Sinbad then gave him a hundred gold coins, and from then on counted him among his friends. Also he made him give up his work as a porter, and to eat everyday at his table so that he might all his life remember Sinbad the Sailor.

The Little Hunchback

In the kingdom of Kashgar, there lived long ago, a tailor and his wife who loved each other very much. One day, when the tailor was hard at work, a little hunchback came and sat at the entrance of the shop, and began to sing and play his tambourine. The tailor was amused by the fellow, and thought he would take him home to show his wife. The hunchback agreed, so the tailor closed his shop and they set off together.

When they reached the house they found the table ready laid for supper, and in a very few minutes all three were sitting before a beautiful fish which the tailor's wife had cooked with her own hands. But unluckily, the hunchback happened to swallow a large bone, and, in spite of all the tailor and his wife could do to help him, died in an instant. Besides being very sorry for the poor man, the tailor and his wife were very much frightened for if the police came to hear of it the couple ran the risk of being thrown into prison for murder. In order to prevent this they both set about inventing some plan which would throw suspicion on someone else, and at last they made up their minds that they could do no better than select a doctor who lived close by. So the tailor picked up the hunchback by his head while his wife took his feet and carried him to the doctor's house. Then they knocked at the door, which opened straight on to a steep staircase. A servant soon appeared, feeling her way down the dark staircase and asked what they wanted.

"Tell your master," said the tailor, "that we have brought a very sick man for him to cure. And," he added, holding out some money, "give him this in advance, so that he may not feel he is wasting his time." The servant climbed the stairs to give the message to the doctor, and the moment she was out of sight the tailor and his wife carried the

body swiftly after her, sat it up at the top of the staircase, and ran home as fast as their legs could carry them.

Now the doctor was delighted at the news of a patient.

”Get a light,” he called to the servant, “and follow me as fast as you can!” and rushing out of his room he ran towards the staircase. There he nearly fell over the body of the hunchback, and without knowing what it was gave it such a kick that it rolled right to the bottom, and very nearly dragged the doctor after it. “A light! A light!” he cried again, and when it was brought and he saw what he had done he was almost beside himself with terror.

”Holy Moses!” he exclaimed, “Why did I not wait for the light? I have killed the sick man who they brought me; and if God does not come to help me I am lost! It will not be long before I am led to jail as a murderer.”

Upset though he was the doctor did not forget to shut the house door, in case some passers-by might happen to see what had happened. He then took up the corpse and carried it into his wife’s room, nearly driving her crazy with fright.

”We are finished!” she cried, “if we cannot find some way of getting the body out of the house. Once the sun rises we can hide it no longer! Why did you commit such a terrible crime?”

”Never mind that,” replied the doctor, “The thing is to find a way out of it.”

For a long while the doctor and his wife continued to turn over in their minds a way of escape, but could not find any that seemed good enough. At last the doctor gave up altogether and prepared himself to accept the punishment of his misfortune.

But his wife, who was twice as smart, suddenly exclaimed, "I have thought of something! Let us carry the body onto the roof of the house and lower it down the chimney of our neighbor." Now this neighbor was employed by the Sultan, and provided him with oil and butter. Part of his house was occupied by a great storeroom, where there were rats and mice.

The doctor jumped at his wife's plan, and they picked up the hunchback, and passing ropes under his armpits they let him down into the neighbor's bedroom so gently that he really seemed to be leaning against the wall. When they felt he was touching the ground they drew up the ropes and left him.

Scarcely had they got back to their own house when the neighbor entered his room. He had spent the evening at a wedding feast, and had a lantern in his hand. In the dim light he was astonished to see a man standing in his chimney, but being naturally courageous he seized a stick and went straight for the supposed thief. "Ah!" he cried, "so it is you, and not the rats and mice, who steal my butter. I'll take care that you don't want to come back!"

So saying he struck him several hard blows. The corpse fell on the floor, but the man only redoubled his blows, till at length it occurred to him it was odd that the thief should lie so still. Then, finding he was quite dead, a cold fear came over him. "I have murdered a man. Ah, my revenge has gone too far. Without the help of God I am finished!" And already he felt the hangman's rope round his neck.

But when he had got over the first shock he began to think of some way out of the difficulty, and seizing the hunchback in his arms he carried him out into the street, and leaning him against the wall of a shop he snuck back to his own house, without once looking behind him.

A few minutes before the sun rose, a rich merchant, who supplied the palace with all sorts of goods, left his house to go to the bath. Though he was very drunk, he was still sober enough to know that the dawn was near, and that all good men would shortly be going to prayer. So he hurried in case he should meet someone, who, seeing his condition would send him to prison as a drunkard. In his hurry he bumped into the hunchback, who fell heavily on him, and the merchant, thinking he was being attacked by a thief, knocked him down with one blow of his fist. He then called loudly for help, beating the fallen man all the time.

The chief policeman of the neighborhood came running up, and found him beating the hunchback. "What are you doing?" he asked angrily.

"He tried to rob me," replied the merchant, "and very nearly choked me."

"Well, you have had your revenge," said the policeman, taking hold of his arm. "Come, be off with you!"

As he spoke he held out his hand to the hunchback to help him up, but the hunchback never moved. "Oho!" he went on, looking closer, and seizing the merchant in a firm grip he took him to the inspector of police, who threw him into prison till the judge should be out of bed and ready to hear his case. The more he thought of it the less he could understand how the hunchback could have died merely from the blows he had received.

The merchant was still considering this subject when he was called before the chief of police and questioned about his crime, which he could not deny. As the hunchback was one of the Sultan's private jesters, the chief of police decided to not to pass sentence of death until he had told his master. He went to the palace and told his story to the Sultan, who only answered,

”There is no pardon. Do your duty.”

So the chief of police ordered a gallows to be erected, and sent criers to proclaim in every street in the city that a man was to be hanged that day for having killed another man.

When all was ready the merchant was brought from prison and led to the foot of the gallows. The executioner tied the rope firmly round the unfortunate man’s neck and was just about to swing him into the air, when the Sultan’s provider of oil and butter dashed through the crowd, and cried, panting, to the hangman,

”Stop, stop, don’t be in such a hurry. It was not he who committed the murder, it was I.”

The chief of police, who was present to see that everything was in order, put several questions to the man, who told him the whole story of the death of the hunchback, and how he had carried the body to the place where it had been found by the merchant.

”You are going,” he said to the chief of police, “to kill an innocent man, for it is impossible that he should have murdered a man who was dead already. It is bad enough for me to have killed another man without having it on my conscience that a man who is innocent should suffer through my fault.”

Now his speech had been made in a loud voice, and was heard by all the crowd, and even if he had wished it, the chief of police could not have escaped setting the merchant free.

”Loosen the rope from his neck,” he commanded, turning to the executioner, “and hang this man in his place, seeing that by his own confession he is the murderer.”

The hangman did as he was told, and was tying the rope firmly, when

he was stopped by the voice of the doctor asking him to stop, for he had something very important to say. When he had fought his way through the crowd and reached the chief of police,

”Sir,” he began, “this man who you want to hang doesn’t deserve it. I alone am guilty. Last night a man and a woman who were strangers to me knocked at my door, bringing with them a patient for me to cure. The servant opened it, but having no light was hardly able to make out their faces. She woke me and gave me the fee for my services. While she was telling me her story they seem to have carried the sick man to the top of the staircase and then left him there. I jumped up in a hurry without waiting for a lantern, and in the darkness I fell against something, which tumbled headlong down the stairs and never stopped till it reached the bottom. When I examined the body I found it was quite dead, and the corpse was that of a hunchback. Terrified at what we had done, my wife and I took the body on the roof and let it down the chimney of our neighbor the man, who you were just about to hang. The neighbor, finding him in his room, naturally thought he was a thief, and struck him such a blow that the man fell down and lay motionless on the floor. Bending over to examine him, and finding him dead, the neighbor supposed that the man had died from the blow he had received. But of course this was a mistake, and I am the only murderer; and although I am innocent of any wish to commit a crime, I must suffer for it all the same, or else have the blood of two men on my conscience. Therefore send away this man, I beg you, and let me take his place, as it is I who am guilty.”

On hearing what the doctor had to say, the chief of police commanded that he should be led to the gallows, and the Sultan’s supplier of oil and butter go free. The rope was placed round the doctor’s neck, and his feet had already left the ground when the voice of the tailor was heard begging the executioner to pause one moment and to listen to what he had to say.

”Oh, my lord,” he cried, turning to the chief of police, “how nearly have you caused the death of three innocent people! But if you will only have the patience to listen to my tale, you shall know who the real culprit is. If someone has to suffer, it must be me! Yesterday, I was working in my shop when the little hunchback, who was more than half drunk, came and sat in the doorway. He sang me several songs, and then I invited him to finish the evening at my house. He accepted my invitation, and we went there together. At supper I gave him a slice of fish, but in eating it a bone stuck in his throat, and in spite of all we could do he died in a few minutes. We felt deeply sorry for his death, but fearing we should be held responsible, we carried the corpse to the house of the doctor. I knocked, and asked the servant to bring her master down as fast as possible and see a sick man who we had brought for him to cure. In order to make him hurry I placed a piece of money in her hand as the doctor’s fee. As soon as she had disappeared I dragged the body to the top of the stairs, and then hurried away with my wife back to our house. When coming down the stairs the doctor accidentally knocked over the corpse, and finding him dead believed that he himself was the murderer. But now you know the truth, set him free, and let me die in his place.”

The chief of police and the crowd of spectators were lost in astonishment at the strange events resulting from the death of the hunchback.

”Free the doctor,” said he to the hangman, “and hang the tailor instead, since he has made confession of his crime. Really, one cannot deny that this is a very special story, and it deserves to be written in letters of gold.”

The executioner speedily untied the knots, and was passing the rope round the neck of the tailor, when the Sultan of Kashgar, who had missed his jester, happened to ask his officials what had become of

him.

”Sire,” replied they, “the hunchback having drunk more than was good for him, escaped from the palace and was seen wandering about the town, where this morning he was found dead. A man was arrested for having caused his death, and held till a gallows was erected. At the moment that he was about to suffer punishment, first one man arrived, and then another, each admitting the murder, and this went on for a long time, and at the present instant the chief of police is questioning a man who declares that he alone is the true killer.”

The Sultan of Kashgar no sooner heard these words than he ordered an official to go to the chief of police and to bring all the persons concerned in the hunchback’s death, together with the corpse, that he wished to see once again. The official hurried on his errand, but was only just in time, for the tailor was swinging in the air, when his voice, commanded the hangman to cut down the body. The hangman, recognizing the official as one of the king’s servants, cut down the tailor, and the official, seeing the man was safe, found the chief of police and gave him the Sultan’s message. The chief of police at once set out for the palace, taking with him the tailor, the doctor, the supplier, and the merchant, who carried the dead hunchback on their shoulders.

When they reached the palace the chief of police bowed at the feet of the Sultan, and told all that he knew of the matter. The Sultan was so much amazed that he ordered his private historian to write down an exact account of what had passed, so that in the years to come the miraculous escape of the four men who had thought themselves murderers might never be forgotten.

The Sultan asked everybody concerned in the hunchback’s affair to tell him their stories. Among others was a barber, whose tale of one of

his brothers follows.

The Story of the Barber's Fifth Brother

As long as our father lived Alnaschar was very idle. Instead of working for his bread he was not ashamed to ask for it every evening, and to support himself next day on what he had received the night before. When our father died of old age, he only left seven hundred silver coins to be divided amongst us, which made one hundred for each son. Alnaschar, who had never had so much money in his life, was quite puzzled to know what to do with it. After thinking about the matter for some time he decided to buy glasses, bottles, and things of that sort, which he would buy from a wholesale merchant. Having bought his stock he next went to look for a small shop in a good position, where he sat down at the open door, his goods being piled up in an uncovered basket in front of him, waiting for a customer among the passers-by.

He remained seated, his eyes fixed on the basket, but his thoughts far away. Unknown to himself he began to talk out loud, and a tailor, whose shop was next door to his, heard quite plainly what he was saying.

"This basket," said Alnaschar to himself, "has cost me a hundred silver coins and is all that I possess in the world. Now in selling the contents I shall make two hundred, and with this money I shall again buy more glass, which will produce four hundred. By this means I shall, in the course of time, make four thousand silver coins, which will easily double themselves. When I have got ten thousand I will give up the glass trade and become a jeweler, and spend all my time trading in pearls, diamonds, and other precious stones. At last, having all the wealth that the heart can desire, I will buy a beautiful country house, with horses and slaves, and then I will lead a merry life and entertain my friends. At my feasts I will send for musicians and

dancers from the neighboring town to amuse my guests. In spite of my riches I shall not, however, give up trade till I have a hundred thousand silver coins, when, I shall request the hand of the grand-vizier's daughter, taking care to inform the father that I have heard favourable reports of her beauty and wit, and that I will pay down on our wedding day three thousand gold pieces. Should the vizier refuse my proposal, which after all is hardly to be expected, I will seize him by the beard and drag him to my house."

When I shall have married his daughter I will give her ten of the best servants that can be found for her service. Then I shall put on my most beautiful robes, and mounted on a horse with a saddle of fine gold, and blazing with diamonds, followed by a line of slaves, I shall present myself at the house of the grand-vizier, the people bowing low as I pass by. At the foot of the grand-vizier's staircase I shall dismount, and while my servants stand in a row I shall climb the stairs, at the head of which the grand-vizier will be waiting to receive me. He will then embrace me as his son-in-law. Then two of my servants will enter, each carrying a purse containing a thousand pieces of gold. One of these I shall present to him saying, "Here are the thousand gold pieces that I offered for your daughter's hand, and here," I shall continue, holding out the second purse, "are another thousand to show you that I am a man who is better than his word." After hearing of such generosity the world will talk of nothing else.

I shall return home in the same way as I set out. I shall never allow my wife to leave her rooms for any reason without my permission. No house will be better ordered than mine, and I shall take care always to be dressed in a manner suitable to my position. In the evening, when we retire to our rooms, I shall sit in the place of honour, where I shall speak little, gazing straight before me, and when my wife, lovely as the full moon, stands humbly in front of my chair I shall pretend not to see her. Then her women will say to me, "Respected lord and

master, your wife and slave is before you waiting to be noticed. She is horrified that you never look her way; she is tired of standing so long. Let her, we beg you, to be seated.” Of course I shall give no signs of even hearing this speech, which will upset them greatly. They will throw themselves at my feet crying, and at last I will raise my head and throw a glance at her. The women will think that I am displeased at my wife’s dress and will lead her away to put on a finer one, and I shall replace the one I am wearing with another yet more splendid. They will then return, but this time it will take much longer before they persuade me even to look at my wife. It is good to begin on my wedding-day as I mean to go on for the rest of our lives.

The next day she will complain to her mother of the way she has been treated, which will fill my heart with joy. Her mother will come to seek me, and, kissing my hands with respect, will say, “My lord, do not, I beg you, refuse to look upon my daughter or to approach her. She only lives to please you, and loves you with all her soul.” But I shall pay no more attention to my mother-in-law’s words than I did to those of the women. Again she will beg me to listen to her, throwing herself this time at my feet, but all in vain. Then, putting a glass of wine into my wife’s hand, she will say to her, “There, present that to him yourself, for he cannot have the cruelty to reject anything offered by so beautiful a hand,” And my wife will take it and offer it to me trembling with tears in her eyes, but I shall look in the other direction. This will cause her to weep still more, and she will hold out the glass crying, “Adorable husband, never shall I stop my prayers till you have done me the favour to drink.” Sick of her begging, these words will drive me to fury. I shall give an angry look at her and then a sharp blow on the cheek, at the same time giving her a kick so violent that she will stagger across the room and fall onto the sofa.

”My brother,” said the barber, “was so much absorbed in his dreams that he actually did give a kick with his foot, which unluckily hit the

basket of glass. It fell into the street and was instantly broken into a thousand pieces.”

His neighbor the tailor, who had been listening to his visions, broke into a loud fit of laughter as he saw this sight.

”Wretched man!” he cried, “You ought to die of shame at behaving so to a young wife who has done nothing to you. You must be too cruel for her tears and prayers not to touch your heart. If I were the grand-vizier I would order you a hundred blows from a whip, and would have you led round the town accompanied by a herald who should announce your crimes.”

The accident, had brought my brother to his senses, and seeing that the problem had been caused by his own pride, he tore his clothes and hair, and cried himself so loudly that the passers-by stopped to listen. It was a Friday, so there were more than usual. Some pitied Alnaschar, others only laughed at him, but the daydream had disappeared with his basket of glass. He was loudly crying of his foolishness when an important looking lady, rode by on a mule. She stopped and asked what the matter was, and why the man wept. They told her that he was a poor man who had spent all his money on this basket of glass, which was now broken. On hearing the cause of these loud cries the lady turned to her servant and said to him, “Give him whatever you have got with you.” The man obeyed, and placed in my brother’s hands a purse containing five hundred pieces of gold. Alnaschar almost died of joy on receiving it. He blessed the lady a thousand times, and, shutting up his shop where he had no longer anything to do, he returned home.

He was still thinking about his good fortune, when a knock came to his door, and on opening it he found an old woman standing outside.

”My son,” she said, “I have a favour to ask of you. It is the hour of

prayer and I have not yet washed myself. Let me, I beg you, enter your house, and give me water.”

My brother, although the old woman was a stranger to him, did not hesitate to do as she wished. He gave her a basin of water and then went back to his place and his thoughts, and with his mind busy over his last adventure, he put his gold into a long and narrow purse, which he could easily carry in his belt. During this time the old woman was busy over her prayers, and when she had finished she came and bowed herself twice before my brother, and then rising called down blessings on him. Seeing her shabby clothes, my brother thought that her gratitude was in reality a hint that he should give her some money to buy some new ones, so he held out two pieces of gold. The old woman started back in surprise as if she had received an insult. “Good heavens!” she exclaimed, “What is the meaning of this? Is it possible that you take me, my lord, for one of those miserable creatures who force their way into houses to beg? Take back your money. I am thankful to say I do not need it, for I belong to a beautiful lady who is very rich and gives me everything I want.”

My brother was not clever enough to realize that the old woman had merely refused the two pieces of money he had offered her in order to get more, but he asked if she could give him the pleasure of seeing this lady.

”Willingly,” she replied, “And she will be happy to marry you, and to make you the master of all her wealth. So pick up your money and follow me.”

Delighted at the thought that he had found so easily both a fortune and a beautiful wife, my brother asked no more questions, but hiding his purse, with the money the lady had given him, in his pocket, he set out joyfully with the old lady.

They walked for some distance till the old woman stopped at a large house, where she knocked. The door was opened by a young Greek slave, and the old woman led my brother across a court into a hall. Here she left him to tell her mistress of his presence, and as the day was hot he flung himself on a pile of cushions and took off his heavy turban. In a few minutes there entered a lady, and my brother saw immediately that she was even more beautiful and more richly dressed than he had expected. He rose from his seat, but the lady told him to sit down again and placed herself beside him. After chatting a while she said, "We are not comfortable here, let us go into another room," and entering a smaller room, she continued to talk to him for some time. Then rising quickly she left him, saying, "Stay where you are, I will come back in a moment."

He waited as he was told, but instead of the lady there entered a huge black slave with a sword in his hand. Approaching my brother with an angry face he exclaimed, "What business have you here?" His voice and manner were so terrifying that Alnaschar could not reply, and allowed his gold to be taken from him, and even to be cut with the sabre without making any resistance. As soon as he was let go, he sank on the ground powerless to move. Thinking he was dead, the black ordered the Greek slave to bring him some salt, and between them they rubbed it into his wounds, thus causing him great pain, but he still pretended to be dead. They then left him, and their place was taken by the old woman, who dragged him to a trapdoor and threw him down into a room filled with the bodies of murdered men.

At first the fall caused him to lose consciousness, but little by little he regained his strength. At the end of two days he lifted the trapdoor during the night and hid himself in the courtyard till daybreak, when he saw the old woman leave the house in search of more victims. Luckily she did not notice him, and when she was out of sight he sneaked from this terrible place and stayed in my house.

I bandaged his wounds and looked after him carefully, and when a month had passed he was as well as ever. His one thought was how to be revenged on that wicked old woman, and for this purpose he had a purse made large enough to contain five hundred gold pieces, but filled it instead with bits of glass. This he tied round him with his belt, and, disguising himself as an old woman, he took a sabre, which he hid under his dress.

One morning as he was walking through the streets he met his old enemy looking to see if she could find anyone to rob. He went up to her and, imitating the voice of a woman, he said, "Do you happen to have a pair of scales you could lend me? I have just come from Persia and have brought with me five hundred gold pieces, and I am anxious to see if they are the proper weight."

"Good woman," replied the old hag, "you could not have asked anyone better. My son is a money-changer, and if you will follow me he will weigh them for you himself. Only we must be quick or he will have gone to his shop." So saying she led the way to the same house as before, and the door was opened by the same Greek slave.

Again my brother was left in the hall, and the false son appeared in the form of the black slave. "Miserable old woman," he said to my brother, "Get up and come with me," and turned to lead the way to the place of murder. Alnaschar rose too, and drawing the sabre from under his dress dealt the black such a blow on his neck that his head was severed from his body. My brother picked up the head with one hand, and seizing the body with the other dragged it to the vault, when he threw it in and sent the head after it. The Greek slave, supposing that all had passed as usual, shortly arrived with the basin of salt, but when she saw Alnaschar with the sabre in his hand she let the basin fall and turned to flee. My brother, however, was too quick for her, and in another instant her head was rolling from her shoulders. The

noise brought the old woman running to see what the matter was, and he seized her before she had time to escape. “Wretch!” he cried, “do you know me?”

”Who are you, my lord?” she replied trembling all over. “I have never seen you before.”

”I am he whose house you entered to offer your prayers. Don’t you remember now?”

She flung herself on her knees to beg mercy, but he cut her into four pieces.

There remained only the lady, who didn’t know what was taking place around her. He searched for her through the house, and when at last he found her, she nearly fainted with terror at the sight of him. She begged hard for her life, which he was generous enough to give her, but he ordered her to tell him how she had got into partnership with the terrible creatures he had just put to death.

”I was once,” replied she, “the wife of an honest merchant, and that old woman, whose wickedness I did not know, used occasionally to visit me.’Madam,’ she said to me one day, ‘We have a grand wedding at our house today. If you would do us the honour to be present, I am sure you would enjoy yourself.’ I allowed myself to be persuaded, put on my best dress, and took a purse with a hundred pieces of gold. Once inside the doors I was kept by force by those dreadful people, and it is now three years that I have been here, to my great grief.”

”Those horrible people must have great wealth,” remarked my brother.

”Such wealth,” she replied, “that if you succeed in carrying it all away it will make you rich for ever. Come and let us see how much

there is.”

She led Alnaschar into a room filled with gold, which he gazed at with an admiration. “Go,” she said, “and bring men to carry it away.”

My brother did not wait to be told twice, and hurried out into the streets, where he soon collected ten men. They all came back to the house, but what was his surprise to find the door open, and the room with the chests of gold quite empty. The lady had been cleverer than himself, and had made the best use of her time. However, he took all the beautiful furniture, which more than made up for the five hundred gold pieces he had lost.

Unluckily, on leaving the house, he forgot to lock the door, and the neighbours, finding the place empty, informed the police, who the next morning arrested Alnaschar as a thief. They tied his hands, and forced him to walk between them to a judge. When they had explained to the judge what he had done wrong, he asked Alnaschar where he had obtained all the furniture that he had taken to his house the day before.

”Sir,” replied Alnaschar, “I am ready to tell you the whole story, but promise that I shall not be punished.”

”That I promise,” said the judge. So my brother began at the beginning and told of all his adventures, and how he had avenged himself on those who had betrayed him. As to the furniture, he begged the judge at least to allow him to keep part to make up for the five hundred pieces of gold which had been stolen from him.

The judge, however, would say nothing about this, and immediately sent men to fetch away all that Alnaschar had taken from the house. When everything had been moved and placed under his roof he ordered my brother to leave the town and never more to enter it again

or he would be put to death, because he feared that if he returned he might seek justice from the Caliph. Alnaschar obeyed, and was on his way to a neighbouring city when he met a band of robbers, who stripped him of his clothes and left him naked by the roadside. Hearing of his plight, I hurried after him to help, and to dress him in my best robe. I then brought him back disguised, at night, to my house, where I have since given him all the care I give my other brothers.

The Story of the Barber's Sixth Brother

Now let me tell you the story of my sixth brother, whose name was Schacabac. Like the rest of us, he inherited a hundred silver coins from our father, which he thought was a large fortune, but through ill-luck, he soon lost it all, and was forced to beg. As he was well spoken and had good manners, he really did very well in his new profession, and he devoted himself specially to making friends with the servants in big houses, so he could meet their masters.

One day he was passing a splendid mansion, with a crowd of servants in the courtyard. He thought that from the appearance of the house it might be good for him, so he entered and asked to whom it belonged.

"My good man, where do you come from?" replied the servant. "Can't you see for yourself that it can belong to nobody but a Barmecide?" For the Barmecides were famed for their generosity. My brother, hearing this, started to beg from the servants. They did not refuse, but told him politely to go in, and speak to the master himself.

My brother thanked them for their courtesy and entered the building, which was so large that it took him some time to reach the Barmecide. At last, in a room richly decorated with paintings, he saw an old man with a long white beard, sitting on a sofa, who received him with such kindness that my brother was asked him for help.

"My lord," he said, "you see in me a poor man who only lives by the help of persons as rich and as generous as you."

Before he could continue, he was stopped by the astonishment shown by the Barmecide. "Is it possible," he cried, "that while I am in Baghdad, a man like you should be starving? That is a state of things that must at once be put an end to! Never shall it be said that I have

abandoned you, and I am sure that you, on your part, will never abandon me.”

”My lord,” answered my brother, “I swear that I have not eaten this whole day.”

”What, you are dying of hunger?” exclaimed the Barmecide. “Here, slave, bring water so that we may wash our hands before eating!” No slave appeared, but my brother noticed that the Barmecide rubbed his hands as if the water had been poured over them.

Then he said to my brother, “Why don’t you wash your hands too?” and Schacabac, supposing that it was a joke on the part of the Barmecide, drew near, and imitated him.

When the Barmecide had done rubbing his hands, he raised his voice, and cried, “Set food before us at once, we are very hungry.” No food was brought, but the Barmecide pretended to help himself from a dish, and put some food in his mouth, saying as he did so, “Eat, my friend, eat, please. Help yourself as if you were at home! For a starving man, you seem to have a very small appetite.”

”Excuse me, my lord,” replied Schacabac, imitating his gestures as before.”

”How do you like this bread?” asked the Barmecide. “I find it particularly good myself.”

”Oh, my lord,” answered my brother, who saw neither meat nor bread, “Never have I tasted anything so delicious.”

”Eat as much as you want,” said the Barmecide. “I bought the woman who makes it for five hundred pieces of gold, so that I might never be without it.”

After ordering a variety of dishes (which never came) to be placed on the table, and discussing each one, the Barmecide declared that having dined so well, they would now drink some wine. The Barmecide, however, pretended to fill their glasses so often, that my brother pretended to be drunk, and struck the Barmecide such a blow on the head, that he fell to the ground. Indeed, he raised his hand to strike him a second time, when the Barmecide cried out that he was mad, upon which my brother controlled himself, and apologized and said that it was all the fault of the wine he had drunk. At this the Barmecide, instead of being angry, began to laugh, and embraced him heartily. "I have long been seeking," he exclaimed, "a man of your description, and from now on my house shall be yours. You have had the good grace to go along with my joke, and to pretend to eat and to drink when nothing was there. Now you shall be rewarded by a really good supper."

Then he clapped his hands, and all the dishes were brought that they had tasted in imagination before, slaves sang and played on various instruments. All the while Schacabac was treated by the Barmecide as a friend, and dressed in a garment out of his own wardrobe.

Twenty years passed by, and my brother was still living with the Barmecide, looking after his house, and managing his affairs. At the end of that time his generous friend died without heirs, so all his possessions went to the prince. They even took away from my brother those that rightly belonged to him, and he, now as poor as he had ever been in his life, decided to join a caravan of pilgrims who were on their way to a holy place. Unluckily, the caravan was attacked and robbed, and the pilgrims were taken prisoners. My brother became the slave of a man who beat him daily, hoping to make him offer a ransom, although, as Schacabac pointed out, it was quite useless trouble, as his relations were as poor as himself. At last the Bedouin grew tired of beating him, and sent him on a camel to the top of a

high barren mountain, where he left him to take his chance. A passing caravan, on its way to Baghdad, told me where he was to be found, and I hurried to his rescue, and brought him in a poor condition back to the town.

The tailor then spoke.”The little hunchback, half drunk already, presented himself before me, singing and playing on his drum. I took him home, to amuse my wife, and she invited him to supper. While eating some fish, a bone got into his throat, and in spite of all we could do, he died shortly. It was all so sudden that we lost our heads, and in order to remove suspicion from ourselves, we carried the body to the house of a physician. He placed it in the room of the supplier, and the supplier propped it up in the street, where it was thought to have been killed by the merchant.”

”This, Sire, is the story which I had to tell to satisfy your highness. It is now for you to say if we deserve mercy or punishment; life or death?”

The Sultan of Kashgar listened with pleasure which filled the tailor and his friends with hope. “I must confess,” he exclaimed, “that I am much more interested in the stories of the barber and his brothers, and of the lame man, than in that of my own jester. But before I allow you all four to return to your own homes, and have the body of the hunchback properly buried, I should like to see this barber who has earned your pardon. And as he is in this town, let an official go with you at once in search of him.”

The official and the tailor soon returned, bringing with them an old man who must have been at least ninety years of age. “O Silent One,” said the Sultan, “I am told that you know many strange stories. Will you tell some of them to me?”

”Never mind my stories for the present,” replied the barber, “but will

your Highness graciously be pleased to explain why these three men, as well as this dead body, are all here?”

”What business is that of yours?” asked the Sultan with a smile. But seeing that the barber had some reasons for his question, he ordered that the tale of the hunchback should be told him.

”It is certainly most surprising,” cried he, when he had heard it all, “But I should like to examine the body.” He then knelt down, and took the head on his knees, looking at it attentively. Suddenly he burst into such loud laughter that he fell right backwards, and when he had recovered himself enough to speak, he turned to the Sultan. “The man is no more dead than I am,” he said; “Watch me.” As he spoke he drew a small case of medicines from his pocket and rubbed the neck of the hunchback with some ointment. Next he opened the dead man’s mouth, and by the help of a pair of pincers drew the bone from his throat. At this the hunchback sneezed, stretched himself and opened his eyes.

The Sultan and all those who saw this operation did not know which to admire most, the health of the hunchback who had apparently been dead for a whole night and most of one day, or the skill of the barber, whom everyone now began to look upon as a great man. His Highness ordered that the history of the hunchback should be written down, and placed in the royal library beside that of the barber. And he did not stop there. He ordered that the tailor, the doctor, the supplier and the merchant, should each be clothed with a robe from his own wardrobe before they returned home. As for the barber, he gave him a large pension, and kept him near.

The Adventures of Prince Camaralzaman and the Princess Badoura

Some twenty days' sail from the coast of Persia lies the isle of the children of Khaledan. The island is divided into several provinces, in each of which are large flourishing towns, It was ruled in by a king named Schahzaman, who, considered himself one of the most peaceful, prosperous, and fortunate kings on Earth. In fact, he had just one worry, which was that none of his four wives had given him a son.

This upset him so much that one day he told the grand-vizier, who, being a wise counselor, said, "Such matters we cannot do anything about. God alone can grant your wish, and I should advise you, sire, to send large gifts to those holy men who spend their lives in prayer, and to beg for their help. Who knows whether their prayers may be answered?"

The king took his vizier's advice, and the result of so many prayers for a son was that a son was born the following year.

Schahzaman sent gifts as thanks to all the religious houses, and great rejoicings were celebrated in honour of the birth of the little prince, who was so beautiful that he was named Camaralzaman, or "Moon of the Century."

Prince Camaralzaman was brought up with extreme care by an excellent governor and all the cleverest teachers, and, a more charming and talented young man was not to be found. While he was still a youth the king, his father, who loved him dearly, had some thoughts of abdicating in his favour. As usual he talked over his plans with his grand-vizier.

”Sire,” he replied, “the prince is still very young for the cares of state. Your Majesty fears him growing lazy and careless, and doubtless you are right. But how would it be if he were first to marry? Your Majesty might give him more responsibility, so that he might gradually learn how to become a king, which you can give up to him whenever you find him capable.”

The vizier’s advice once more struck the king as being good, and he sent for his son.

”I have sent for you,” said the king, “to say that I wish you to marry. What do you think about it?”

The prince was so overcome by these words that he remained silent for some time. At last he said, “Sire, I beg you to pardon me if I am unable to reply as you might wish. I certainly did not expect such a proposal as I am still so young, and I must say that the idea of marrying is very unpleasant to me. Possibly I may not always think like this, but I certainly feel that it will require some time to persuade me to do what your Majesty wants.”

This answer greatly upset the king. However he would not order him to obey, so he said, “I do not wish to force you so I will give you time to consider it, but remember that such a thing is necessary, for a prince such as you who will some day be called to rule over a great kingdom.”

From this time Prince Camaralzaman was admitted to the royal council, and the king gave him more responsibility.

At the end of a year the king took his son aside, and said, “Well, my son, have you changed your mind on the subject of marriage, or do you still refuse to obey my wish?”

The prince was less surprised but still stubborn, and begged his father to forget the subject.

This answer much upset the king, who again told of his trouble to his vizier.

”I have followed your advice,” he said, “But Camaralzaman refuses to marry, and is more obstinate than ever.”

”Sire,” replied the vizir, “much is gained by patience, and your Majesty might regret any force. Why not wait another year and then inform the Prince in front of the assembled council that the good of the country demands his marriage? He cannot possibly refuse again before so many people.”

The Sultan much desired to see his son married at once, but he accepted the vizier’s arguments and decided to wait. He then visited the prince’s mother, and after telling her of his disappointment, he added, “I know that Camaralzaman speaks to you more than he does me. Please speak very seriously to him on this subject, and make him realize that he will most seriously displease me if he remains obstinate, and that he will certainly regret what I must do to make him obey.”

So the first time the Sultana Fatima saw her son she told him she had heard of his refusal to marry, adding how upset she felt that he should have troubled his father so much. She asked what reasons he could have for his objections to obey.

”Madam,” replied the prince, “I am sure that there are many good, virtuous and sweet women. But what bothers me is the idea of marrying a woman without knowing anything at all about her. My father will ask the hand of the daughter of some neighbouring king, who will agree to our marriage. Even if she is she beautiful or ugly,

clever or stupid, good or bad, I must marry her, and am left no choice in the matter. How am I to know that she will not be proud, contemptuous, and recklessly extravagant, or that her character will in any way suit mine?"

"But, my son," urged Fatima, "you surely do not wish to be the last of a family which has reigned so long and so gloriously over this kingdom?"

"Madam," said the prince, "I will try to reign as well as my ancestors."

These and similar conversations proved to the Sultan how useless it was to argue with his son, and the year passed without bringing any change in the prince's ideas.

At last a day came when the Sultan ordered him before the council, and there told him that not only his own wishes but the good of the country demanded his marriage, and told him to give his answer before the assembled ministers.

At this Camaralzaman grew so angry and spoke so fiercely that the king, naturally irritated at being opposed by his son in full council, ordered the prince to be arrested and locked up in an old tower, where he had nothing but a very little furniture, a few books, and a single slave to wait on him.

Camaralzaman, was pleased to be free to enjoy his books.

When night came he washed himself, and, having read some pages of a book, lay down on a couch and was soon asleep.

Now there was a deep well in the tower in which Prince Camaralzaman was imprisoned, and this well was a favourite place of the fairy Maimoune, daughter of Damriat, chief of a group of genies.

Towards midnight Maimoune floated lightly up from the well planning, as usual, to wander about the upper world.

The light in the prince's room surprised her, and without disturbing the slave, who slept at the door, she entered the room. She approached the bed and was still more astonished to find someone there.

The prince lay with his face half hidden by the cover. Maimoune lifted it a little and saw the most beautiful youth she had ever seen.

"How handsome he must be when his eyes are open!" she thought. "What can he have done to deserve to be treated like this?"

She continued to gaze at Camaralzaman, but at last, having softly kissed each cheek, she replaced the cover and carried on her flight through the air.

She heard the sound of great wings coming towards her, and shortly met one of the bad genies. This genie, whose name was Danhasch, recognised Maimoune with terror, for he knew the power which her goodness gave her over him. He would gladly have avoided her altogether, but they were so near that he must either be prepared to fight or surrender to her, so he at once spoke to her in a friendly way.

"Good Maimoune, promise me to do me no harm, and I will promise not to injure you."

"Wicked genie!" replied Maimoune, "What harm can you do to me? But I will grant your wish and give the promise you ask. And now tell me what you have seen and done to-night."

"Fair lady," said Danhasch, "You meet me at the right moment to hear something really interesting. I must tell you that I come from the furthest end of China, which is one of the largest and most powerful kingdoms in the world. The present king has one only daughter, who

is so perfectly lovely that neither you, nor I, nor any other creature could find the words in which to describe her marvelous charms. You must therefore imagine the most perfect features, joined to a fair and delicate complexion, and even then you cannot imagine her beauty.

”The king, her father, has taken every care to keep her from the sight of everyone except the happy man he may choose to be her husband. The report of her wonderful beauty has spread far and wide, and many powerful kings have sent messengers to ask for her hand in marriage. The king has always received these messengers politely, but says that he will never force the princess to marry against her will, and as she regularly refuses each new proposal, the messengers have had to leave disappointed.”

”Sire,” said the princess to her father, “you wish me to marry, and I know you want to please me, for which I am very grateful. But, indeed, I will not change my mind, for where could I find so happy a life in such a beautiful and delightful place? I feel that I could never be as happy with any husband as I am here, and I beg you not to try to make me marry one.”

”At last a messenger came from a king so rich and powerful that the King of China felt he had to persuade his daughter. He told her how important such a relationship would be, and pushed her to agree. In fact, he pushed her so much that the princess at last lost her temper and quite forgot the respect for her father. “Sire,” cried she angrily, “do not speak again about this or any other marriage or I will stab this dagger into my heart.”

”The king of China was extremely angry with his daughter and replied, “You have lost your senses.” So he had her shut in one set of rooms in one of her palaces, and only allowed her ten old women, to wait on her and keep her company. He next sent letters to all the kings

who had asked for the princess's hand, begging they would think of her no longer, as she was quite crazy, and he asked his various messengers to make it known that anyone who could cure her would have her for his wife.

"Fair Maimoune," continued Danhasch, "This is the situation now. Everyday I go to gaze on this beauty, and I am sure that if you would only come with me you would think the sight well worth the trouble, and agree that you never saw such loveliness before."

The fairy only answered with laughter, and when at last she had control of her voice she cried, "Oh, come, you are making a joke! I thought you had something really interesting to tell me instead of talking about some unknown princess. What would you say if you could see the prince I have just been looking at and whose beauty is really magnificent? That is something worth talking about."

"Maimoune," asked Danhasch, "may I ask who the prince you are talking about is?"

"He is in much the same situation as your princess" replied Maimoune, "The king, his father, wanted to force him to marry, and on the prince's refusal to obey he has been imprisoned in an old tower where I have just seen him."

"I don't like to argue with a lady," said Danhasch, "but you must really allow me to doubt there is any person as beautiful as my princess."

"Do not speak," cried Maimoune. "I repeat that is impossible."

"Well, I don't wish to seem obstinate," replied Danhasch, "The best plan to test the truth of what I say will be for you to let me take you to see the princess for yourself."

”There is no need for that,” replied Maimoune; “We can satisfy ourselves in another way. Bring your princess here and lay her down beside my prince. We can then compare them, and decide who is right.”

Danhasch agreed, and he flew off to China to fetch the princess.

In a short time Danhasch returned, carrying the sleeping princess. Maimoune led him to the prince’s room, and the princess was placed beside him.

When the prince and princess lay thus side by side, an argument started between the fairy and the genie. Danhasch began by saying, ”Now you see that my princess is more beautiful than your prince. Can you doubt it any longer?”

”Doubt! Of course I do!” exclaimed Maimoune. “Why, you must be blind not to see how much my prince is more beautiful than your princess. I do not deny that your princess is very pretty, but only look and you must agree that I am right.”

”There is no need for me to look longer,” said Danhasch, “I haven’t changed my mind but of course, Maimoune, I am ready to agree with you if you insist on it.”

”By no means,” replied Maimoune. “. I shall ask a judge, and shall expect you to accept his decision.”

Danhasch agreed, and on Maimoune striking the floor with her foot it opened, and a hideous, hump-backed, lame, genie, with six horns on his head, hands like claws, emerged. As soon as he saw Maimoune he threw himself at her feet.

”Rise, Caschcasch,” said she. “I called you to judge between me and Danhasch. Look at that couch, and say whether you think the man or

the woman lying there the more beautiful.”

Caschcasch looked at the prince and princess in surprise and admiration. At length, having gazed long without being able to come to a decision, he said, ” Madam, I cannot say that one is more beautiful than the other. There seems to me only one way in which to decide the matter, and that is to wake one after the other and judge which of them shows the greater admiration for the other.”

This advice pleased Maimoune and Danhasch, and the fairy at once transformed herself into the shape of a gnat and settling on Camaralzaman’s throat stung him so sharply that he awoke. As he did so his eyes fell on the Princess of China. Surprised at finding a lady so near him, he raised himself on one arm to look at her. The youth and beauty of the princess at once awoke a new feeling in his heart, and he could not control his delight.

”What loveliness! Oh, my heart, my soul!” he exclaimed, as he kissed her forehead, her eyes and mouth in a way which would certainly have woken her had not the genie’s magic spell kept her asleep.

”Why!” he cried, “Don’t you awaken?”

He then suddenly, that perhaps this was the bride his father had chosen for him, and that the King had probably had her placed in this room in order to see how far Camaralzaman’s dislike of marriage would withstand her charms.

”Anyway,” he thought, “I will take this ring to remember her by.”

He took off a fine ring which the princess wore on her finger, and replaced it with one of his own. After which he lay down again and was soon fast asleep.

Then Danhasch, took the form of a gnat and bit the princess on her

lip.

She started up, and was amazed at seeing a young man beside her. Surprise soon changed to admiration, and then to delight on seeing how handsome he was.

”Why,” cried she, “Was it you my father wished me to marry? How unlucky that I did not know sooner! I should not have made him so angry. But wake up! Wake up! For I know I shall love you with all my heart.”

So saying she shook Camaralzaman so violently that nothing but the spells of Maimoune could have prevented his waking.

”Oh!” cried the princess. “Why are you so sleepy?” So saying she took his hand and noticed her own ring on his finger, which made her wonder still more. But as he still remained in a deep sleep she kissed his cheek and soon fell fast asleep too.

Then Maimoune turning to the genie said, “Well, are you satisfied that my prince is better than your princess? Next time believe me when I say something.”

Then turning to Caschcasch, “My thanks to you, and now you and Danhasch carry the princess back to her own home.”

The two genies quickly obeyed, and Maimoune returned to her well.

On waking the next morning the first thing Prince Camaralzaman did was to look round for the lovely lady he had seen at night, and the next to question the slave who waited on him. But the slave said that he knew nothing of any lady, and still less of how she got into the tower, that the prince lost all patience, and after giving him a good beating tied a rope round him and ducked him in the well till the unfortunate man cried out that he would tell everything. Then the

prince drew him up all dripping wet, but the slave begged to change his clothes first, and as soon as the prince agreed hurried off to the palace. Here he found the king talking to the grand-vizier of all the anxiety his son had caused him. The slave was admitted at once and cried, "Alas, Sire! I bring sad news to your Majesty. There can be no doubt that the prince has completely lost his senses. He declares that he saw a lady sleeping on his couch last night." He then told everything the prince had said and done.

The king, told the vizier to find out what was going on, and he at once went to the tower, where he found the prince quietly reading a book. The vizier said, "I feel really very angry with your slave for upsetting his Majesty by the news he brought him."

"What news?" asked the prince.

"Ah!" replied the vizier, "Something silly, I feel sure."

"Most likely," said the prince, "But now that you are here I am glad of the opportunity to ask you where the lady is who slept in this room last night?"

The grand-vizier felt great surprise at this question.

"Prince!" he exclaimed, "How would it be possible for any man, much less a woman, to enter this room at night without walking over your slave at the door? Please consider the matter, and you will realize that you have been dreaming."

But the prince angrily insisted on knowing who and where the lady was, and was not persuaded by what the vizier said. At last, losing patience, he seized the vizier by the beard and beat him.

"Stop, Prince," cried the unhappy vizier, "And hear what I have to say."

The prince, whose arm was getting tired, paused.

”I must say, Prince,” said the vizier, “that there is some truth for what you say. But you know well that a minister has to carry out his master’s orders. Allow me to go and to take to the king any message you may choose to send.”

”Very well,” said the prince, “then go and tell him that I agree to marry the lady he sent or brought here last night. Be quick and bring me back his answer.”

The vizier bowed to the ground and quickly left the room and tower.

”Well,” asked the king as soon as he appeared, “And how was my son?”

”Alas, sire,” was the reply, “The slave’s report is only too true!”

He then reported his conversation with Camaralzaman and of the prince’s anger when told that it was not possible for any lady to have entered his room, and of the treatment he himself had received. The king, much upset, decided to clear up the matter himself, and, ordering the vizier to follow him, set out to visit his son.

The prince received his father with great respect, and the king, making him sit beside him, asked him several questions, to which Camaralzaman replied sensibly. At last the king said, “My son, tell me about the lady who, it is said, was in your room last night.”

”Sire,” replied the prince, “Make me happy by giving her to me in marriage. However much I may have objected to marriage before, the sight of this lovely girl has overcome me and I will gratefully marry her.”

The king was almost speechless on hearing his son, but after a time

told him most seriously that he knew nothing whatever about the lady in question, and had not planned to make her appear. He then asked the prince to tell the whole story to him.

Camaralzaman did so, and showed the ring, and begged his father to help to find the bride he desired so strongly.

”After everything you have told me,” said the king, “I believe you, but how and from where the lady came, or why she should have stayed so short a time I cannot imagine. It is indeed mysterious. Come, my dear son, let us wait together for happier days.”

The king took Camaralzaman by the hand and led him back to the palace, where the prince went to bed very depressed, and the king looking after his son, completely forgot about running his kingdom.

The prime minister, felt it his duty at last to tell the king how much the court and all the people complained of his absence, and how bad it was for the country. He begged the sultan to send the prince to a lovely little island close by, whence he could easily run the country, and where the charming scenery and fine air would do the poor prince so much good.

The king agreed, and as soon as the castle on the island could be prepared for them he and the prince arrived there, Schahzaman never leaving his son except for public audiences twice a week.

While all this was happening in the capital of Schahzaman the two genies had carefully carried the Princess of China back to her own palace and replaced her in bed. On waking the next morning she first turned from one side to another and then, finding herself alone, called loudly for her women.

”Tell me,” she cried, “Where is the young man I love so dearly, and

who slept near me last night?”

”Princess,” exclaimed the nurse, “We don’t know what you are talking about.”

”Why,” continued the princess, “the most charming and beautiful young man lay sleeping beside me last night. I did my best to wake him, but in vain.”

”Does your Royal Highness wishes to play tricks on us?” said the nurse.

”I am quite serious,” said the princess, “And I want to know where he is.”

”But, Princess,” replied the nurse, “we left you quite alone last night, and we have seen no one enter your room since then.”

At this the princess lost all patience, and taking the nurse by her hair she beat her ears, crying out, “You shall tell me, you old witch, or I’ll kill you.”

The nurse had some trouble in escaping, and hurried off to the queen, who she told the whole story to with tears in her eyes.

”You see, madam,” she said, “that the princess must be out of her mind. If only you will come and see her, you will be able to judge for yourself.”

The queen hurried to her daughter’s room, and asked her why she had treated her nurse so badly.

”Madam,” said the princess, “I believe that your Majesty wishes to make fun of me, but I can tell you that I will never marry anyone except the charming young man I saw last night. You must know

where he is, so please send for him.”

The queen was much surprised by these words, but when she said that she knew nothing whatever of the matter the princess lost her temper, and answered that if she were not allowed to marry as she wished she would kill herself, and it was in vain that the queen tried to reason with her.

The king himself heard about it, and the princess still stuck to her story, and as proof showed the ring on her finger. The king hardly knew what to make of it all, but ended by thinking that his daughter was crazier than ever, and he had a powerful guard to stay at the door.

Then he assembled his council, and having told them the sad situation, added, “If any of you can succeed in curing the princess, I will give her to him in marriage.”

An elderly prince who wanted to have a young and lovely wife and to rule over a great kingdom, offered to try the magic that he knew.

”You are welcome to try,” said the king, “but I make one condition, which is, that should you fail you will lose your life.”

The prince accepted the condition, and the king led him to the princess, who, veiling her face, remarked, “I am surprised, sire, that you should bring an unknown man into my presence.”

”You need not be shocked,” said the king; “This is a prince who asks for your hand in marriage.”

”Sire,” replied the princess, “this is not the one you gave me before and whose ring I wear. I must say that I can accept no other.”

The prince, who had expected to hear the princess talk nonsense, finding how calm and reasonable she was, told the king that he could

not cure her, so the irritated king promptly had his head cut off.

This was the first of many attempts for the princess whose inability to cure her cost them their lives.

Now it happened that after things had been going on in this way for some time the nurse's son Marzavan returned from his travels. He had been to many countries and learnt many things. Needless to say that one of the first things his mother told him was the sad condition of the princess, his childhood friend. Marzavan asked if she could not manage to let him see the princess without the king's knowledge.

After some consideration his mother agreed, and even persuaded the guard to make no objection to Marzavan's entering the princess's room.

The princess was delighted to see her childhood friend again, and after some conversation she told to him everything that had happened to her.

Marzavan listened with great attention. When she had finished speaking he said, "If what you tell me Princess is true, I can find comfort for you. Be patient a little longer. I will set out at once to explore other countries, and when you hear of my return be sure that your prince is nearby." So saying, he left and started the next morning on his travels.

Marzavan journeyed from city to city and from one island and province to another, and wherever he went he heard people talk of the strange story of the Princess Badoura, as the Princess of China was named.

After four months he reached a large seaport town named Torf, and here he heard no more of the Princess Badoura but a great deal of

Prince Camaralzaman, who was reported ill, and whose story sounded very similar to that of the Princess Badoura.

Marzavan was happy, and set out at once for Prince Camaralzaman's home. The ship on which he embarked had a safe voyage till it got within sight of the capital of King Schahzaman. But when just about to enter the harbour it suddenly struck on a rock, and sank within sight of the palace where the prince was living with his father and the grand-vizier.

Marzavan, who swam well, threw himself into the sea and managed to land close to the palace, where he was kindly welcomed, and after having a change of clothing given to him was brought before the grand-vizier. The vizier was at once attracted by the young man's intelligent conversation, and seeing that he had gained much experience in the course of his travels, he said, "Ah, how I wish you had learnt some secret which might enable you to cure an illness which has upset this court for some time!"

Marzavan replied that if he knew what the illness was he might possibly be able to suggest a remedy, on which the vizier told him the whole history of Prince Camaralzaman.

On hearing this Marzavan rejoiced, for he felt sure that he had at last discovered the object of the Princess Badoura's love. However, he said nothing, but asked to be allowed to see the prince.

On entering the prince's room the first thing which he noticed was the prince himself, who lay stretched out on his bed with his eyes closed. The king sat near him, but, without paying him any notice. Marzavan exclaimed, "Heavens! What an amazing resemblance!" And, indeed, there was a good deal of resemblance between the features of Camaralzaman and those of the Princess of China.

These words caused the prince to open his eyes with curiosity, and Marzavan took this chance to speak to him and let him know about the princess but without anyone else finding out.

The prince asked his father to allow him the favour of a private meeting with Marzavan, and the king was only too pleased to find his son taking an interest in anyone or anything. As soon as they were left alone Marzavan told the prince the story of the Princess Badoura and her sufferings, adding, "I am convinced that you alone can cure her, but before starting on so long a journey you must be well and strong, so do your best to recover as quickly as you can."

These words produced a great effect on the prince, who was so much cheered by the news that he declared he felt able to get up and be dressed. The king was overjoyed at the result of Marzavan's words, and ordered public celebrations in honour of the prince's recovery.

Before long the prince was quite healthy again, and as soon as he felt himself really strong he took Marzavan aside and said, "Now is the time to leave. I am so impatient to see my beloved princess once more that I am sure I shall fall ill again if we do not start soon. The one problem is my father's tender care of me, for, as you may have noticed, he cannot bear me out of his sight."

"Prince," replied Marzavan, "I have already thought over the matter, and this is what seems to me the best plan. You have not been out of doors since my arrival. Ask the king's permission to go with me for two or three days' hunting, and when he has given leave order two good horses to be held ready for each of us. Leave all the rest to me."

The next day the prince took the opportunity to make his request, and the king gladly granted it on condition that only one night could be spent away out for fear of too much tiredness after such a long illness.

The next morning Prince Camaralzaman and Marzavan left early, attended by two grooms leading the two extra horses. They hunted a little by the way, but took care to get as far from the towns as possible. At nightfall they reached an inn, where they dined and slept till midnight. Then Marzavan awoke the prince without disturbing anyone else. He told the prince to give him the coat he had been wearing and to put on another which they had brought with them. They mounted their second horses, and Marzavan led one of the grooms' horses by the bridle.

By daybreak our travellers found themselves where four cross roads met in the middle of the forest. Here Marzavan told the prince to wait for him, and leading the groom's horse into a dense part of the wood he cut its throat, dipped the prince's coat in its blood, and having rejoined the prince threw the coat on the ground where the roads parted.

In answer to Camaralzaman's questions as to the reason for this, Marzavan replied that the only chance they had of continuing their journey was by creating the idea of the prince's death. "Your father will doubtless be in the deepest grief," he went on, "but his joy at your return will be all the greater."

The prince and his companion now continued their journey by land and sea, and as they had brought plenty of money they met with no delays. At length they reached the capital of China, where they spent three days in a suitable inn to recover from their long journey.

During this time Marzavan had an astrologer's robe prepared for the prince, which he put on and was then taken near the king's palace by Marzavan, who left him there and went to see his mother, the princess's nurse.

Meanwhile the prince, according to Marzavan's instructions, walked

near to the palace gates and there proclaimed aloud” I am an astrologer and I come to heal the Princess Badoura, daughter of the high and mighty King of China, on the conditions laid down by His Majesty of marrying her should I succeed, or of losing my life if I fail.”

It was some little time since anyone had presented himself to run the terrible risk of attempting to cure the princess, and a crowd soon gathered round the prince. On seeing his youth and good looks, everyone felt pity for him.

”What are you thinking of, sir,” exclaimed some; “Why send yourself to certain death? Are the heads you see on the town wall not sufficient warning? For goodness sake give up this mad idea and go home while you can.”

But the prince refused to leave, and only repeated his cry loudly, to the horror of the crowd.

”He is determined to die!” they cried, “May heaven have pity on him!”

Camaralzaman now called out for the third time, and at last the grand-vizier himself came out and brought him in.

The prime minister led the prince to the king, who was much impressed by this new adventurer, and felt such pity for the fate awaiting him, that he tried to persuade the young man to give up.

But Camaralzaman politely yet showed his determination, and at last the king told the guard of the princess’s apartments to take the astrologer to her.

The guard led the way through long passages, and Camaralzaman followed quickly, in order to reach the object of his desires. At last

they came to a large hall which was the ante-room to the princess's chamber, and here Camaralzaman said to the guard," Now you shall choose. Shall I cure the princess in her own presence, or shall I do it from here without seeing her?"

The guard, who had expressed many doubts of the newcomer's powers, was much surprised and said," If you really can cure her, it doesn't matter when you do it. Your fame will be equally great."

"Very well," replied the prince: "Then, impatient though I am to see the princess, I will cure her where I stand, the better to demonstrate my power." He took out his pen and wrote as follows, "Adorable princess! Camaralzaman has never forgotten the moment when, seeing your sleeping beauty, he gave you his heart. At that time he gave you his ring as a sign of his love, and to take yours in exchange, which he now encloses in this letter. Should you wish to return it to him he will be the happiest of men, if not he will cheerfully die, seeing he does so for love of you. He awaits your reply in your ante-room."

Having finished this note the prince carefully enclosed the ring in it without letting the guard see it, and gave him the letter, saying, "Take this to your mistress, my friend, and if on reading it and seeing its contents she is not instantly cured, you may call me a cheat."

The guard at once entered the princess's room, and handing her the letter said, "Madam, a new astrologer has arrived, who says that you will be cured as soon as you have read this letter and seen what it contains."

The princess took the note and opened it uninterested. But no sooner did she see her ring than, barely glancing at the writing, she rose quickly and with one leap reached the doorway. Here she and the prince recognized each other, and in a moment they were in each

other's arms, where they tenderly embraced, wondering how they came to meet at last after so long a separation. The nurse, who had entered, took them back to the inner room, where the princess returned her ring to Camaralzaman.

"Take it back," she said, "I could not keep it without returning yours to you, and I am determined to wear that as long as I live."

Meantime the guard had hurried back to the king. "Sire," he cried, "All the former doctors and astrologers were useless. This man has cured the princess without even seeing her." He then told all to the king, who, overjoyed, hurried to his daughter's room, where, after embracing her, he placed her hand in that of the prince, saying, "Happy stranger, I keep my promise, and give you my daughter to be your wife."

The prince thanked the king in the warmest and most respectful terms, and added, "I am not an astrologer. It is a disguise which I put on. I am myself a prince, my name is Camaralzaman, and my father is Schahzaman, King of the Isles of the Children of Khaledan." He then told his whole history, including the extraordinary way he first saw and fell in love with the Princess Badoura.

When he had finished the king exclaimed, "Such a remarkable a story must not be lost. It shall be written and placed in the grand library of my kingdom and published everywhere abroad."

The wedding took place the next day with great celebration. Marzavan was not forgotten, and was given a high position at court.

The prince and princess were now entirely happy, and months slipped by in the enjoyment of each other's company.

One night, however, Prince Camaralzaman dreamt that he saw his

father lying at the point of death, and saying, “Alas! My son, who I loved so tenderly, has deserted me and is now causing my death.”

The prince woke with such a groan as to startle the princess, who asked what the matter was.

”Ah!” cried the prince, “At this very moment my father is perhaps no more!” and he told his dream.

The princess said little at the time, but the next morning she went to the king, and kissing his hand said, ” I have a favour to ask of your Majesty. It is that you will allow us both to visit my father-in-law King Schahzaman.”

Sorry though the king felt at the idea of parting with his daughter, he felt her request to be so reasonable that he could not refuse it, and made just one condition, which was that she should only spend one year at the court of King Schahzaman, suggesting that in future the young couple should visit their respective parents in turn.

The princess brought this good news to her husband, who thanked her tenderly for this proof of her love.

All preparations for the journey were now ready and the king accompanied the travelers for some days, after which he left his daughter, and telling the prince to take every care of her, returned to his capital.

The prince and princess journeyed on, and at the end of a month reached a huge meadow with clumps of big trees which provided a most pleasant shade. As the heat was great, Camaralzaman thought it a good idea to camp in this cool spot. The tents were pitched, and the princess entered hers removed her jacket which she placed beside her, and asking her women to leave her, lay down and was soon asleep.

When the camp was all in order the prince entered the tent and, seeing the princess asleep, he sat down near her without speaking. His eyes fell on the jacket which, he picked up, and while looking at the precious stones set in it he noticed a little pouch sewn into the jacket. He touched it and felt something hard inside. Curious as to what this might be, he opened the pouch and found a stone engraved with various figures and strange words.

”This stone must be something very precious,” thought he, “or my wife would not wear it on her with so much care.”

In truth it was a lucky charm which the Queen of China had given her daughter, telling her it would ensure her happiness as long as she carried it with her.

In order to better examine the stone the prince stepped to the open doorway of the tent. As he stood there holding it in the open palm of his hand, a bird suddenly swooped down, picked the stone up in its beak and flew away with it.

Imagine the prince’s dismay at losing a thing which his wife thought was so important!

The bird flew off some yards and landed on the ground, holding the lucky charm in its beak. Prince Camaralzaman followed, hoping the bird would drop it, but as soon as he approached the thief fluttered on a little further still. He continued his chase till the bird suddenly swallowed the stone and took a longer flight than before. The prince then hoped to kill it with a stone, but the more he pursued the further the bird flew.

In this way he was led over hill and dale through the entire day, and when night came the bird roosted on the top of a very high tree where it could rest in safety.

The prince began to think whether he had better return to the camp. "But," thought he, "How shall I find my way back? Must I go up hill or down? I should certainly lose my way in the dark." Overwhelmed by hunger, thirst, fatigue and sleep, he ended by spending the night at the foot of the tree.

The next morning Camaralzaman woke up before the bird left, and no sooner did it take flight than he followed it again with as little success as the previous day, only stopping to eat some herbs and fruit he found on the way. He spent ten days, following the bird all day and spending the night at the foot of a tree, whilst it roosted. On the eleventh day the bird and the prince reached a large town, and as soon as they were close to its walls the bird took a sudden and higher flight and was shortly completely out of sight, while Camaralzaman felt in despair at having to give up all hopes of ever recovering the lucky charm of the Princess Badoura.

Much saddened, he entered the town, which was built near the sea and had a fine harbour. He walked about the streets for a long time, not knowing where to go, but at last as he walked near the seashore he found a garden door open and walked in.

The gardener, a good old man, who was at work, happened to look up, and, seeing a stranger, told him to come in at once and to shut the door.

Camaralzaman did as he was told.

Camaralzaman warmly thanked the kind old man for offering him shelter, and was about to say more, but the gardener said, "You are weary and must be hungry. Come in, eat, and rest." So saying he led the prince into his cottage, and after satisfying his hunger asked why he had come.

Camaralzaman told him all, and ended by asking the shortest way to his father's capital. "For," added he, "if I tried to rejoin the princess, how should I find her after eleven days' separation. Perhaps, indeed, she may be no longer alive!" At this terrible thought he burst into tears.

The gardener told Camaralzaman that they were a year's land journey to any country, but that there was a much shorter route by sea to the Ebony Island, from which the Isles of the Children of Khaledan could be easily reached, and that a ship sailed once a year for the Ebony Island by which he might get so far as his very home.

"If only you had arrived a few days sooner," he said, "You might have embarked at once. As it is you must now wait till next year, but if you care to stay with me I offer you my house, such as it is, with all my heart."

Prince Camaralzaman thought himself lucky to find some place of safety, and gladly accepted the gardener's offer. He spent his days working in the garden, and his nights thinking of and sighing for his beloved wife.

Let us now see what had become during this time of the Princess Badoura.

On first waking she was much surprised not to find the prince near her. She called her women and asked if they knew where he was, and while they were telling her that they had seen him enter the tent, but had not noticed his leaving it, she picked up her jacket and noticed that the little pouch was open and the lucky charm gone.

She at once thought that her husband had taken it and would shortly bring it back. She waited for him till evening rather impatiently, and wondering what could have kept him from her so long. When night

came without him she felt in despair. In spite of her grief and anxiety however, she did not act wildly, but decided on a courageous, though very unusual step.

Only the princess and her women knew of Camaralzaman's disappearance, for the rest of the party were sleeping or resting in their tents. Fearing some trouble if the truth was known, she ordered her women not to say a word which would cause suspicion, and changed her robe for one of her husband's, for whom she had a strong likeness.

In this disguise she looked so much like the prince that when she gave orders next morning to leave the camp and continue the journey no one suspected the change. She made one of her women enter her caravan, while she herself went on horseback and the march began.

After a long journey by land and sea the princess, still under the name and disguise of Prince Camaralzaman, arrived at the capital of the Ebony Island whose king was named Armanos.

No sooner did the king hear that the ship which was just in port had on board the son of his old friend than he hurried to meet the supposed prince, and had him and his party brought to the palace, where they were entertained.

After three days, finding that his guest, to whom he had taken a great fancy, talked of continuing his journey, King Armanos said to him, "Prince, I am now an old man, and unfortunately I have no son to whom to leave my kingdom. It has pleased Heaven to give me only one daughter, who possesses such great beauty and charm that I could only give her to a prince as highly born and as accomplished as yourself. Instead of returning to your own country, take my daughter and my crown and stay with us. I shall feel that I have a worthy successor, and shall cheerfully retire from government."

The king's offer was naturally rather embarrassing to the Princess Badoura. She felt that it was equally impossible to admit that she had deceived him, or to refuse the marriage on which he had set his heart; a refusal which might turn all his kindness to hatred.

All things considered, she decided to accept, and after a few moments silence said, "Sire, I feel so grateful for what your Majesty has said about me and of the honour you do me, that I dare not refuse. But, sire, I can only accept this if you give me your promise to assist me with your advice."

The marriage was arranged for the following day, and the princess used the time in informing the officers of her party what had happened, telling them that the Princess Badoura had given her full agreement to the marriage. She also told her women, and made them keep her secret.

King Armanos, delighted with the success of his plans, lost no time in assembling his court and council, to whom he presented his successor, and placing his future son-in-law on the throne made everyone take oaths of allegiance to the new king.

At night the whole town was filled with rejoicings, and the Princess Haiatelnefous (this was the name of the king's daughter) was taken to the palace of the Princess Badoura.

Now Badoura had thought much of the difficulties of her first meeting with King Armanos' daughter, and she felt the only thing to do was at once to tell her the truth.

So, as soon as they were alone she took Haiatelnefous by the hand and said, "Princess, I have a secret to tell you, and must throw myself on your mercy. I am not Prince Camaralzaman, but a princess like yourself and his wife, and I beg you to listen to my story, then I am

sure you will forgive me, because of my suffering.”

She then told her whole story, and at its end Haiatelnefous embraced her warmly, and promised her, her sympathy and affection.

The two princesses now planned out their future action, and agreed to work together to keep up the deception and to let Badoura continue to play a man’s part until such time as there might be news of the real Camaralzaman.

Whilst these things were happening in the Ebony Island Prince Camaralzaman continued to find shelter in the gardener’s cottage in the town.

Early one morning the gardener said to the prince,” Today is a public holiday, and the people of the town not only do not work themselves but forbid others to do so. You had better therefore take a good rest while I go to see some friends, and as the time is near for the arrival of the ship of which I told you I will make inquiries about it, and try to get you on it.” He then put on his best clothes and went out, leaving the prince, who strolled into the garden and was soon lost in thoughts of his dear wife and their sad separation.

As he walked up and down he was suddenly heard the noise two large birds were making in a tree.

Camaralzaman stood still and looked up, and saw that the birds were fighting so fiercely with beaks and claws that before long one fell dead to the ground, whilst the winner spread his wings and flew away. Almost immediately two other larger birds, who had been watching the fight, flew up and landed, one at the head and the other at the feet of the dead bird. They stood there some time sadly shaking their heads, and then dug up a grave with their claws in which they buried him.

As soon as they had filled in the grave the two flew off, and before long returned, bringing with them the murderer, whom they held, one by a wing and the other by a leg, with their beaks, screaming and struggling with rage and terror. But they held tight, and having brought him to his victim's grave, they proceeded to kill him, after which they tore open his body, scattered the inside and once more flew away.

The prince, who had watched the whole scene with much interest, now drew near the spot where it happened, and glancing at the dead bird he noticed something red lying near which had evidently fallen out of its inside. He picked it up, and what was his surprise when he recognized the Princess Badoura's lucky charm which had been the cause of many misfortunes. It would be impossible to describe his joy. He kissed the lucky charm repeatedly, wrapped it up, and carefully tied it round his arm. For the first time since his separation from the princess he had a good night, and next morning he was up at daybreak and went cheerfully to ask what work he should do.

The gardener told him to cut down an old fruit tree which had quite died away, and Camaralzaman took an axe and cut away at it. As he was chopping at one of the roots the axe struck on something hard. On pushing away the earth he discovered a large slab of bronze, under which was a staircase with ten steps. He went down them and found himself in a roomy kind of cave in which stood fifty large bronze jars, each with a cover on it. The prince uncovered one after another, and found them all filled with gold dust. Delighted with his discovery he left the cave, replaced the slab, and having finished cutting down the tree waited for the gardener's return.

The gardener had heard the night before that the ship about which he was asking would start soon, but the exact date not being yet known he had been told to return next day for further information. He had

gone therefore to ask, and came back with good news.

”My son,” said he, “Be happy and make yourself ready to start in three days’ time. The ship is to set sail, and I have arranged everything with the captain.

”You could not bring me better news,” replied Camaralzaman, “And in return I have something pleasant to tell you. Follow me and see the good fortune which has befallen you.”

He then led the gardener to the cave, and having shown him the treasure there, said how happy it made him that Heaven should in this way reward his kind friend.

”What do you mean?” asked the gardener. “Do you think that I should take this treasure? It is yours, and I have no right whatever to it. For the last eighty years I have dug up the ground here without discovering anything. It is clear that these riches are meant for you, and they are much more needed by a prince like yourself than by an old man like me. This treasure comes just at the right time, when you are about to return to your own country, where you will make good use of it.”

But the prince would not hear of this suggestion, and finally after much discussion they agreed to divide the gold. When this was done the gardener said, ” My son, the great thing now is to arrange how you can best carry off this treasure as secretly as possible for fear of losing it. There are no olives in the Ebony Island, and those imported from here fetch a high price. As you know, I have a good stock of the olives which grew in this garden. Now you must take fifty jars, fill each half full of gold dust and fill them up with the olives. We will then have them taken on board ship when you embark.”

The prince took this advice, and spent the rest of the day filling the

fifty jars, and fearing the precious lucky charm might slip from his arm and be lost again, he put it in one of the jars, on which he made a mark so as to be able to recognize it. When night came the jars were all ready, and the prince and his host went to bed.

Whether it was because of his great age, or of the excitement of the previous day, I do not know, but the gardener spent a very bad night. He was worse the next day, and by the morning of the third day was dangerously ill. At daybreak the ship's captain and some of his sailors knocked at the garden door and asked for the passenger who was to embark.

"I am him," said Camaralzaman, who had opened the door. "The gardener is ill and cannot see you, but please come in and take these jars of olives and my bag, and I will follow as soon as I have said goodbye to him."

The sailors did as he asked, and the captain before leaving told Camaralzaman to hurry, as the wind was fair, and he wished to set sail at once.

As soon as they were gone the prince returned to the cottage to say goodbye to his old friend, and to thank him once more for all his kindness. But the old man was near the end, and passed away.

Camaralzaman had to stay and take care of it, so having dug a grave in the garden he wrapped the kind old man up and buried him. He then locked the door, gave up the key to the owner of the garden, and hurried to the quay only to hear that the ship had sailed long ago, after waiting three hours for him.

It may well be believed that the prince felt terribly sad at this misfortune, which forced him to spend another year in a strange country. Moreover, he had once more lost the Princess Badoura's

lucky charm, which he feared he might never see again. There was nothing left for him but to work in the garden as the old man had done, and to live on in the cottage. As he could not work the garden by himself, he employed a boy to help him, and to hide the rest of the treasure he put the remaining gold dust into fifty more jars, filling them up with olives so as to have them ready for transport.

While the prince was settling down to this second year of work, the ship made a fast voyage and arrived safely at Ebony Island.

As the palace of the new king, or rather of the Princess Badoura, overlooked the harbour, she saw the ship entering it and asked what ship it was coming in so beautifully decorated with flags, and was told that it was a ship from the Island which every year brought precious merchandise.

The princess, always looking for news of her beloved husband, went down to the harbour with some officers of the court, and arrived just as the captain was landing. She sent for him and asked many questions about his country, the voyage, what passengers he had, and what his ship was carrying. The captain answered all her questions, and said that his passengers consisted entirely of traders who brought valuable good from various countries, fine fabrics, precious stones, musk, amber, spices, olives, and many other things.

As soon as he mentioned olives, the princess, who was very fond of them, exclaimed, "I will take all you have on board. Have them unloaded and tell the other merchants to let me see all their best goods before showing them to other people."

"Sire," replied the captain, "I have on board fifty very large pots of olives. They belong to a merchant who was left behind, because he delayed so long that I had to set sail without him."

”Never mind,” said the princess, “unload them all the same, and we will arrange the price.”

The captain sent his boat off to the ship and it soon returned with the fifty pots of olives. The princess asked what they might be worth.

”Sire,” replied the captain, “The merchant is very poor. Your Majesty will not overpay him if you give him a thousand pieces of silver.”

”In order to satisfy him and as he is so poor,” said the princess, “I will order a thousand pieces of gold to be given you, which you will be sure to give to him.”

So saying she gave orders for the payment and returned to the palace, having the jars carried before her. When evening came the Princess Badoura went to the inner part of the palace, and going to the rooms of the Princess Haiatelnefous she had the fifty jars of olives brought to her. She opened one to let her friend taste the olives and to taste them herself, but great was her surprise when, on pouring some into a dish, she found them all powdered with gold dust. “What an adventure! How extraordinary!” she cried. Then she had the other jars opened, and was more and more surprised to find the olives in each jar mixed with gold dust.

But when at last her lucky charm was discovered in one of the jars her emotion was so great that she fainted away. The Princess Haiatelnefous and her women hurried to help her, and as soon as she awoke she covered the precious lucky charm with kisses.

Then, she said to her friend, ” You will have guessed, my dear, that it was the sight of this lucky charm which has moved me so deeply. This was the cause of my separation from my dear husband, and now, I am convinced, it will be the means of our reunion.”

As soon as it was light next day the Princess Badoura sent for the captain, and asked him about the merchant who owned the olive jars she had bought.

In reply the captain told her all he knew of the place where the young man lived, and how, he came to be left behind.

”If that is the case,” said the princess, “You must set sail at once and go back for him. He owes me money and must be brought here at once, or I will take all your merchandise. I shall now give orders to have all the warehouses locked, and they will only be opened when you have brought me the man I ask for. Go at once and obey my orders.”

The captain had no choice but to do as he was told, so he started that same evening on his return voyage.

When, after a quick voyage, he saw the Island, he thought it better not to enter the harbour, but dropping anchor at some distance he got, at night, in a small boat with six sailors and landed near Camaralzaman’s cottage.

The prince was not asleep, and as he lay awake moaning over all the sad events which had separated him from his wife, he thought he heard a knock at the garden door. He went to open it, and was immediately seized by the captain and sailors, who without a word of explanation took him off to the boat, which took them back to the ship immediately. No sooner were they on board than they set sail.

Camaralzaman, who had kept silent till then, now asked the captain (whom he had recognized) the reason for this kidnapping.

”Do you owe the King of the Ebony Island money?” asked the captain.

”I? Why, I have never even heard of him before, and never set foot in his kingdom!” was the answer.

”Well, you must know better than I,” said the captain. “You will soon see him now, and meantime be content where you are and have patience.”

The return voyage was as fast as the former one, and though it was night when the ship entered the harbour, the captain lost no time in landing with his passenger, who he took to the palace, where he asked to see the king.

As soon as the Princess Badoura saw the prince she recognized him in spite of his poor clothes. She wanted to hug him, but stopped herself, feeling it was better for them both that she should play her part a little longer. She therefore asked one of her officers to take care of him and to treat him well. Next she ordered another officer to unlock the warehouse, whilst she presented the captain with a valuable diamond, and told him to keep the thousand pieces of gold paid for the olives, as she would arrange matters with the merchant himself.

She then returned to her private apartments, where she told the Princess Haiatelnefous all that had happened, as well as her plans for the future, and begged her assistance, which her friend readily promised.

The next morning she ordered the prince to be taken to the bath and clothed in a manner suitable to a prince or governor of a province. He was then introduced to the council.

Princess Badoura, delighted to see him looking himself once more, turned to the other princes, saying, ”My lords, I introduce to you a new colleague, Camaralzaman, who I have known on my travels and who, I can promise you, you will find well deserves your respect and

admiration.”

Camaralzaman was much surprised at hearing the king, who he never suspected of being a woman in disguise, saying that they had met before, for he felt sure he had never seen her before. However he received all the praises and said, ” Sire, I cannot find words to thank your Majesty for the great honour given me. I can but promise you that I will do all in my power to prove myself worthy of it.”

On leaving the council the prince was taken to a splendid house which had been prepared for him. On entering his study his servant presented him with a jar filled with gold pieces for spending. He felt more and more puzzled by such good fortune, and did not guess that the Princess of China was the cause of it.

After a few days the Princess Badoura promoted Camaralzaman to the post of grand treasurer, an office which he filled with so much honesty and kindness.

He would now have thought himself the happiest of men had it not been for that separation which he never stopped thinking about. He had no clue to the mystery of his present position, for the princess was generally known as King Armanos the younger, few people remembering that on her first arrival she went by another name.

At last the princess felt that the time had come to put an end to it, and having arranged all her plans with the Princess Haiatnefous, she told Camaralzaman that she wished his advice on some important business, and, to avoid being disturbed, asked him to come to the palace that evening.

The prince was on time, and was taken into the private room, when, having ordered her servants to leave, the princess took from a small box the lucky charm, and, handing it to Camaralzaman, said: “Not

long ago an astrologer gave me this lucky charm. As you are very knowledgeable, you can perhaps tell me what its use is.”

Camaralzaman took the lucky charm and, holding it to the light, cried with surprise, “Sire, you ask me the use of this talisman. Alas before it has been only a source of misfortune to me, being the cause of my separation from the one I love best on Earth. The story is so sad and strange that I am sure your Majesty will be touched by it if you will permit me to tell it to you.”

”I will hear it some other time,” replied the princess. “Meanwhile I believe it is not quite unknown to me. Wait here for me. I will return shortly.”

So saying she went to another room, where she quickly changed her male clothing for that of a woman, and, after putting on the jacket she wore the day they parted, returned to Camaralzaman.

The prince recognized her at once, and, embracing her with the utmost tenderness, cried, “Ah, how can I thank the king for this delightful surprise?”

”Do not expect ever to see the king again,” said the princess, as she wiped the tears of joy from her eyes, “In me you see the king. Let us sit down, and I will tell you all about it.”

She then gave a full account of all her adventures since their parting, and talked much about the charms and good character of the Princess Haiatnefous,. When she had done she asked to hear the prince’s story, and in this way they spent most of the night.

The next morning the princess put on her woman’s clothes, and as soon as she was ready she asked the chief servant to ask King Armanos to come to her apartments.

When the king arrived great was his surprise at finding a strange lady in company of the grand treasurer who had no right to enter the private room. Seating himself he asked for the king.

”Sire,” said the princess, “Yesterday I was the king, today I am only the Princess of China and wife to the real Prince Camaralzaman, son of King Schahzaman, and I trust that when your Majesty has heard our story you will not be angry.”

The king agreed to listen, and did so with great surprise.

At the end of her story the princess said, “Sire, as our religion allows a man to have more than one wife, I would ask your Majesty to give your daughter, the Princess Haiatelnefous, in marriage to Prince Camaralzaman.”

King Armanos heard the princess with surprise and admiration, then, turning to Camaralzaman, he said, “My son, as your wife, the Princess Badoura (whom I have before looked on as my son-in-law), agrees to share your hand and affections with my daughter, I have only to ask if this marriage is agreeable to you, and if you will agree to accept the crown which the Princess Badoura deserves to wear all her life, but which she prefers to give to you.”

”Sire,” replied Camaralzaman, “I can refuse your Majesty nothing.”

So Camaralzaman was proclaimed king, and married to the Princess Haiatelnefous, with whose beauty, talents, and affections he had every reason to be pleased.

The two queens lived in true sisterly harmony together, and after a time each presented King Camaralzaman with a son, whose births were celebrated throughout the kingdom with the utmost rejoicing.

Noureddin and the Fair Persian

Basra was the capital of a kingdom. During the time of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid the king of Basra, who was his cousin, was called Zinebi. Not thinking one vizier enough for him, he had two, named Khacan and Saouy.

Khacan was kind, generous, and took pleasure in helping others who had business with him. Throughout the entire kingdom there was no one who did not respect and praise him as he deserved.

Saouy was quite a different character, and repelled everyone with whom he met. He was always gloomy, and, in spite of his great riches, he was a miser. What made him particularly detested was the great hatred he had for Khacan, of whom he continually spoke evil about to the king.

One day, while the king amused himself talking with his two viziers and other members of the council, the conversation turned to female slaves. While some declared that it was enough for a slave to be beautiful, Khacan among others, maintained that beauty alone was not enough, but that it must be accompanied by wit, wisdom, modesty, and, if possible, knowledge.

The king not only agreed with this opinion, but instructed Khacan to get him a slave who should fulfill all these conditions. Saouy, who had been of the opposite side, and was jealous of the honour done to Khacan, said, "Sire, it will be very difficult to find a slave as wonderful as your Majesty desires, and, if she is to be found, she will be cheap if she cost less than 10,000 gold pieces."

"Saouy," answered the king, "you seem to find that a very great sum. For you it may be so, but not for me."

And so he ordered his grand treasurer, who was present, to send 10,000 gold pieces to Khacan for the purchase of the slave.

As soon, then, as Khacan had returned home he sent for the dealers in female slaves, and told them directly to find such a one as he described and then inform him. They promised to do their best, and no day passed that they did not bring a slave for his inspection but none was found without some defect.

Early one morning, while Khacan was on his way to the king's palace, a dealer, throwing himself in his way, announced eagerly that a Persian merchant, arrived late the previous evening, had a slave to sell whose wit and wisdom were equal to her beauty.

Khacan, overjoyed at this news, gave orders that the slave should be brought for his inspection on his return from the palace. The dealer appeared on time and Khacan found the slave beautiful beyond his expectations, and immediately gave her the name of "The Fair Persian."

Being a man of great wisdom and learning, he realized in the short conversation he had with her that he would never find another better in any of the qualities required by the king, and therefore asked the dealer what price the merchant asked.

"Sir," was the answer, "for less than 10,000 gold pieces he will not let her go. She is in every way fit to be the slave of a king. She plays every musical instrument, she sings, she dances, and she writes poetry. In fact there is no talent in which she does not excel."

Khacan, who was better able to judge her talents than the dealer, sent for the merchant, and said to him, "It is not for myself that I wish to buy your slave, but for the king. Her price, however, is too high."

”Sir,” replied the merchant, “I should consider it an honour to present her to his Majesty, if a merchant could do such a thing. I ask no more than the sum it has cost me to deliver her from Persia.”

Khacan, not wishing to bargain, immediately had the sum counted out, and given to the merchant, who before leaving said, ”Sir, as she is for the king, you should understand that she is extremely tired with the long journey, and before presenting her to his Majesty you would do well to keep her for two weeks in your own house, and to see that a little care is given her. The sun has tanned her complexion, but when she has been two or three times to the bathes, and is fittingly dressed, you will see how much her beauty will be increased.”

Khacan thanked the merchant for his advice, and decided to follow it. He gave the beautiful Persian an apartment near to that of his wife, whom he asked to treat as a lady destined for the king, and to order for her the most magnificent garments.

Before saying goodbye to the Fair Persian, he said to her: “No happiness can be greater than what I have bought for you, for now you belong to the king. I have, however, to warn you of one thing. I have a son, who is young, foolish, and headstrong, and I order you to keep away from him.”

The Persian thanked him for his advice, and to heed it.

Noureddin, as the vizier’s son was named, went freely in and out of his mother’s apartments. He was young, strong and agreeable, and had the gift of charming all he met. As soon as he saw the beautiful Persian, though aware that she was destined for the king, he let himself be carried away by her charms, and was determined at once to use every means in his power to keep her for himself. The Persian was equally attracted to Noureddin, and said to herself: “The vizier does me too great honour in buying me for the king. I should be very happy

if he would give me to his son.”

Noureddin took every opportunity to gaze upon her beauty, to talk and laugh with her, and never would have left her side if his mother had not forced him.

Some time had passed, since the beautiful Persian had been to the bath. Five or six days after her purchase the vizier's wife gave orders that the bath should be heated for her, and that her own female slaves should attend her there, and afterwards should dress her in a magnificent dress that had been prepared for her.

Her preparation completed, the beautiful Persian came to present herself to the vizier's wife, who hardly recognized her, so greatly was her beauty increased. Kissing her hand, the beautiful slave said: “Madam, I do not know how you find me in this dress that you have had prepared for me. Your women assure me that it suits me so well that they hardly knew me. If it is the truth they tell me, and not flattery, it is to you I owe the transformation.”

”My daughter,” answered the vizier's wife, “they do not flatter you. I myself hardly recognized you. The improvement is not due to the dress alone, but largely to the beautifying effects of the bath. I am so struck by its results, that I would try it myself.”

She ordered two little slaves during her absence to watch over the beautiful Persian, and not to allow Noureddin to enter if he should come.

She had no sooner gone than he arrived, and not finding his mother in her apartment, wanted to look in the Persian's. The two little slaves barred the entrance, saying that his mother had given orders that he was not to be admitted. Taking each by an arm, he pushed them out of the way, and shut the door. Then they rushed to the bath, informing

their mistress with shrieks and tears that Nouredin had driven them away by force and gone in.

This news caused great anxiety to the lady, who, dressing herself as quickly as possible, hastened to the apartment of the fair Persian, to find that Nouredin had already gone out. Much astonished to see the vizier's wife enter in tears, the Persian asked what misfortune had happened.

"What!" exclaimed the lady, "You ask me that, knowing that my son Nouredin has been alone with you?"

"But, madam," inquired the Persian, "what harm is there in that?"
Has my husband not told you that you are destined for the king?"

"Certainly, but Nouredin has just been to tell me that his father has changed his mind and has given me to him. I believed him, and so great is my affection for Nouredin that I would willingly pass my life with him."

"My god," exclaimed the wife of the vizier, "But Nouredin has deceived you, and his father will sacrifice him in revenge for the wrong he has done."

So saying, she wept bitterly, and all her slaves wept with her.

Khacan, entering shortly after this, was much astonished to find his wife and her slaves in tears, and the beautiful Persian greatly upset. He asked why, but for some time there was no answer. When his wife was calm enough to inform him of what had happened, he was enraged. He exclaimed:

"Wretched son! You have destroyed not only yourself but also your father. The king will take not only your life but mine." His wife tried

to comfort him, saying: “Do not worry yourself. With the sale of my jewels I will obtain 10,000 gold pieces, and with this sum you will buy another slave.”

”Do not think,” replied her husband, “that it is the loss of the money that affects me. My honour is more precious to me than all my wealth. You know that Saouy is my deadly enemy. He will tell all this to the king, and you will see the result.”

”My lord,” said his wife, “I am quite aware of Saouy’s evil, and that he is capable of doing terrible things. But how can he or any one else know what takes place in this house? Even if you are suspected and the king accuses you, you have only to say that, after examining the slave, you did not find her worthy of his Majesty. Calm yourself, and send to the dealers, saying that you are not satisfied, and wish them to find you another slave.”

This advice appearing reasonable, Khacan decided to follow it, but his anger against his son did not lessen. Noureddin dared not appear all that day, and fearing to stay with his usual friends in case his father should seek him there, he spent the day in a distant park where he was not known. He did not return home till after his father had gone to bed, and went out early next morning before the vizier awoke, and did the same for an entire month.

His mother, though knowing very well that he returned to the house every evening, did not dare ask her husband to forgive him. At last she took courage and said, ”My lord, I know that a son could not act more badly towards his father than Noureddin has done towards you, but after all will you now forgive him? Do you not consider the harm you may be doing yourself, and fear that evil people, seeking the reason for your anger, may guess the real one?”

”Madam,” replied the vizier, “What you say is very true, but I cannot

pardon Noureddin before I have punished him as he deserves.”

”He will be sufficiently punished,” answered the lady, “if you do as I suggest. In the evening, when he returns home, lie in wait for him and pretend that you will kill him. I will come to his aid, and while pointing out that you only spare his life at my begging, you can force him to take the beautiful Persian on any conditions you please.”

Khacan agreed to follow this plan, and everything took place as arranged. On Noureddin’s return Khacan pretended to be about to kill him, but giving to his wife’s pleading, said to his son, ”You owe your life to your mother. I pardon you for her, and on the conditions that you take the beautiful Persian for your wife, and not your slave, that you never sell her, nor send her away.”

Noureddin, not believing his luck, thanked his father, and promised to do as he desired. Khacan spoke to the king of the difficulties with the task he had given him, but some whispers of what had actually taken place did reach Saouy’s ears.

More than a year after these events the vizier took ill. The vizier, feeling that his end was near, sent for Noureddin, and told him with his dying breath never to part with the beautiful Persian.

Shortly afterwards he passed away, leaving great sadness throughout the kingdom. Rich and poor alike followed him to the grave.

Noureddin showed every mark of the deepest grief at his father’s death, and for long refused to see anyone. At last a day came when one of his friends being allowed in urged him strongly to resume his former place in society. This advice Noureddin was not slow to follow, and soon he formed small group of ten young men all about his own age, with whom he spent all his time in continual feasting and partying.

Sometimes the fair Persian agreed to appear at these parties, but she

disapproved of this waste of money, and warned Noureddin of the probable consequences. He, however, only laughed at her advice, saying, that his father had always restricted him, and that now he rejoiced at his new found freedom.

What added to the confusion was that he refused to look into his accounts with his servant, sending him away every time he appeared with his book.

”See only that I live well,” he said, “and do not disturb me about anything else.”

Not only did Noureddin’s friends constantly enjoy his hospitality, but in every way they took advantage of his generosity. Everything of his that they admired, whether land, houses, baths, or anyother thing, he immediately gave them. In vain the Persian protested against the wrong he did himself.

For one entire year Noureddin did nothing but amuse himself, and waste the money his father had taken such care to save. The year had barely passed, when one day, as they sat at table, there came a knock at the door. The slaves having been sent away, Noureddin went to open it himself. One of his friends had risen at the same time, but Noureddin was before him, and finding the visitor to be the steward, he went out and closed the door. The friend, curious to hear what passed between them, hid himself, and heard the following words, ”My lord,” said the steward, “I beg a thousand pardons for interrupting you, but what I have long foreseen has taken place. Nothing remains of the money you gave me for your expenses, and all other sources of income are also at end, having been transferred by you to others. If you wish me to remain in your service, give me the necessary funds, else I must leave.”

So great was Noureddin’s anxiety that he had not a word to say in

reply.

The friend, who had been listening behind the curtain, immediately hurried to spread the news to the rest of the company.

”If this is so,” they said, “we must stop coming here.”

Noureddin re-entered at that moment, and they plainly saw, in spite of his efforts to hide the truth, that what they had heard was true. One by one they rose, and each with a different excuse left the room, till presently he found himself alone. Then, seeing the beautiful Persian, he regretfully told her what the steward had said.

”Had I followed your advice, beautiful Persian,” he said, “all this would not have happened, but at least I know that I have spent my fortune with friends who will not desert me in my hour of need. Tomorrow I will go to them, and amongst them they will lend me enough money to start in some business.”

Accordingly early the next morning, Noureddin went to seek his ten friends, who all lived in the same street. Knocking at the door of the first, the slave who opened it left him to wait in a hall while he announced his visit to his master. “Noureddin!” he heard him exclaim quite loudly. “Tell him, every time he calls, that I am not at home.” The same thing happened at the second door, and also at the third, and so on with all the ten. Noureddin, much horrified, recognized too late that he had false friends, who abandoned him in his hour of need. Overwhelmed with grief, he sought comfort from the beautiful Persian.

”Alas, my lord,” she said, “At last you are convinced of the truth of what I said. There is now no other choice left but to sell your slaves and your furniture.”

First then he sold the slaves, and lived for a time on that money, after that the furniture was sold, and as much of it was valuable it was enough for some time. Finally this also came to an end, and again he asked advice from the beautiful Persian.

”My lord,” she said, “I know that the late vizier, your father, bought me for 10,000 gold pieces, and though I am reduced in value since, I should still fetch a large sum. Do not therefore hesitate to sell me, and with the money you obtain go and establish yourself in business in some distant town.”

”Charming Persian,” answered Nouredin, “how could I commit such a terrible act? I would die rather than part from you whom I love more than my life.”

”My lord,” she replied, “I am well aware of your love for me, which is only equaled by mine for you, but a cruel necessity forces us to seek the only remedy.”

Nouredin, convinced at length of the truth of her words, gave in, and reluctantly led her to the slave market, where, showing her to a dealer named Hagi Hassan, he inquired her value.

Taking them into a room apart, Hagi Hassan exclaimed as soon as she had unveiled, “My lord, is not this the slave your father bought for 10,000 pieces?”

On learning that it was so, he promised to obtain the highest possible price for her. Leaving the beautiful Persian shut up in the room alone, he went out to seek the slave merchants, announcing to them that he had found the pearl among slaves, and asking them to come and put a value upon her. As soon as they saw her they agreed that less than 4,000 gold pieces could not be asked. Hagi Hassan, then closing the door upon her, began to offer her for sale, calling out, “Who will bid

4,000 gold pieces for the Persian slave?”

Before any of the merchants had bid, Saouy happened to pass that way, and judging that it must be a slave of extraordinary beauty, rode up to Hagi Hassan and desired to see her. Now it was not the custom to show a slave to a private bidder, but as no one dared to disobey the vizier his request was granted.

As soon as Saouy saw the Persian he was so struck by her beauty, that he immediately wished to possess her, and not knowing that she belonged to Nouredin, he desired Hagi Hassan to send for the owner and to conclude the bargain at once.

Hagi Hassan then sought Nouredin, and told him that his slave was going far below her value, and that if Saouy bought her he was capable of not paying the money. “What you must do,” he said, “is to pretend that you had no real intention of selling your slave, and only swore you would in a fit of anger against her. When I present her to Saouy you must step in, and with blows begin to lead her away.”

Nouredin did as Hagi Hassan advised, to the great anger of Saouy, who riding straight at him tried to take the beautiful Persian from him by force. Nouredin letting her go, seized Saouy’s horse by the bridle, and, encouraged by the applause of the bystanders, dragged him to the ground, beat him severely, and left him in the gutter streaming with blood. Then, taking the beautiful Persian, he returned home amidst the cheering of the people, who detested Saouy so much that they would neither help him nor allow his slaves to protect him.

Covered from head to foot with mud and streaming with blood he rose, and leaning on two of his slaves went straight to the palace, where he demanded an audience with the king, to whom he told what had taken place in these words:

”Your Majesty, I went to the slave market to buy myself a cook. While there I heard a slave being offered for 4,000 pieces. Asking to see her, I found she was of the greatest beauty, and was being sold by Nouredin, the son of your late vizier. Your Majesty will remember giving him a sum of 10,000 gold pieces for the purchase of a slave. This is the identical slave, who instead of bringing to your Majesty he gave to his own son. Since the death of his father this Nouredin has wasted his entire fortune, has sold all his possessions, and is now selling the slave. Calling him to me, I said, “Nouredin, I will give you 10,000 gold pieces for your slave, whom I will present to the king.” “Bad old man,” he exclaimed, “Rather than sell my slave to you I would give her to a donkey.” “But, Nouredin,” I said, “you do not consider that in saying this you insult the king, to whom your father owed everything.” This scolding only irritated him more. Throwing himself on me like a madman, he tore me from my horse, beat me, and left me in the state your Majesty sees.”

Having said this Saouy turned aside his head and wept bitterly.

The king’s fury was turned against Nouredin. He ordered the captain of the guard to take with him forty men, to destroy Nouredin’s house, to burn it to the ground, and to bring Nouredin and the slave to him. A doorkeeper, named Sangiar, who had been a slave of Khacan’s, hearing this order given, slipped out of the king’s apartment, and hastened to warn Nouredin to escape instantly with the beautiful Persian. Then, giving him forty gold pieces, he disappeared before Nouredin had time to thank him.

As soon, then, as the fair Persian had put on her veil they fled together, and had the good fortune to get out of the town without being seen. At the mouth of the Euphrates they found a ship just about to start for Baghdad. They embarked, and immediately the anchor was raised and they set sail.

When the captain of the guard reached Nouredin's house his soldiers burst open the door, but no trace was to be found of Nouredin and his slave, nor could the neighbours give any information about them. When the king heard that they had escaped, he issued a proclamation that a reward of 1,000 gold pieces would be given to whoever would bring him Nouredin and the slave, but that, on the contrary, whoever hid them would be severely punished. Meanwhile Nouredin and the fair Persian had safely reached Baghdad. When the ship had come to an anchor they paid five gold pieces for their passage and went ashore. Never having been in Baghdad before, they did not know where to seek accommodation. Wandering along the banks of the Tigris, they walked by a garden enclosed by a high wall. The gate was shut, but in front of it was an open porch with a sofa on either side. "Here," said Nouredin, "let us stay the night," and lying on the sofas they soon fell asleep.

Now this garden belonged to the Caliph. In the middle of it was a vast pavilion, whose superb house had eighty windows, each window having a light, lit only when the Caliph spent the evening there. Only the door-keeper lived there, an old soldier named Scheih Ibrahim, who had strict orders to be very careful whom he admitted, and never to allow anyone to sit on the sofas by the door. It happened that evening that he had gone out on an errand. When he came back and saw two persons asleep on the sofas he was about to drive them out with blows, but drawing nearer he perceived that they were a handsome young man and beautiful young woman, and decided to awake them by gentler means. Nouredin, on being awake, told the old man that they were strangers, and merely wished to pass the night there. "Come with me," said Scheih Ibrahim, "I will find you something better, and will show you a magnificent garden belonging to me." So saying, the doorkeeper led the way into the Caliph's garden, the beauties of which filled them with wonder and amazement. Nouredin took out two gold pieces, and gave them to

Scheih Ibrahim and said,

”I beg you to get us something to eat that we may feast together.” Being very greedy, Scheih Ibrahim decided to spend only the tenth of the money and to keep the rest for himself. While he was gone Noureddin and the Persian wandered through the gardens and went up the white marble staircase of the pavilion as far as the locked door of the house. On the return of Scheih Ibrahim they begged him to open it, and to allow them to enter and admire the magnificence within. Agreeing, he brought not only the key, but a light, and immediately unlocked the door. Noureddin and the Persian entering were dazzled with the magnificence they saw. The paintings and furniture were of astonishing beauty, and between each window was a silver arm holding a candle.

Scheih Ibrahim spread the table in front of a sofa, and all three ate together. When they had finished eating Noureddin asked the old man to bring them a bottle of wine.

”Heaven forbid,” said Scheih Ibrahim, “that I should drink wine! I have renounced wine forever.”

”You would, however, do us a great service in buying us some,” said Noureddin. “You need not touch it yourself. Take the donkey which is tied to the gate, lead it to the nearest wine shop, and ask some passerby to order two jars of wine. Have them put in the donkey’s saddlebags and return. Here are two pieces of gold for the expenses.”

At sight of the gold, Scheih Ibrahim set off at once to buy the wine. On his return, Noureddin said: “We still need cups to drink from, and fruit, if you can buy us some.” Scheih Ibrahim disappeared again, and soon returned with a table spread with cups of gold and silver, and every sort of beautiful fruit. Then he withdrew, in spite of repeated invitations to remain.

Noureddin and the beautiful Persian, finding the wine excellent, drank, and while drinking they sang. Both had fine voices, and Scheih Ibrahim listened to them with great pleasure, first from a distance, then he drew nearer, and finally put his head in at the door.

Noureddin, seeing him, called to him to come in and keep them company. At first the old man refused, but was persuaded to enter the room, to sit down on the edge of the sofa nearest the door, and at last to draw closer and to seat himself by the beautiful Persian, who urged him to drink her health that at length he gave in, and took the cup she offered.

Now the old man only pretended to renounce wine. He visited wine shops like other people. Having had one cup of wine, he was easily persuaded to take a second cup, and a third, and so on till he no longer knew what he was doing. Till near midnight they continued drinking, laughing, and singing together.

About that time the Persian, seeing that the room was lit by only one miserable candle, asked Scheih Ibrahim to light some of the beautiful candles in the silver arms.

”Light them yourself,” answered the old man, ” You are younger than I, but let five or six be enough.”

She did not stop, however, till she had lit all the eighty, but Scheih Ibrahim was not aware of this, and when, soon after that, Noureddin proposed to have some of the lights lit, he answered:

”You are more capable of lighting them than I, but not more than three.”

Noureddin, , lit all, and opened all the eighty windows.

The Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, at that moment opened a window in

the room of his palace looking on the garden, was surprised to see the pavilion brilliantly lit. Calling the grand-vizier, Giafar, he said to him:

“Vizier, look at the pavilion, and tell me why it is lit up when I am not there.”

When the vizier saw that it was as the Caliph said, he trembled with fear, and immediately invented an excuse.

”Your Majesty,” he said, “I must tell you that four or five days ago Scheih Ibrahim told me that he wished to have an assembly of the ministers of his mosque, and asked permission to hold it in the pavilion. I granted his request, but forgot since to mention it to your Majesty.”

”Giafar,” replied the Caliph, “you have committed three faults; first, in giving the permission; second, in not mentioning it to me, and third, in not investigating the matter more closely. For punishment you must spend the rest of the night with me with these worthy people. While I dress myself as an ordinary citizen, go and disguise yourself, and then come with me.”

When they reached the garden gate they found it open, to the great indignation of the Caliph. The door of the pavilion being also open, he went softly upstairs, and looked in at the half-closed door of the saloon. Great was his surprise to see Scheih Ibrahim, drinking and singing with a young man and a beautiful lady. The Caliph, before losing his temper, decided to watch and see who the people were and what they did.

Presently Scheih Ibrahim asked the beautiful Persian if anything could complete her enjoyment of the evening.

"If only," she said, "I had an instrument upon which I might play."

Scheih Ibrahim immediately took a lute from a cupboard and gave it to the Persian, who began to play on it, singing with such skill that the Caliph was enchanted. When she stopped he went softly downstairs and said to the vizier:

"Never have I heard a finer voice, nor the lute better played. I am determined to go in and make her play to me."

"Your Majesty," said the vizier, "if Scheih Ibrahim recognizes you he will die of fright."

"I should be sorry for that," answered the Caliph, "I am going to take steps to prevent it. Wait here till I return."

Now the Caliph had caused a bend in the river to form a lake in his garden. There the finest fish in the Tigris were to be found, but fishing was strictly forbidden. It happened that night, however, that a fisherman had taken advantage of the gate being open to go in and cast his nets. He was just about to draw them when he saw the Caliph approaching. Recognizing him at once in spite of his disguise, he threw himself at his feet begging forgiveness.

"Fear nothing," said the Caliph, "only rise up and pull in your nets."

The fisherman did as he was told, and produced five or six fine fish, of which the Caliph took the two largest. Then he told the fisherman to change clothes with him, and in a few minutes the Caliph was transformed into a fisherman, even to the shoes and the turban. Taking the two fish in his hand, he returned to the vizier, who did not recognize him at first. Leaving the vizier at the foot of the stairs, the Caliph went up and knocked at the door of the room. Nouredin opened it, and the Caliph, standing there, said:

”Scheih Ibrahim, I am the fisher Kerim. Seeing that you are feasting with your friends, I bring you these fish.”

Noureddin and the Persian said that when the fishes were properly cooked and prepared they would gladly eat them. The Caliph then returned to the vizier, and they set to work in Scheih Ibrahim’s house to cook the fish, of which they made so wonderful a dish that Noureddin and the fair Persian ate it hungrily. When they had finished Noureddin took thirty gold pieces (all that remained of what Sangiar had given him) and presented them to the Caliph, who, thanking him, asked as a further favour if the lady would play him one piece on the lute. The Persian gladly agreed, and sang and played so that the Caliph was delighted.

Noureddin, always giving to others whatever they admired, said, “Fisherman, as she pleases you so much, take her; she is yours.”

The fair Persian, astounded that he should wish to part from her, took her lute, and with tears in her eyes sang a sad song.

The Caliph said to him, “Sir, I see that this fair lady is your slave. Please tell me your story.”

Noureddin willingly granted this request, and told everything from the purchase of the slave to the present moment.

”And where do you go now?” asked the Caliph.

”Wherever the hand of God leads me,” said Noureddin.

”Then, if you will listen to me,” said the Caliph, “you will immediately return to Basra. I will give you a letter to the king, which will ensure you forgiveness from him.”

”It is unheard of,” said Noureddin, “that a fisherman should

communicate with a king.”

”Don’t be surprised,” answered the Caliph; “We studied together, and have always remained the best of friends, though fortune, while making him a king, left me a humble fisherman.”

The Caliph then took a sheet of paper, and wrote the following letter, at the top of which he put in very small characters this code to show that he must be obeyed: “In the name of the Most Merciful God.

”Letter of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid to the King of Basra.

”Haroun-al-Raschid, son of Mahdi, sends this letter to Mohammed Zinebi, his cousin. As soon as Nouredin, son of the Vizier Khacan, bearer of this letter, has given it to you and you have read it, take off your royal cloak, put it on his shoulders, and seat him in your place without fail. Farewell.”

The Caliph then gave this letter to Nouredin, who immediately set off, with only what little money he possessed. The beautiful Persian, deeply saddened at his departure, sank on a sofa bathed in tears.

When Nouredin had left the room, Scheih Ibrahim, who had kept silent, said,”Kerim, for two miserable fish you have received a purse and a slave. I tell you I will take the slave, and as for the purse, if it contains silver you may keep one piece .If it is gold then I will take all and give you what copper pieces I have in my purse.”

Now here it must be told that when the Caliph went upstairs with the plate of fish he ordered the vizier to hasten to the palace and bring back four slaves with a change of clothes, who should wait outside the pavilion till the Caliph should clap his hands.

Still pretending to be the fisherman, the Caliph answered,”Scheih Ibrahim, whatever is in the purse I will share equally with you, but as

to the slave I will keep her for myself. If you do not agree to these conditions you shall have nothing.”

The old man, furious at this, took a cup and threw it at the Caliph, who easily avoided something thrown from the hand of a drunken man. It hit against the wall, and broke into a thousand pieces. Scheih Ibrahim, still more enraged, and then went out to fetch a stick. The Caliph at that moment clapped his hands and the vizier and the four slaves entering took off the fisherman’s dress and put on him what they had brought.

When Scheih Ibrahim returned, a thick stick in his hand, the Caliph was seated on his throne, and nothing remained of the fisherman but his clothes in the middle of the room. Throwing himself on the ground at the Caliph’s feet, he said, “Your Majesty, your miserable slave has offended you, and begs forgiveness.”

The Caliph came down from his throne, and said, “Rise, I forgive you.” Then turning to the Persian he said: “Fair lady, now you know who I am, learn also that I have sent Noureddin to Balsora to be king, and as soon as all necessary preparations are made I will send you there to be queen. Meanwhile I will give you an apartment in my palace, where you will be treated with all honour.”

At this the beautiful Persian took courage, and the Caliph was as good as his word, putting her into the care of his wife Zobeida.

Noureddin hurried on his journey to Basra, and on his arrival there went straight to the palace of the king, and demanded an audience. It was immediately granted, and holding the letter high above his head he forced his way through the crowd. While the king read the letter he changed colour. He would instantly have carried out the Caliph’s order, but first he showed the letter to Saouy. Pretending that he wished to read it a second time, Saouy turned aside as if to seek a

better light. Unseen by anyone he tore off the code from the top of the letter, put it to his mouth, and swallowed it. Then, turning to the king, he said:

”Your majesty has no need to obey this letter. The writing is indeed that of the Caliph, but the code is absent. Leave all to me, and I will take care of it.”

The king not only listened to the advice of Saouy, but gave Nouredin to him. Such a severe beating was first given to him, that he was left more dead than alive. Then Saouy threw him into the darkest and deepest dungeon, and fed him only on bread and water. After ten days Saouy decided to put an end to Nouredin’s life, but dared not without the king’s permission. To do this, he loaded several of his own slaves with rich gifts, and presented himself at their head to the king, saying that they were from the new king on his coronation.

”What!” said the king; “is that wretch still alive? Go and behead him at once. I order you.”

”Sire,” said Saouy, “I thank your Majesty. I would further beg, as Nouredin publicly attacked me, that the execution might be in front of the palace, and that it might be proclaimed throughout the city, so that everyone may know of it.”

The king granted these requests, and the announcement caused great grief, for the memory of Nouredin’s father was still fresh in the hearts of his people. Saouy, accompanied by twenty of his own slaves, went to the prison to fetch Nouredin, who he placed on a donkey without a saddle. Arriving at the palace, Saouy went in to the king, leaving Nouredin in the square, surrounded not only by Saouy’s slaves but by the royal guard, who had great difficulty in preventing the people from rushing in and rescuing Nouredin. Saouy, who witnessed the anger of the people from the windows of the king’s

chambers, called to the executioner to strike at once. The king, however, ordered him to delay. Not only was he jealous of Saouy's interference, but he had another reason. A troop of horsemen was seen at that moment riding at full gallop towards the square. Saouy suspected who they might be, and urged the king to give the signal for the execution without delay, but this, the king refused to do till he knew who the horsemen were.

Now, they were the vizier Giafar and his officers arriving at full speed from Baghdad.. Hearing a beautiful voice one day in the women's part of the palace moaning, he was informed that it was the voice of the Fair Persian, and he suddenly remembered Nouredin. He ordered Giafar, to make for Basra at top speed and if Nouredin were dead, to hang Saouy, if he were still alive, to bring him at once to Baghdad along with the king and Saouy.

Giafar rode at full speed through the square, and alighted at the steps of the palace, where the king came to greet him. The vizier's first question was whether Nouredin was still alive. The king replied that he was, and he was immediately brought forward, though bound hand and foot. By the vizier's orders he was untied and Saouy was tied up with the same ropes. The next day Giafar returned to Baghdad, taking with him the king, Saouy, and Nouredin.

When the Caliph heard what treatment Nouredin had received, he authorized him to behead Saouy with his own hands, but he declined to take the life of his enemy, who was handed over to the executioner. The Caliph also asked Nouredin to reign over Basra, but this, too, he declined, saying that after what had passed there he preferred never to return, but to enter the service of the Caliph. He became one of his most intimate courtiers, and lived long in great happiness with the fair Persian. As to the king, the Caliph contented himself with sending him back to Basra, with the recommendation to be more careful in

future in the choice of his vizier.

Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp

There once lived a poor tailor, who had a son called Aladdin, a lazy boy who would do nothing but play all day long in the streets with little lazy boys like himself. However, in spite of his mother's pleading, Aladdin did not change. One day, when he was playing in the streets as usual, a stranger asked him his age, and if he were the son of Mustapha the tailor.

"I am, sir," replied Aladdin, "But he died a long while ago."

On hearing this, the stranger, who was a famous African magician, said, "I am your uncle, and knew you from your likeness to my brother. Go to your mother and tell her I am coming."

Aladdin ran home, and told his mother of his newly found uncle.

"Indeed, child," she said, "your father had a brother, but I always thought he was dead."

However, she prepared supper, and told Aladdin to find his uncle, who came with wine and fruit. He told Aladdin's mother not to be surprised at not having seen him before, as he had been out of the country for forty years. He then turned to Aladdin, and asked him his trade, at which the boy hung his head, while his mother burst into tears. On learning that Aladdin was lazy and would learn no trade, he offered to open a shop for him and stock it with merchandise. The next day he bought Aladdin a fine suit of clothes, and took him all over the city, showing him the sights, and brought him home at nightfall to his mother, who was overjoyed to see her son looking so fine.

The following day the magician led Aladdin into some beautiful

gardens a long way outside the city gates. They sat down by a fountain, and the magician pulled a cake from his bag, which he divided between them. They then journeyed onwards till they almost reached the mountains. Aladdin was so tired that he begged to go back, but the magician persuaded him with pleasant stories, and led him on.

At last they came to two mountains divided by a narrow valley.

“We will go no farther,” said the false uncle. “I will show you something wonderful. You gather up sticks while I start a fire.”

When it was lit the magician threw on it a powder he had with him, and at the same time saying some magical words. The earth trembled a little and opened in front of them, revealing a square flat stone with a brass ring in the middle to raise it by. Aladdin tried to run away, but the magician caught him and gave him a blow that knocked him down.

“What have I done, uncle?” he said sadly and the magician said more kindly, “Fear nothing, but obey me. Beneath this stone lies a treasure which is to be yours, and no one else may touch it, so you must do exactly as I tell you.”

At the word treasure, Aladdin forgot his fears, and grasped the ring as he was told. The stone came up quite easily and some steps appeared.

“Go down,” said the magician, “At the foot of those steps you will find an open door leading into three large halls. Go through them without touching anything, or you will die instantly. These halls lead into a garden of fine fruit trees. Walk on till you come to a lighted lamp. Pour out the oil it contains and bring it to me.”

He drew a ring from his finger and gave it to Aladdin, wishing him

good luck.

Aladdin found everything as the magician had said, gathered some fruit off the trees, and, having got the lamp, arrived at the mouth of the cave. The magician cried out in a great hurry.

“Quickly give me the lamp.” This Aladdin refused to do until he was out of the cave. The magician flew into a terrible rage and throwing some more powder on the fire, he said something, and the stone rolled back into its place.

The magician left Persia forever, which showed that he was no uncle of Aladdin’s, but a cunning magician who had read in his magic books of a wonderful lamp, which would make him the most powerful man in the world. Though he alone knew where to find it, he could only receive it from the hand of another. He had picked out the foolish Aladdin for this purpose, intending to get the lamp and kill him afterwards.

For two days Aladdin remained in the dark, crying. At last he clasped his hands in prayer, and in so doing rubbed the ring, which the magician had forgotten to take from him. Immediately an enormous and frightful genie rose out of the earth, saying:

”What do you want with me? I am the Slave of the Ring, and will obey you in all things.”

Aladdin fearlessly replied: “Help me escape!” and at once the earth opened, and he found himself outside. He went home and told his mother what had happened, and showed her the lamp and the fruits he had gathered in the garden, which were in reality precious stones. He then asked for some food.

”Alas! child,” she said, “I have nothing in the house, but I have spun a

little cotton and will go and sell it.”

Aladdin told her keep her cotton, for he would sell the lamp instead. As it was very dirty she began to rub it, so that it might fetch a higher price. Instantly a hideous genie appeared, and asked what she wanted. She fainted, but Aladdin, snatching the lamp, said boldly:

”Fetch me something to eat!”

The genie returned with a silver bowl, twelve silver plates containing delicious foods. Aladdin’s mother, when she awoke, said, ” Where does this splendid feast come from?”

“Don’t ask, just eat,” replied Aladdin.

So they sat at breakfast till it was dinner-time, and Aladdin told his mother about the lamp. She begged him to sell it, and have nothing to do with devils.

”No,” said Aladdin, “We will use it and the ring too, which I shall always wear on my finger.” When they had eaten all the genie had brought, Aladdin sold one of the silver plates, and so on till none were left. He then asked the genie for more, and was given another set of plates, and so they lived for many years.

One day Aladdin heard an order from the Sultan proclaiming that everyone was to stay at home and close his windows and curtains while the princess, his daughter, went to and from the bath. Aladdin was seized by a desire to see her face, which was very difficult, as she always went veiled. He hid himself behind the door of the bath, and peeped through a crack. The princess lifted her veil as she went in, and looked so beautiful that Aladdin fell in love with her at first sight. He went home so changed that his mother was frightened. He told her he loved the princess so deeply that he could not live without her, and

meant to ask for her hand in marriage. His mother, on hearing this, burst out laughing, but Aladdin at last persuaded her to go before the Sultan and carry out his request. She fetched a napkin and laid in it the magic fruits from the enchanted garden, which sparkled and shone like the most beautiful jewels. She took these with her to please the Sultan,. The grand-vizier and the lords of council had just gone in as she entered the hall and placed herself in front of the Sultan. He, however, took no notice of her. She went every day for a week, and stood in the same place.

When the council broke up on the sixth day the Sultan said to his vizier: “I see a certain woman in the audience chamber every day carrying something in a napkin. Call her next time so I may find out what she wants.”

The next day, at a sign from the vizier, she went up to the foot of the throne, and remained kneeling till the Sultan said to her: “Rise, good woman, and tell me what you want.”

She hesitated, so the Sultan sent away all but the vizier, and told her speak freely, promising to forgive her beforehand for anything she might say. She then told him of her son’s love for the princess.

”I begged him to forget her,” she said, “But in vain. He threatened to take some terrible action if I refused to go and ask your Majesty for the hand of the princess. Now I beg you to forgive not only me, but also my son Aladdin.”

The Sultan asked her kindly what she had in the napkin, whereupon she unfolded the jewels and presented them to him.

He was thunderstruck, and turning to the vizier said: “What do you say? Shouldn’t I give the princess in marriage to one who values her at such a price?”

The vizier, who wanted her for his own son, begged the Sultan to withhold her for three months, in which time he hoped his son would be able to make him a richer present. The Sultan granted this, and told Aladdin's mother that, though he agreed to the marriage, she must not appear before him again for three months.

Aladdin waited patiently for nearly three months, but after two months had passed his mother, going into the city to buy oil, found everyone rejoicing, and asked what was going on.

"Do you not know," was the answer, "that the son of the grand-vizier is to marry the Sultan's daughter tonight?"

Breathless, she ran and told Aladdin, who was shocked at first, but presently thought of the lamp. He rubbed it, and the genie appeared, saying, "What is your will?"

Aladdin replied, "The Sultan, as you know, has broken his promise to me, and the vizier's son is to have the princess. My command is that tonight you bring here, the bride and bridegroom."

"Master, I obey," said the genie.

Aladdin then went to his room, where, sure enough at midnight the genie transported the bed containing the vizier's son and the princess.

"Take this newly married man," he said, "and put him outside in the cold, and return at daybreak."

The genie took the vizier's son out of bed, leaving Aladdin with the princess.

"Fear nothing," Aladdin said to her; "You are my wife, promised to me by your father, and no harm shall come to you."

The princess was too frightened to speak, and passed the most miserable night of her life, while Aladdin lay down beside her and slept soundly. In the morning the genie fetched in the shivering bridegroom, laid him in his place, and transported the bed back to the palace.

Presently the Sultan came to wish his daughter good morning. The unhappy vizier's son jumped up and hid himself, while the princess would not say a word, and was very sorrowful.

The Sultan sent her mother to her, who said: "Why, child, won't you speak to your father? What has happened?"

The princess sighed deeply, and at last told her mother how, during the night, the bed had been carried into some strange house, and what had passed there. Her mother did not believe her in the least, and told her it was a bad dream.

The following night exactly the same thing happened, and next morning, on the princess's refusing to speak, the Sultan threatened to cut off her head. She then told all, asking him to ask the vizier's son if it were true. The Sultan told the vizier to ask his son, who admitted the truth, adding that, dearly as he loved the princess, he would rather die than go through another such fearful night, and wished to be separated from her. His wish was granted.

When the three months were over, Aladdin sent his mother to remind the Sultan of his promise. She stood in the same place as before, and the Sultan, who had forgotten Aladdin, at once remembered him, and sent for her. On seeing how poor she was the Sultan felt unwilling to keep his word, and asked the vizier's advice, who told him to set so high a value on the princess that no man living could afford it.

The Sultan then turned to Aladdin's mother, saying: "Good woman, a

Sultan must remember his promises, and I will remember mine, but your son must first send me forty basins of gold filled with jewels, carried by forty black slaves, led by as many white ones, splendidly dressed. Tell him that I await his answer.” The mother of Aladdin bowed low and went home, thinking all was lost.

She gave Aladdin the message, adding, “He may wait long enough for your answer!”

”Not so long, mother, as you think,” her son replied “I would do a great deal more than that for the princess.”

He summoned the genie, and in a few moments the eighty slaves arrived, and filled up the small house and garden.

Aladdin made them set out to the palace, followed by his mother. They were so richly dressed, with such splendid jewels, that everyone crowded to see them and the basins of gold they carried on their heads.

They entered the palace, and, after kneeling before the Sultan, stood in a half-circle round the throne with their arms crossed, while Aladdin’s mother presented them to the Sultan.

He hesitated no longer, but said, “Good woman, return and tell your son that I wait for him with open arms.”

She lost no time in telling Aladdin, telling him to hurry. But Aladdin first called the genie.

”I want a scented bath,” he said, “a richly embroidered suit, a horse more beautiful than the Sultan’s, and twenty slaves to attend me. Besides this, six slaves, beautifully dressed, to wait on my mother; and lastly, ten thousand pieces of gold in ten purses.”

No sooner said than done. Aladdin mounted his horse and passed through the streets, the slaves scattering gold as they went. Those who had played with him in his childhood couldn't recognize him, for he had grown so handsome.

When the Sultan saw him he came down from his throne and led him into a hall where a feast was spread, intending to marry him to the princess that very day.

But Aladdin refused, saying, "I must build a palace fit for her," and left.

Once home he said to the genie, "Build me a palace of the finest marble, set with rubies, emeralds, and other precious stones. In the middle you shall build me a large hall with a dome, its four walls of gold and silver, each side having six windows, all except one, which is to be left unfinished, must be set with diamonds and rubies. There must be stables and horses and grooms and slaves. Go and see to it!"

The palace was finished by the next day, and the genie carried him there and showed him all his orders carried out, even to the laying of a velvet carpet from Aladdin's palace to the Sultan's. Aladdin's mother then dressed herself carefully, and walked to the palace with her slaves, while he followed her on horseback. The Sultan sent musicians with trumpets and cymbals to meet them, so that the air resounded with music and cheers. She was taken to the princess, who greeted her and treated her with great honour. At night the princess said goodbye to her father, and set out on the carpet for Aladdin's palace, with his mother at her side, and followed by the hundred slaves. She was charmed at the sight of Aladdin, who ran to receive her.

She told him that, having seen him, she willingly obeyed her father in this matter. After the wedding had taken place Aladdin led her into

the hall, where a feast was spread, and she dined with him, after which they danced till midnight.

The next day Aladdin invited the Sultan to see the palace. On entering the hall with the twenty four windows, with their rubies, diamonds, and emeralds, he cried, "It is a wonder! There is only one thing that surprises me. Was it by accident that one window was left unfinished?"

"No, sir," replied Aladdin. "I wished your Majesty to have the glory of finishing this palace."

The Sultan was pleased, and sent for the best jewelers in the city. He showed them the unfinished window, and ordered them to make it like the others.

"Sir," replied their spokesman, "we cannot find enough jewels."

The Sultan had his own fetched, which they soon used, but there were still not enough. Aladdin, knowing that their task was in vain, told them to undo their work and carry the jewels back, and the genie finished the window at his command. The Sultan was surprised to receive his jewels again and visited Aladdin, who showed him the window finished. The Sultan embraced him, and the envious vizier meanwhile hinting that it was the work of enchantment.

Aladdin had won the hearts of the people by his gentle manner. He was made captain of the Sultan's armies, and won several battles for him, but remained modest and courteous as before, and lived in peace for several years.

But far away in Africa the magician remembered Aladdin, and by his magic arts discovered that Aladdin, instead of dying miserably in the cave, had escaped, and had married a princess, with whom he was

living in great honour and wealth. He knew that the poor tailor's son could only have done this by means of the lamp, and traveled night and day till he reached the capital, determined to ruin Aladdin. As he passed through the town he heard people talking everywhere about a marvelous palace.

"Forgive my ignorance," he asked, "What is this palace you speak of?"

"Have you not heard of Prince Aladdin's palace," was the reply, "The greatest wonder of the world? I will show you if you want to see it."

The magician thanked him, and having seen the palace knew that it had been built by the genie of the lamp, and became half mad with rage. He was determined to get hold of the lamp, and again make Aladdin poor.

Unluckily, Aladdin had gone hunting for eight days, which gave the magician plenty of time. He bought a dozen copper lamps, put them into a basket, and went to the palace, crying, "New lamps for old!" followed by a jeering crowd.

The princess, sitting in the hall of twenty four windows, sent a slave to find out what the noise was about, who came back laughing, so that the princess scolded her.

"Madam," replied the slave, "who can help laughing to see an old fool offering to exchange fine new lamps for old ones?"

Another slave, hearing this, said, "There is an old one on the shelf there which he can have."

Now this was the magic lamp, which Aladdin had left there, as he could not take it out hunting with him. The princess, not knowing its value, laughingly told the slave to take it and make the exchange.

She went and said to the magician: “Give me a new lamp for this.”

He snatched it and told the slave take her choice. Little he cared, and went out of the city gates to a lonely place, where he remained till nightfall, when he pulled out the lamp and rubbed it. The genie appeared, and at the magician’s command carried him, together with the palace and the princess in it, to a lonely place in Africa.

The next morning the Sultan looked out of the window towards Aladdin’s palace and rubbed his eyes, for it was gone. He sent for the vizier, and asked what had become of the palace. The vizier looked out too, and was lost in astonishment. He again put it down to enchantment, and this time the Sultan believed him, and sent thirty men on horseback to fetch Aladdin in chains. They met him riding home, tied him, and forced him to go with them on foot. The people however, who loved him, followed to see that he came to no harm. He was carried before the Sultan, who ordered the executioner to cut off his head. The executioner made Aladdin kneel down, covered his eyes, and raised his scimitar to strike.

At that instant the vizier, who saw that the crowd had forced their way into the courtyard and were climbing the walls to rescue Aladdin, called to the executioner to stop. The people, indeed, looked so threatening that the Sultan gave way and ordered Aladdin to be untied, and forgave him in front of the crowd.

Aladdin now begged to know what he had done.

”False wretch!” said the Sultan, “Come here,” and showed him from the window the place where his palace had stood.

Aladdin was so amazed that he could not say a word.

”Where are my palace and my daughter?” demanded the Sultan. “For

the palace I am not so deeply worried, but my daughter I must have, and you must find her or lose your head.”

Aladdin begged for forty days in which to find her, promising if he failed to return and suffer death at the Sultan’s pleasure. His wish was granted, and he went forth sadly from the Sultan’s presence. For three days he wandered about like a madman, asking everyone what had become of his palace, but they only laughed and pitied him. He came to the banks of a river, and knelt down to say his prayers before throwing himself in. In so doing he rubbed the magic ring he still wore.

The genie he had seen in the cave appeared, and asked his will.

”Save my life, genie,” said Aladdin, “And bring my palace back.”

”That is not in my power,” said the genie; “I am only the slave of the ring. You must ask the slave of the lamp.”

”Even so,” said Aladdin “But you can take me to the palace, and set me down under my dear wife’s window.” He at once found himself in Africa, under the window of the princess, and fell asleep out of sheer exhaustion.

He was awakened by the singing of the birds, and his heart was lighter. He saw plainly that all his misfortunes were because of the loss of the lamp, and wondered who had robbed him of it.

That morning the princess rose earlier than she had done since she had been carried into Africa by the magician, whose company she was forced to put up with once a day. She, however, treated him so harshly that he dared not live there. As she was dressing, one of her women looked out and saw Aladdin. The princess ran and opened the window, and at the noise she made Aladdin looked up. She called to him to

come to her, and great was the joy of these lovers at seeing each other again.

After he had kissed her Aladdin said, "I beg of you, Princess, in God's name, before we speak of anything else, for your own sake and mine, tell me what has become of an old lamp I left on the shelf in the hall of twenty four windows, when I went hunting."

"Alas!" she said "I caused our sorrows," and told him of the exchange of the lamp.

"Now I know," cried Aladdin, "that we have to thank the African magician for this! Where is the lamp?"

"He carries it about with him," said the princess, "I know, for he pulled it out of his robe to show me. He wishes me marry him, saying that you were beheaded by my father's command. He always speaks badly of you, but I only reply by my tears. If I continue, I am sure that he will use violence."

Aladdin comforted her, and left her for a while. He changed clothes with the first person he met in the town, and having bought a certain powder returned to the princess, who let him in by a little side door.

"Put on your most beautiful dress," he said to her, "and receive the magician with smiles, leading him to believe that you have forgotten me. Invite him to eat with you, and say you wish to taste the wine of his country. He will go for some, and while he is gone I will tell you what to do."

She listened carefully to Aladdin, and when he left her dressed herself gaily for the first time since she left her country. She put on a gown and headdress of diamonds, and seeing in a glass that she looked more beautiful than ever, received the magician, saying to his great

amazement, “I have made up my mind that Aladdin is dead, and that all my tears will not bring him back to me, so I have decided to mourn no more, and have therefore invited you to dine with me. But I am tired of the wines of my country, and would like to taste those of Africa.”

The magician went to his cellar, and the princess put the powder Aladdin had given her in her cup. When he returned she asked him to drink to her health with the wine of Africa, handing him her cup in exchange for his as a sign she had accepted him.

Before drinking the magician made her a speech in praise of her beauty, but the princess cut him short saying, “Let me drink first, and you shall say what you like afterwards.” She set her cup to her lips and kept it there, while the magician drank and fell back dead.

The princess then opened the door to Aladdin, and flung her arms round his neck, but Aladdin put her away, telling her to leave him, as he had more to do. He then went to the dead magician, took the lamp out of his vest, and told the genie to carry the palace and all in it back home. This was done, and the princess in her chamber was at home again.

The Sultan, who was sitting in his room, mourning for his lost daughter, happened to look up, and rubbed his eyes, for there stood the palace as before! He quickly went there and Aladdin received him in the hall of the twenty four windows, with the princess at his side. Aladdin told him what had happened, and showed him the dead body of the magician, so he would believe. A ten days’ feast was proclaimed, and it seemed as if Aladdin might now live the rest of his life in peace; but it was not to be.

The African magician had a younger brother, who was, if possible, more wicked and more cunning than himself. He traveled to avenge

his brother's death, and went to visit a famous holy woman called Fatima, thinking she might be of use to him. He entered her room and held a dagger to her throat, telling her to rise and do what he said or she would die. He changed clothes with her, coloured his face like hers, put on her veil and murdered her, so that she might tell no tales. Then he went towards the palace of Aladdin, and all the people thinking he was the holy woman, gathered round him, kissing his hands and begging his blessing. When he got to the palace there was such a noise going on round him that the princess told her slave look out of the window and ask what was the matter. The slave said it was the holy woman, curing people by her touch of their illnesses, so the princess, who had long wanted to see Fatima, sent for her. On coming to the princess the magician offered a prayer for her health and happiness. When he had finished the princess made him sit by her, and begged him to stay with her always. The false Fatima, who wished for nothing better, agreed, but kept his veil down for fear of being discovered. The princess showed him the hall, and asked him what he thought of it.

"It is truly beautiful," said the false Fatima. "In my mind it wants just one thing."

"And what is that?" said the princess.

"If only a roc's egg," he replied, "were hung up from the middle of this dome, it would be the wonder of the world."

After this the princess could think of nothing but a roc's egg, and when Aladdin returned from hunting he found her in a very bad mood. He begged to know what was wrong, and she told him that all her pleasure in the hall was spoilt because she wanted a roc's egg hanging from the dome.

"If that is all," replied Aladdin, "you shall soon be happy."

He left her and rubbed the lamp, and when the genie appeared commanded him to bring a roc's egg. The genie gave such a loud and terrible shriek that the hall shook.

"Wretch!" he cried, "Is it not enough that I have done everything for you, but you must command me to bring my master and hang him up in the midst of this dome? You and your wife and your palace deserve to be burnt to ashes; but this request does not come from you, but from the brother of the African magician whom you destroyed. He is now in your palace disguised as the holy woman whom he murdered. He put that wish into your wife's head. Take care of yourself, for he means to kill you." So saying, the genie disappeared.

Aladdin went back to the princess, saying his head ached, and requesting that the holy Fatima should be fetched to lay her hands on it. But when the magician came near, Aladdin, seizing his dagger, stabbed him in the heart.

"What have you done?" cried the princess. "You have killed the holy woman!"

"Not so," replied Aladdin, "but a wicked magician," and told her of how she had been deceived.

After this, Aladdin and his wife lived in peace. He succeeded the Sultan when he died, and reigned for many years, leaving behind him a long line of kings.

The Adventures of Haroun-al-Raschid, Caliph of Bagdad

The Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid sat in his palace, wondering if there was anything left in the world that could possibly give him a few hours' amusement, when Giafar the grand-vizier, his old friend, suddenly appeared before him. Bowing low, he waited, as was his duty, till his master spoke. However, Haroun-al-Raschid merely turned his head and looked at him, and sank back into his throne looking very bored.

Now Giafar had something of importance to say to the Caliph, so with another low bow in front of the throne, he began to speak.

“Your Majesty,” said he, “I wish to remind your Highness that you have decided to secretly observe for yourself the manner in which justice is done and order is kept throughout the city. This is the day you have set to devote to this duty in which you may find some distraction from the boredom from which you suffer.”

”You are right,” returned the Caliph, “I had forgotten all about it. Go and change your coat, and I will change mine.”

A few moments later they reentered the hall, disguised as foreign merchants, and passed through a secret door, out into the open country. Here they turned towards the Euphrates river, and crossing the river in a small boat, walked through that part of the town which lay along the further bank, without seeing anything worth mentioning. Much pleased with the peace and good order of the city, the Caliph and his vizier made their way to a bridge, which led straight back to the palace, and had already crossed it, when they were stopped by an old and blind man, who was begging.

The Caliph gave him a coin, and was passing on, but the blind man seized his hand, and held him fast.

”Kind person,” he said, “Whoever you may be do me another favour. Strike me, I beg of you, one blow. I deserve it, and even a more severe punishment.”

The Caliph, much surprised at this request, replied gently: “My good man, what you ask is impossible. Of what use would my kindness be if I treated you so badly?” And as he spoke he tried to loosen the grasp of the blind beggar.

”My lord,” answered the man, “pardon my boldness. Take back your money, or give me the blow which I desire. I have made a vow that I will receive nothing without also receiving punishment, and if you knew everything, you would feel that the punishment is not a tenth part of what I deserve.”

Moved by these words, and perhaps still more by the fact that he had other business to take care of, the Caliph gave in, and struck him lightly on the shoulder. Then he continued on the road, followed by the blessing of the blind man. When they were out of earshot, he said to the vizier, “There must be something very odd to make that man act so. I should like to find out what is the reason. Go back to him, tell him who I am, and order him to come to the palace tomorrow.”

So the grand-vizier went back to the bridge, gave the blind beggar first a coin and then a blow, delivered the Caliph’s message, and then rejoined his master.

They passed on towards the palace, but walking through a square, they came upon a crowd watching a young and well-dressed man who was urging a horse at full speed round the open space, using at the same time his spurs and whip so unmercifully that the animal was all

covered with blood. The Caliph, astonished at this, inquired of a passer-by what it all meant, but no one could tell him anything, except that every day at the same hour the same thing took place.

Still wondering, he passed on, and for the moment had to content himself with telling the vizier to command the horseman also to appear before him at the same time as the blind man.

The next day, the Caliph entered the hall, and was followed by the vizier bringing with him the two men of whom we have spoken, and a third, with whom we have nothing to do. They all bowed themselves low before the throne and then the Caliph told them to rise, and asked the blind man his name.

”Baba-Abdalla, your Highness,” said he.

”Baba-Abdalla,” returned the Caliph, “your way of begging yesterday seemed to me so strange, that I almost commanded you to stop causing such a public scandal. But I have sent for you to inquire what the reason for your curious vow was. When I know the reason I shall be able to judge whether you can be permitted to continue to practise it, for I cannot help thinking that it sets a very bad example to others. Tell me therefore the whole truth, and conceal nothing.”

These words troubled the heart of Baba-Abdalla, who kneeled himself at the feet of the Caliph. Then rising, he answered: “Your Majesty, I beg your pardon humbly, for my asking your Highness to do an action which appears to be without any meaning. No doubt, in the eyes of men, it has none; but I look on it as a small punishment for a fearful sin of which I have been guilty, and if your Highness will listen to my tale, you will see that no punishment is sufficient for the crime.”

The Story of the Blind Baba-Abdalla

I was born, Your Majesty, in Baghdad, and was left an orphan when I was a very young man, for my parents died within a few days of each other. I had inherited from them a small fortune, which I worked hard night and day to increase, till at last I found myself the owner of eighty camels. These I hired out to traveling merchants, whom I frequently accompanied on their various journeys, and always returned with large profits.

One day I was coming back from Basra, where I had taken a supply of goods, intended for India, and stopped at noon in a lonely place, which had good grass for my camels. I was resting in the shade under a tree, when a holy man, going on foot towards Basra, sat down by my side. I asked where he had come from and where he was going. We soon made friends, and after we had asked each other the usual questions, we produced the food we had with us, and ate together.

While we were eating, the holy man happened to mention that in a place only a little way off from where we were sitting, there was hidden a treasure so great that if my eighty camels were loaded till they could carry no more, the hiding place would seem as full as if it had never been touched.

At this news I became excited with joy and greed, and I exclaimed, “Good man, I see plainly that the riches of this world are nothing to you, therefore what use is the knowledge of this treasure to you? Alone and on foot, you could carry away a mere handful. But tell me where it is, and I will load my eighty camels with it, and give you one of them as a sign of my gratitude.”

Certainly my offer does not sound very generous, but it was great to me, for at his words a wave of greed had swept over my heart.

The holy man saw quite well what I was thinking, but he did not show what he thought of my suggestion.

”My brother,” he answered quietly, “you know as well as I do, that you are behaving unfairly. I could have kept my secret and the treasure for myself. But the fact that I have told you of its existence shows that I had confidence in you, and that I hoped to earn your gratitude for ever, by making your fortune as well as mine. But before I reveal to you the secret of the treasure, you must swear that, after we have loaded the camels with as much as they can carry, you will give half to me, and let us go our own ways. I think you will see that this is fair, for if you present me with forty camels, I on my side will give you the means of buying a thousand more.”

I could not of course deny that what the holy man said was perfectly reasonable, but, in spite of that, the thought that the man would be as rich as I was unbearable to me. Still there was no use in discussing the matter, and I had to accept his conditions or regret to the end of my life the loss of great wealth. So I collected my camels and we set out together. After walking some time, we reached what looked like a valley, but with such a narrow entrance that my camels could only pass one by one. The little valley was between two mountains, whose sides were formed of straight cliffs, which no human being could climb.

When we were exactly between these mountains the holy man stopped.

”Make your camels lie down in this open space,” he said, “so that we can easily load them, and then we will go to the treasure.”

I did what I was told, and rejoined the holy man, whom I found trying to start a fire out of some dry wood. As soon as it was alight, he threw on it a handful of perfumes, and pronounced a few words that I did

not understand, and immediately a thick column of smoke rose high into the air. He separated the smoke into two columns, and then I saw a rock, which stood like a pillar between the two mountains, slowly open, and a splendid palace appear within.

But, Your Majesty, the love of gold had taken such possession of my heart, that I could not even stop to examine the riches, but fell upon the first pile of gold within my reach and began to heap it into a sack that I had brought with me.

The holy man also set to work, but I soon noticed that he only collected precious stones, and I felt I should be wise to follow his example. At length the camels were loaded with as much as they could carry, and nothing remained but to seal up the treasure, and go our ways.

Before, however, this was done, the holy man went up to a great golden vase, beautifully decorated, and took from it a small wooden box, which he hid in his robe, merely saying that it contained a special kind of ointment. Then he once more started the fire, threw on the perfume, and murmured the unknown spell, and the rock closed, and stood whole as before.

The next thing was to divide the camels, , after which we each took our own and marched out of the valley, till we reached the place in the high road where the road split, and then we parted, the holy man going towards Basra, and I to Baghdad. We embraced each other, and I expressed my gratitude for the honour he had done me, and having said a fond farewell we turned our backs, and hurried after our camels.

I had hardly come up with mine when envy filled my soul. “What does a holy man want with riches like that?” I said to myself. “He alone has the secret of the treasure, and can always get as much as he

wants,” and I stopped my camels by the roadside, and ran back after him.

I was a quick runner, and it did not take me very long to come up with him. “My brother,” I exclaimed, as soon as I could speak, “a thought occurred to me, which is perhaps new to you. You are a holy man, and live a very quiet life, only caring to do good, and uninterested in the things of this world. You do not realize the burden that you lay upon yourself, when you gather into your hands such great wealth. Besides, the fact is that anyone, who is not used to camels from his birth, can ever manage the stubborn beasts. If you are wise, you will not bother yourself with more than thirty, and you will find those trouble enough.”

”You are right,” replied the holy man, who understood me quite well, but did not wish to argue the matter. “I admit I had not thought about it. Choose any ten you like, and take them with you.”

I selected ten of the best camels, and we carried along the road, to rejoin those I had left behind. I had got what I wanted, but I had found the holy man so easy to deal with, that I rather regretted I had not asked for ten more. I looked back. He had only gone a few paces, and I called after him.

”My brother,” I said, “I am unwilling to part from you without pointing out what I think you scarcely understand, that large experience of camel-driving is necessary to anybody who intends to keep together a troop of thirty. In your own interest, I feel sure you would be much happier if you entrusted ten more of them to me, for with my practice it is all the same to me if I take two or a hundred.”

As before, the holy man made no difficulties, and I drove off my ten camels, only leaving him with twenty for his share. I had now sixty, and anyone might have imagined that I should be content.

But, Your Majesty, there is a proverb that says, “the more one has, the more one wants.” So it was with me. I could not rest as long as one single camel remained with the holy man and returning to him, I redoubled my efforts, and promises of gratitude, till the last twenty were in my hands.

”Make a good use of them, my brother,” said the holy man. “Remember riches sometimes have wings if we keep them for ourselves, and the poor are there so that we may help them.”

My eyes were so blinded by gold that I paid no attention to his wise advice, and only looked about for something else to grasp. Suddenly I remembered the little box of ointment that the holy man had hidden, and which most likely contained a treasure more precious than all the rest. I said, “What are you going to do with that little box of ointment? It seems hardly worth taking with you; you might as well let me have it. And really, a holy man who has given up the world has no need of ointment!”

Oh, if he had only refused my request! But then, supposing he had, I should have taken it by force, so great was the madness that had hold of me. However, far from refusing it, the holy man at once held it out, saying gracefully, “Take it, my friend, and if there is anything else I can do to make you happy you must let me know.”

Directly the box was in my hands I ripped off the cover. “As you are so kind,” I said, “Tell me, what the benefits of this ointment are?”

”They are most curious and interesting,” replied the holy man. “If you apply a little of it to your left eye you will see in an instant all the treasures hidden in the earth. But beware, if you touch your right eye with it, your sight will be destroyed for ever.”

His words excited my curiosity. “Let me try, I beg you,” I cried,

holding out the box to the holy man. “You will know how to do it better than I! I am burning with impatience to test its magic.”

The holy man took the box I had extended to him, and, telling me shut my left eye, touched it gently with the ointment. When I opened it again I saw spread out, as it were before me, treasures of every kind and without number. But as all this time I had to keep my right eye closed, which was very tiring, I begged the holy man to apply the ointment to that eye also.

”If you insist I will do it,” answered the holy man, “But you must remember what I told you just now, that if it touches your right eye you will become blind on the spot.”

Unluckily, I was firmly convinced that he was now keeping hidden from me some hidden and precious magic of the ointment. So I refused to listen to what he said.

”My brother,” I replied smiling, “I see you are joking. It is not natural that the same ointment should have two such exactly opposite effects.”

”It is true all the same,” answered the holy man, “and it would be better for you if you believed my word.”

But I would not believe, and, dazzled by my greed, I thought that if one eye could show me riches, the other might teach me how to get possession of them. And I continued to urge the holy man to put the ointment on my right eye, but this he refused to do.

”After having given so much to you,” said he, “I will not do you such evil. Think what it is to be blind, and do not force me to do what you will regret as long as you live.”

It was of no use. “My brother,” I said firmly, “Say no more, but do

what I ask. You have most generously granted my wishes so far; do not spoil my memory of you for such a little thing. I will take responsibility for what happens to me and not blame you.”

”Since you are so determined,” he answered with a sigh, “There is no use talking,” and taking the ointment he laid some on my right eye, which was tight shut. When I tried to open it heavy clouds of darkness floated before me. I was as blind as you see me now!

”Miserable holy man!” I shrieked, “So it is true after all! Into what hell has my greed for gold sent me? Ah, now that my eyes are closed they are really opened. I know that all my sufferings are caused by myself alone! But, good brothers, you, who are so kind and generous, and know the secrets of so many things, have you nothing that will give me back my sight?”

”Unhappy man,” replied the holy man “It is not my fault that this has happened to you, but it is a fair punishment. The blindness of your heart has caused the blindness of your body. Yes, I have secrets; that you have seen in the short time that we have known each other. But I have none that will give you back your sight. You have proved yourself unworthy of the riches that were given you. Now they have passed into my hands, where they will be given into the hands of others less greedy and ungrateful than you.”

The holy man said no more and left me speechless with shame and confusion, and so wretched that I stood rooted to the spot, while he collected the eighty camels and proceeded on his way to Basra. It was in vain that I begged him not to leave me, but at least to take me within reach of the first passing caravan. He was deaf to my prayers and cries, and I should soon have been dead of hunger and misery if some merchants had not come along the track the following day and kindly brought me back to Baghdad.

From a rich man I had in one moment become a beggar, and up to this time I have lived solely on the coins that I have begged. But, in order to pay for the sin of greed, which was my undoing, I ask each passer-by to give me a blow.

This, Your Majesty, is my story.

When the blind man had ended the Caliph addressed him: “Baba-Abdalla, truly your sin is great, but you have suffered enough. Henceforth repent in private, for I will see that enough money is given you day by day for all your wants.”

At these words Baba-Abdalla flung himself at the Caliph’s feet, and prayed that honour and happiness might be his for ever.

The Story of Sidi-Nouman

The Caliph, Haroun-al-Raschid, was very pleased with the tale of the blind man and the holy man, and when it was finished he turned to the young man who had ill-treated his horse, and asked his name also. The young man replied that he was called Sidi-Nouman.

”Sidi-Nouman,” said the Caliph, “I have seen horses broken in all my life long, and have even broken them in myself, but I have never seen any horse broken in such a cruel manner as by you yesterday. Every one who looked on was angry, and blamed you loudly. As for myself, I was so angry that I very nearly put a stop to it at once. Still, you don’t appear to be a cruel man, and I would gladly believe that you did not act in this way without some reason. As I am told that it was not the first time and indeed that every day you are to be seen flogging your horse, I wish to come to the bottom of the matter. But tell me the whole truth, and conceal nothing.”

Sidi-Nouman reddened as he heard these words, and he grew confused, but he saw there was nothing he could do. So he bowed before the throne of the Caliph and tried to obey, but the words stuck in his throat, and he remained silent.

The Caliph, accustomed to instant obedience, guessed something what the young man was thinking and tried to put him at his ease. “Sidi-Nouman,” he said, “do not think of me as the Caliph, but merely as a friend who would like to hear your story. If there is anything in it that you are afraid may offend me, take courage, for I pardon you beforehand. Speak then openly and without fear, as to one who knows and loves you.”

Reassured by the kindness of the Caliph, Sidi-Nouman at last began his tale.

”Your Majesty” said he, “I will do my best to satisfy your wishes. I am by no means perfect, but I am not naturally cruel, neither do I take pleasure in breaking the law. I admit that the treatment of my horse must give your Highness a bad opinion of me, and to set an evil example to others. Yet I have not punished it without reason.

Your Majesty, I will not bother to describe my early life. It is not of interesting enough to deserve your Highness’ attention. My parents were careful people, and I inherited enough money to enable me to live comfortably.

Having therefore a small fortune, the only thing wanting for my happiness was a wife who could return my affection, but this blessing I was not destined to get, for on the very day after my marriage, my bride began to try my patience in every imaginable way.

Now, seeing that the customs of our land force us to marry without ever seeing the person with whom we are to spend our lives, a man has of course no right to complain as long as his wife is not absolutely repulsive, or is not deformed. And whatever defects her body may have, a pleasant manner and good behaviour will go far to remedy them.

The first time I saw my wife unveiled, when she had been brought to my house with the usual ceremonies, I was pleasantly surprised to find that I had not been deceived about her beauty. I began my married life in high spirits, and the best hopes of happiness.

The following day a grand dinner was served to us but as my wife did not appear, I ordered a servant to call her. Still she did not come, and I waited impatiently for some time. At last she entered the room, and she took her place at the table, and plates of rice were set before us.

I ate mine, as was natural, with a spoon, but was shocked to see that

my wife, instead of doing the same, drew from her pocket a little case, from which she selected a long pin, and by the help of this pin carried her rice grain by grain to her mouth.

”Amina,” I exclaimed in astonishment, “Is that the way you eat rice at home? And did you do it because your appetite was so small, or did you wish to count the grains so that you might never eat more than a certain number? If it was from economy, and you are anxious to teach me not to be wasteful, you have no cause for alarm. We shall never be so poor! Our fortune is large enough for all our needs. Therefore, dear Amina, eat as much as you desire, as I do!”

In reply to my affectionate words, I expected a cheerful answer, yet Amina said nothing at all, but continued to pick her rice as before, only at longer and longer intervals. And, instead of trying the other dishes, all she did was to put every now and then a crumb, of bread into her mouth that would not have made a meal for a sparrow.

I felt angered by her obstinacy, but to excuse her to myself as far as I could, I suggested that perhaps she had never been used to eat in the company of men, and that her family might have taught her that she ought to behave carefully in the presence of her husband. Likewise that she might either have dined already or intend to do so in her own room. So I took no further notice, and when I had finished left the room, very perplexed at her strange conduct.

The same thing occurred at supper, and all through the next day, whenever we ate together. It was quite clear that no woman could live upon two or three bread-crumbs and a few grains of rice, and I decided to find out how and when she got food. I pretended not to pay attention to anything she did, in the hope that little by little she would get used to me, and become friendlier, but I soon saw that it was quite in vain.

One night I was lying with my eyes closed and, to all appearance, sound asleep, when Amina arose softly, and dressed herself without making the slightest sound. I could not imagine what she was going to do, and as my curiosity was great I made up my mind to follow her. When she was fully dressed, she quietly left the room.

The instant she had let the curtain fall behind her, I threw a coat on and a pair of slippers on my feet. Looking from a window which opened into the court, I saw her in go through the street door, which she carefully left open.

It was bright moonlight, so I easily managed to keep her in sight, till she entered a cemetery not far from the house. There I hid myself under the shadow of the wall, and crouched down cautiously; and hardly was I concealed, when I saw my wife approaching with a ghoul; one of those demons which, as your Highness is aware, wander about the country making their homes in deserted buildings and springing out upon innocent travelers whose flesh they eat. If no live being goes their way, they then take themselves to the cemeteries, and feed upon the dead bodies.

I was nearly struck dumb with horror on seeing my wife with this hideous female ghoul. They passed by me without noticing me, and began to dig up a corpse which had been buried that day. Then they sat down on the edge of the grave, to enjoy their frightful meal, talking quietly and cheerfully all the while, though I was too far off to hear what they said. When they had finished, they threw back the body into the grave, and heaped back the earth upon it. I made no effort to disturb them, and returned quickly to the house, and took care to leave the door open, as I had previously found it. Then I got back into bed, and pretended to sleep soundly.

A short time after Amina entered as quietly as she had gone out. She

undressed and climbed into bed.

As may be guessed, after such a scene it was long before I could close my eyes, and at dawn, I put on my clothes and went to the mosque. But even prayer did not restore peace to my troubled spirit, and I could not face my wife until I had made up my mind what I should do. Therefore I spent the morning wandering the streets, considering various plans for forcing my wife to give up her horrible ways. I thought of using violence to make her obey, but felt reluctant to be unkind to her. Besides, I had feeling that gentle means had the best chance of success; so, a little calmer, I turned towards home, which I reached at about dinner time.

As soon as I appeared, Amina ordered dinner to be served, and we sat down together. As usual, she only picked a few grains of rice, and I decided to speak to her at once of what lay so heavily on my heart.

”Amina,” I said, as quietly as possible, “you must have guessed the surprise I felt, when the day after our marriage you refused to eat anything but a few grains of rice, and behaved in such a manner that most husbands would have been deeply upset. However I had patience with you, and only tried to get you to eat with the best dishes I could find. But it was all no use. Still, Amina, it seems to me that some people prefer the flesh of a corpse?”

I had no sooner spoken these words than Amina, who instantly understood that I had followed her to the grave-yard, was seized with a fury beyond any that I have ever seen. Her face became purple, her eyes looked as if they would explode from her head, and she looked at me in rage.

I watched her with terror, wondering what would happen next. She seized a cup of water, and plunging her hand in it, murmured some words I failed to hear. Then, sprinkling it on my face, she cried

madly:

”Wretch, receive the reward of your spying, and become a dog.”

The words were not out of her mouth when, I suddenly knew that I had ceased to be a man. In the greatness of the shock and surprise, I never dreamed of running away, and stood rooted to the spot, while Amina took a stick and began to beat me. Indeed her blows were so heavy, that I only wonder they did not kill me at once. However they succeeded in bringing me back to my senses, and I dashed into the court-yard, followed closely by Amina, who was still beating me. At last she got tired of pursuing me, or else a new trick entered into her head, which would give me speedy and painful death. She opened the gate leading into the street, intending to crush me as I passed through. Dog though I was, I saw through her plan, and I timed my movements so well that I was able to rush through, and only the tip of my tail received a squeeze as she banged the gate.

I was safe, but my tail hurt me horribly, and I yelped and howled so loudly all along the streets, that the other dogs came and attacked me, which made matters no better. In order to avoid them, I took refuge in a butcher shop.

At first the owner showed me great kindness, and drove away the other dogs that were still chasing me, while I crept into the darkest corner. But though I was safe for the moment I spent the night in sleep, which I needed, after the pain inflicted on me by Amina.

I have no wish to bore your Highness by talking about the sad thoughts I had, but it may interest you to hear that the next morning the butcher went out early to do his marketing, and returned with the sheep’s heads, and tongues and trotters that he sold. The smell of meat attracted hungry dogs in the neighbourhood, and they gathered round the door begging for some bits. I crept out of my corner, and

stood with them.

My protector was a kind-hearted man, and knowing I had eaten nothing since yesterday, he threw me bigger and better bits than the other dogs. When I had finished, I tried to go back into the shop, but this he would not allow, and stood so firmly at the entrance with a big stick, that I was forced to give it up, and seek some other home.

A few paces further on was a baker's shop, which seemed to have a happy man for a master. At that moment he was having his breakfast, and though I gave no signs of hunger, he at once threw me a piece of bread. Before gobbling it up, as most dogs are in the habit of doing, I bowed my head and wagged my tail, in token of thanks, and he understood, and smiled pleasantly. I really did not want the bread at all, but felt it would be ungracious to refuse, so I ate it slowly, in order that he might see that I only did it out of politeness. He understood this also, and seemed quite willing to let me stay in his shop, so I sat down, with my face to the door, to show that I only asked his protection. This he gave me, and indeed encouraged me to come into the house itself, giving me a corner where I might sleep, without being in anybody's way.

The kindness shown me by this excellent man was far greater than I could ever have expected. He was always affectionate in his manner of treating me, and I shared his breakfast, dinner and supper, and I showed him much gratitude and affection.

I sat with my eyes fixed on him, and he never left the house without having me at his heels. If it ever happened that when he was preparing to go out I was asleep, and did not notice, he would call "Rufus, Rufus," for that was the name he gave me.

Some weeks passed in this way, when one day a woman came in to buy bread. In paying for it, she laid down several coins, one of which

was bad. The baker saw this, and refused to take it, demanding another in its place. The woman, refused to take it back, declaring it was perfectly good, but the baker would have nothing to do with it. "It is really such a bad imitation," he exclaimed at last, "that even my dog would not be fooled. Here Rufus! Rufus!" and hearing his voice, I jumped on to the counter. The baker threw down the money before me, and said, "Find out if there is a bad coin." I looked at each in turn, and then laid my paw on the false one, glancing at the same time at my master, so as to point it out.

The baker, who had of course only been joking, was surprised at my cleverness, and the woman, who was at last convinced that the man spoke the truth, produced another coin in its place. When she had gone, my master was so pleased that he told all the neighbors what I had done.

The neighbors, of course, didn't believe his story, and tested me several times with all the bad money they could collect, but I passed every test.

Soon, the shop was filled from morning till night, with people came to see if I was as clever as I was reported to be. The baker sold much bread, and admitted that I was worth my weight in gold to him.

Of course there were plenty of people who envied him, and many traps were set for me, so that he never dared to let me out of his sight. One day a woman, who had not been in the shop before, came to ask for bread. As usual, I was lying on the counter, and she threw down six coins before me, one of which was false. I spotted it at once, and put my paw on it, looking as I did so at the woman. "Yes," she said, nodding her head. "You are quite right, that is the one." She stood gazing at me attentively for some time, then paid for the bread, and left the shop, making a sign for me to follow her secretly.

Now I was always thinking of some means of shaking off the spell on me, and noticing the way in which this woman had looked at me, the idea entered my head that perhaps she might have guessed what had happened, and I was right. However I let her go on a little way and merely stood at the door watching her. She turned, and seeing that I was quite still, she again called to me.

The baker all this while was busy with his oven, and had forgotten all about me, so I crept out quietly, and ran after the woman.

When we came to her house, which was some distance off, she opened the door and then said to me, "Come in, come in and you will never be sorry that you followed me." When I had entered she locked the door, and took me into a large room, where a beautiful girl was working at a piece of embroidery. "My daughter," exclaimed the woman, "I have brought you the famous dog belonging to the baker which can tell good money from bad. You know that when I first heard of him, I told you I was sure he must be really a man, changed into a dog by magic. Today I went to the baker's, to prove for myself the truth of the story, and persuaded the dog to follow me here. Now what do you say?"

"You are right, mother," replied the girl, and rising she dipped her hand into a cup of water. Then sprinkling it over me she said, "If you were born dog, remain a dog, but if you were born man, resume your proper form." In one moment the spell was broken. The dog's shape vanished as if it had never been, and it was a man who stood before her.

Overcome with gratitude, I flung myself at her feet. "How can I thank you for your goodness towards a stranger, and for what you have done? From this time forward I am your slave!"

Then, in order to explain how I came to be changed into a dog, I told

her my whole story, and finished with giving the mother the thanks due to her for the happiness she had brought me.

”Sidi-Nouman,” replied the daughter, “The knowledge that we have been of service to you is enough. Let us talk about Amina, your wife, who I knew before her marriage. I was aware that she was a magician, and she knew too that I had studied the same art, under the same mistress. We met often, but we did not like each other, and never tried to become friends. It is not enough to have broken your spell; she must be punished for her wickedness. Remain for a moment with my mother,” she added, “I will return shortly.”

Left alone with the mother, I again expressed the gratitude I felt, to her as well as to her daughter.

”My daughter,” she answered, “is, as skilled a magician as Amina herself, but you would be astonished at the amount of good she does by her knowledge. That is why I have never interfered; otherwise I should have put a stop to it long ago.” As she spoke, her daughter entered with a small bottle in her hand.

”Sidi-Nouman,” she said, “I have just discovered me that Amina is not home at present, but she should return at any moment. I have also found out, that she shows great anxiety in front of the servants about your absence. She has spread a story that, while at dinner with her, you remembered some important business that had to be done at once, and left the house without shutting the door. Then a dog had strayed in, which she was forced to get rid of with a stick. Go home then without delay, and await Amina’s return in your room. When she comes in, go down to meet her, and in her surprise, she will try to run away. Then have this bottle ready, and throw the water it contains over her, saying boldly, “Receive the reward of your crimes.” That is all I have to tell you.”

Everything happened exactly as the young magician had foretold. I had not been in my house many minutes before Amina returned, and as she approached I stepped in front of her, with the water in my hand. She gave one loud cry, and turned to the door, but she was too late. I had already dashed the water in her face and spoken the magic words. Amina disappeared, and in her place stood the horse you saw me beating yesterday.

This, Your Majesty, is my story, and may I say that, now you have heard the reason of my conduct, your Highness will not think this wicked woman too harshly treated?

”Sidi-Nouman,” replied the Caliph, “your story is indeed a strange one, and there is no excuse to be offered for your wife. But, without criticizing your treatment of her, I wish you to think of how much she must suffer from being changed into an animal. I hope you will let that punishment be enough. I do not order you to ask the young magician to restore your wife to her human shape, because I know that when once women such as she begin to work evil they never stop.”

The Story of Ali Cogia, Merchant of Baghdad

In the reign of Haroun-al-Raschid, there lived in Bagdad a merchant named Ali Cogia, who, having neither wife nor child, kept himself busy with his business. He had spent some years quite happily in the house his father had left him, when three nights running he dreamed that an old man had appeared to him, and scolded him for not having gone on a pilgrimage to holy places.

Ali Cogia was much troubled by this dream, as he was unwilling to give up his shop, and lose all his customers. He tried to avoid going on this pilgrimage, by doing an extra number of good works, but the dream seemed to him a direct warning, and he decided to postpone the journey no longer.

The first thing he did was to sell his furniture and the goods he had in his shop, only keeping for himself such goods as he might trade with on the road. The shop itself he sold also, and easily found a tenant for his private house. The only matter he could not settle satisfactorily was the thousand pieces of gold which he wished to leave behind him.

After some thought, Ali Cogia had an idea which seemed a safe one. He took a large jar, and placing the money in the bottom of it, filled up the rest with olives. After closing the lid tightly down, he carried it to one of his friends, a merchant like himself, and said to him, "My brother, you have probably heard that I am leaving with a caravan in a few days on a pilgrimage. I have come to ask whether you would do me the favour of keeping this jar of olives for me till I come back."

The merchant replied, "Look, this is the key of my shop, take it, and put the jar wherever you like. I promise that you shall find it in the same place on your return."

A few days later, Ali Cogia mounted the camel, joined the caravan, and arrived in due time at the holy places. And after all his religious duties were performed, he spread out his goods, hoping to find some customers among the passers-by.

Very soon two merchants stopped before them, and when they had examined them, one said to the other, "If this man was wise he would take these things to Cairo, where he would get a much better price than he is likely to do here."

Ali Cogia heard the words, and lost no time in following the advice. He packed up his goods, and instead of returning to Baghdad, joined a caravan that was going to Cairo. The results of the journey were very satisfying. He sold off everything almost immediately, and bought a stock of Egyptian goods, which he intended selling at Damascus. But as the caravan with which he would have to travel would not be starting for another six weeks, he took advantage of the delay to visit the Pyramids, and some of the cities along the banks of the Nile.

Now the attractions of Damascus so fascinated Ali, that he could hardly tear himself away, but at length he remembered that he had a home in Baghdad, meaning to return by way of Aleppo, and after he had crossed the Euphrates river, to follow the course of the Tigris river.

But when he reached Mossoul, Ali had made such friends with some Persian merchants, that they persuaded him to accompany them to their native land, and even as far as India, and so seven years had slipped by since he had left Baghdad, and during all that time the friend with whom he had left the vase of olives had never once thought of him or of it. In fact, it was only a month before Ali Cogia's return that he remembered at all, because of his wife's remarking one day, that it was a long time since she had eaten any olives, and would

like some.

“That reminds me,” said the husband, “that before Ali Cogia went to Mecca seven years ago, he left a jar of olives in my care. But really by this time he must be dead, and there is no reason we should not eat the olives if we like. Give me a light, and I will fetch them and see how they taste.”

“My husband,” answered the wife, “beware, of doing anything so terrible! Supposing seven years have passed without news of Ali Cogia. He might not be dead, and may come back any day. How shameful it would be to have to tell him that you had betrayed your trust and broken the seal of the jar! Pay no attention to my words; I really have no desire for olives now. And probably after all this while they are no longer good. I have a feeling that Ali Cogia will return, and what will he think of you? Please, just forget it.”

The merchant, however, refused to listen to her advice, sensible though it was. He took a light and a dish and went into his shop.

“If you will be so obstinate,” said his wife, “I cannot help it; but do not blame me if it turns out badly.”

When the merchant opened the jar he found the top olives were rotten, and in order to see if the under ones were in better condition he shook some out into the dish. As they fell out a few of the gold pieces fell out too.

The sight of the money made the merchant’s greedy. He looked into the jar, and saw that all the bottom was filled with gold. He then replaced the olives and returned to his wife.

“My wife,” he said, as he entered the room, “you were quite right, the olives are rotten, and I have resealed the jar so well that Ali Cogia

will never know it has been touched.”

“You would have done better to believe me,” replied the wife. “I trust that no harm will come of it.”

He spent the whole night wondering how he could manage to keep the gold if Ali Cogia should come back and claim his jar. Very early the next morning he went out and bought fresh new olives; he then threw away the old ones, took out the gold and hid it, and filled up the jar with the olives he had bought. This done he resealed the jar and put it in the same place where it had been left by Ali Cogia.

A month later Ali Cogia returned to Baghdad, and as his house was still rented out he went to an inn. The following day set out to see his friend the merchant, who met him with open arms and much surprise. After a few moments explaining where he had been Ali Cogia begged the merchant to hand him over the jar that he had taken care of for so long.

“Oh certainly,” said he, “I am only glad I could be of use to you in the matter. Here is the key of my shop. You will find the jar in the place where you put it.”

Ali Cogia fetched his jar and carried it to his room at the inn, where he opened it. He put his hand down but could feel no money, but still believed it must be there. So he got some plates and emptied out the olives. The gold was not there. The poor man was dumb with horror, then, lifting up his hands, he exclaimed, “Can my old friend really have committed such a crime?”

Hurriedly he went back to the house of the merchant. “My friend,” he cried, “you will be astonished to see me again, but I can’t find anywhere in this jar a thousand pieces of gold that I placed in the bottom under the olives. Perhaps you may have taken a loan of them

for your business. If that is so you are most welcome. I will only ask you to pay the money whenever you can.”

The merchant, who had expected something of the sort, had his reply all ready. “Ali Cogia,” he said, “When you brought me the jar of olives did I ever touch it?”

“I gave you the key of my shop and you put it where you liked, and did you not find it in exactly the same spot and in the same condition? If you placed any gold in it, it must be there still. I know nothing about that. You only told me there were olives. You can believe me or not, but I have not touched the jar.”

Ali Cogia still tried every means to persuade the merchant to admit the truth. Once more, think of your reputation. I shall be sorry if you make me take you to court.”

“Ali Cogia,” answered the merchant, “you say that it was a jar of olives you placed in my care. You fetched it and removed it yourself, and now you tell me it contained a thousand pieces of gold, and that I must return them to you! Did you ever say anything about them before? Why, I did not even know that the jar had olives in it! You never showed them to me. I wonder you have not demanded pearls or diamonds.”

By this time passers-by, and also the neighbouring merchants, were standing round, listening to the argument, and trying to settle matters between them. But at the merchant’s last words Ali Cogia decided to tell the reason for the quarrel, and told them the whole story. They heard him to the end, and asked the merchant what he had to say.

The merchant admitted that he had kept Ali Cogia’s jar in his shop, but he denied having touched it, and said that as to what it contained, he only knew what Ali Cogia had told him.

“You have brought it on yourself,” said Ali Cogia, taking him by the arm, “and as you want the law, the law you shall have! Let us see if you will dare to repeat your story before the magistrate.”

Now the merchant was forbidden to refuse this choice of a judge, so he accepted and said to Ali Cogia, “Very well, I should like nothing better. We shall soon see which of us is in the right.”

So the two men presented themselves before the magistrate, and Ali Cogia again repeated his tale. The magistrate asked what witnesses he had. Ali Cogia replied that he did not bother with any, as he had considered the man his friend, and up to that time had always found him honest.

The merchant, on his side, stuck to his story, and stated that not only had he never stolen the thousand gold pieces, but that he did not even know they were there. The magistrate pronounced him innocent.

Ali Cogia, furious at having to suffer such a loss, protested against the verdict, declaring that he would appeal to the Caliph, Haroun-al-Raschid, himself. But the magistrate paid no attention to him, and was quite satisfied that he had done what was right.

Judgment being given the merchant returned home happy, and Ali Cogia went back to his inn to write a petition to the Caliph. The next morning he placed himself on the road along which the Caliph must pass, and gave his petition to the officer who walked before the Caliph, whose duty it was to collect such things, and on entering the palace to hand them to his master. There Haroun-al-Raschid studied them carefully.

Knowing this custom, Ali Cogia followed the Caliph into the public hall of the palace, and waited the result. After some time the officer appeared, and told him that the Caliph had read his petition, and

would give him an audience the next morning. He then asked the merchant's address, so that he might be called to attend also.

That very evening, the Caliph, with his grand-vizier Giafar, and Mesrour, chief of the servants, all three disguised, as usual, went out to take a stroll through the town.

Going down one street, the Caliph's attention was attracted by a noise, and looking through a door which opened into a court he saw ten or twelve children playing in the moonlight. He hid himself in a dark corner, and watched them.

“Let us play at being the magistrate,” said the brightest and cleverest of them all, “I will be the magistrate. Bring before me Ali Cogia, and the merchant who robbed him of the thousand pieces of gold.”

The boy's words reminded the Caliph of the petition he had read that morning, and he waited with interest to see what the children would do.

The other children, who had heard a great deal of talk about the matter, quickly settled the part each one was to play. The magistrate took his seat, and an officer introduced first Ali Cogia, and then the merchant.

Ali Cogia made a low bow, and argued his cause, concluding by begging the magistrate not to cause him such a heavy loss.

The magistrate having heard his case, turned to the merchant, and asked why he had not repaid Ali Cogia the gold.

The merchant repeated the reasons that the real merchant had given to the magistrate of Baghdad.

“Stop a moment!” said the little magistrate, “I should like to examine

the jar with the olives. Ali Cogia,” he added, “have you got the jar with you?” and finding he had not, the magistrate continued, “Go and get it, and bring it to me.”

So Ali Cogia disappeared for an instant, and then pretended to lay a jar at the feet of the magistrate, stating it was his jar, which he had given to the merchant for safe keeping; and in order to be quite correct, the magistrate asked the merchant if he recognized it as the same jar. The merchant said it was, and the magistrate then ordered the jar opened. Ali Cogia made a movement as if he was taking off the lid, and the little magistrate pretended to look into a jar.

“What beautiful olives!” he said, “I should like to taste one,” and pretending to put one in his mouth, he added, “They are really excellent!

“But,” he went on, “it seems to me odd that olives seven years old should be as good as that! Send for some dealers in olives, and let us hear what they say!”

Two children were presented to him as olive merchants, and the magistrate spoke to them. “Tell me,” he said, “how long can olives be kept?”

“My lord,” replied the merchants, “They never last more than three years. They lose both taste and colour, and are only fit to be thrown away.”

“If that is so,” answered the little magistrate, “examine this jar, and tell me how long the olives have been in it.”

The olive merchants pretended to examine the olives and taste them; then reported to the magistrate that they were fresh and good.

“You are mistaken,” said he, “Ali Cogia says he put them in that jar

seven years ago.”

“My lord,” replied the olive merchants, “we promise you that the olives are those of this year. And if you ask all the merchants in Baghdad you will not find one to disagree.”

The merchant opened his mouth to speak, but the magistrate gave him no time. “Be silent,” he said, “You are a thief. Take him away and hang him.” So the game ended, the children clapping their hands, and leading the criminal away to be hanged.

Haroun-al-Raschid was lost in astonishment at the wisdom of the child, who had given so wise a verdict on the case which he himself was to hear the next day. “Is there any other verdict possible?” he asked the grand-vizier, who was as much impressed as himself. “I can imagine no better judgment.”

“It seems to me your Highness could only follow the example of this boy in your decision.” “replied the grand-vizier,

“Then take careful note of this house,” said the Caliph, “and bring me the boy tomorrow. Summon also the magistrate, to learn his duty from a child. Tell Ali Cogia to bring his jar of olives, and see that two dealers in olives are present.” The Caliph then returned to the palace.

Early the next morning, the grand-vizier went back to the house where they had seen the children playing, and asked for the mother and her children. Three boys appeared, and the grand-vizier inquired which had represented the magistrate in their game of the previous evening. The eldest and tallest, said that it was he, and the grand-vizier said that he had orders to bring to the Caliph.

“Does he want to take my son from me?” cried the poor woman. But the grand-vizier calmed her, by promising her that she should have

the boy again in an hour, and she would be quite satisfied when she knew the reason. So she dressed the boy in his best clothes, and the two left the house.

When the grand-vizier presented the child to the Caliph, he was a little confused, and the Caliph explained why he had sent for him. "My son," he said kindly. "I think it was you who judged the case of Ali Cogia and the merchant last night? I overheard you by chance, and was very pleased with the way you conducted it. Today you will see the real Ali Cogia and the real merchant. Seat yourself at once next to me."

The Caliph being seated on his throne with the boy next him, two men were brought in. One by one they bowed low. When they stood up, the Caliph said, "Now speak. This child will give you justice, and if more should be necessary I will see to it myself."

Ali Cogia and the merchant spoke one after the other, but when the merchant wanted to say more, he was stopped by the child, who said that before this was done he must first see the jar of olives.

At these words, Ali Cogia presented the jar to the Caliph, and uncovered it. The Caliph took one of the olives, tasted it, and ordered the expert merchants to do the same. They said the olives were good and fresh that year. The boy told them that Ali Cogia said it was seven years since he had placed them in the jar and they replied the same way the children had done. They said the olives were fresh, and not seven years old

The merchant saw by this time that his punishment was certain,. The boy had too much sense to order him to be hanged, and looked at the Caliph, saying, "Your Majesty, this is not a game now. It is for your Highness to punish him and not for me."

Then the Caliph, convinced that the man was a thief, told them take him away and put him in jail, which was done, but not before the merchant had told them the place in which he had hidden Ali Cogia's money. The Caliph ordered the magistrate to learn how to deal out justice from a child, and sent the boy home, with a purse containing a hundred pieces of gold.

The Enchanted Horse

It was the Festival of the New Year, the oldest and most splendid of all the festivals in the Kingdom of Persia, and the day had been spent by the king in the city of Shiraz, taking part in the magnificent parades prepared by his subjects to do honour to the festival. The sun was setting, and the king was about to leave, when suddenly an Indian appeared before his throne, leading a horse richly harnessed, and looking in every respect exactly like a real one.

”Sire,” said he, bowing as he spoke, “Although I make my appearance so late before your Highness, I am certain that none of the wonders you have seen during the day can be compared to this horse, if you will please look at him.”

“I see nothing in it,” replied the king, “except a clever imitation of a real one. Any skilled workman could do the same.”

”Sire,” replied the Indian, “it is not his appearance that I am talking about, but of the use that I can make of him. I have only to mount him, and to wish myself in some special place, and no matter how far away it may be, in a very few moments I shall find myself there. It is this, Sire, that makes the horse so marvelous, and if your Highness will allow me, you can prove it for yourself.”

The King of Persia, who was interested in everything that was unusual, and had never before come across a horse with such qualities, told the Indian mount the animal, and show what he could do. In an instant the man had jumped on his back, and asked where the king wished to send him.

”Do you see that mountain?” asked the king, pointing to a huge mountain that towered into the sky about three miles from Shiraz,

“Go and bring me the leaf of a palm tree that grows at the foot.”

The words were hardly out of the king’s mouth when the Indian turned a screw placed in the horse’s neck, close to the saddle, and the animal bounded like lightning up into the air, and was soon beyond the sight even of the sharpest eyes. In a quarter of an hour the Indian was seen returning, bearing in his hand the palm, and, guiding his horse to the foot of the throne, he dismounted, and laid the leaf before the king.

Now the king had no sooner proved the astonishing speed of which the horse was capable than he longed to possess it himself, and indeed, so sure was he that the Indian would be quite ready to sell it, that he looked upon it as his own already.

”I never guessed from his appearance how valuable an animal he was,” he remarked to the Indian, “And I am grateful to you for having shown me my error,” said he. “If you will sell it, name your own price.”

”Sire,” replied the Indian, “I was sure that a king so wise as your Highness would be impressed by my horse, when he once knew its power. I thought that you might wish to possess it. Greatly as I prize it, I will give it up to your Highness on one condition. The horse was not built by me, but it was given to me by the inventor, in exchange for my only daughter, who made me promise that I would never part with it, except for some object of equal value.”

”Name anything you like,” cried the king, interrupting him. “My kingdom is large, and filled with fair cities. You have only to choose which you would prefer, to become its ruler to the end of your life.”

”Sire,” answered the Indian, “I am most grateful to your Highness for your generous offer, and beg you not to be offended with me if I say

that I can only give my horse away in exchange for the hand of the princess your daughter.”

A shout of laughter burst from the courtiers as they heard these words, and Prince Firouz Schah, was filled with anger at the Indian’s idea. The king, however, thought that it would not cost him much to part from the princess in order to gain such a delightful toy, and while he was hesitating as to his answer the prince spoke.

”Sire,” he said, “It is not possible that you can consider doing this. Consider what you owe to yourself, and to the blood of your ancestors.”

”My son,” replied the king, “You speak well, but you do not realize either the value of the horse, or the fact that if I reject the proposal of the Indian, he will only make the same offer to some other king, and I should be filled with despair at the thought that anyone but myself should own this Seventh Wonder of the World. Of course I do not say that I shall accept his conditions, and perhaps he may be persuaded to accept something else, but meanwhile I should like you to examine the horse, and, with the owner’s permission, to test its powers.”

The Indian, who had overheard the king’s speech joyfully agreed to the king’s wishes, and came forward to help the prince to mount the horse, and show him how to guide it. But, before he had finished, the young man turned the screw, and was soon out of sight.

They waited some time, expecting that any moment he might be seen returning in the distance, but at last the Indian grew frightened, and bowing before the throne, he said to the king, “Sire, your Highness must have noticed that the prince, in his impatience, did not allow me to tell him what it was necessary to do in order to return to the place from where he started. I beg you not to punish me for what was not my fault.”

”But why,” cried the king in a burst of fear and anger, “Why did you not call him back when you saw him disappearing?”

”Sire,” replied the Indian, “the speed of his movements took me so by surprise that he was out of hearing before I could speak. But we must hope that he will see and turn a second screw, which will have the effect of bringing the horse back to earth.”

”But supposing he does!” answered the king, “What is to stop the horse from falling straight into the sea, or smashing him to pieces on the rocks?”

”Have no fears, your Highness,” said the Indian, “The horse has the gift of passing over seas, and of carrying his rider wherever he wishes to go.”

”Well, your head shall answer for it,” replied the monarch, “and if in three months he is not safe back with me, or does not send me news of his safety, your life shall pay the penalty.” So saying, he ordered his guards to seize the Indian and throw him into prison.

Meanwhile, Prince Firouz Schah had gone up into the air, and for an hour continued to fly higher and higher, till the very mountains could not be seen from the plains. Then he began to think it was time to come down, and thought that, in order to do this, it was only needed to turn the screw the opposite way; but, to his surprise and horror, he found that, turn as he might, nothing happened. He then remembered that he had never waited to ask how he was to get back to earth again, and understood the danger in which he stood. Luckily, he remained calm, and set about examining the horse’s neck with great care, till at last, to his great joy, he discovered a tiny little peg, much smaller than the other, close to the right ear. This he turned, and found himself dropping to the earth, though more slowly than he had left it.

It was now dark, and as the prince could see nothing, he had to allow the horse to go its own way, and midnight was already passed before Prince Firouz Schah again touched the ground, faint and weary from his long ride, and from the fact that he had eaten nothing since early morning.

The first thing he did on dismounting was to try to find out where he was, and, as far as he could discover in the thick darkness, he found himself on the terraced roof of a huge palace. In one corner of the terrace stood a small door, opening on to a staircase which led down into the palace.

Some people might have hesitated before exploring further, but not so the prince. "I am doing no harm," he said, "and whoever the owner may be, he will not touch me when he sees I am unarmed," and in fear of stumbling, he went cautiously down the staircase. On a landing, he noticed an open door, beyond which was a faintly lighted hall.

Before entering, the prince paused and listened, but he heard nothing except the sound of men snoring. By the light of a lantern suspended from the roof, he saw a row of black guards sleeping, each with a sword lying by him, and he understood that the hall must form the ante-room to the chamber of some queen or princess.

Standing quite still, Prince Firouz Schah looked about him, till his eyes grew accustomed to the dark, and he noticed a bright light shining through a curtain in one corner. He then made his way softly towards it, and, drawing it aside, passed into a magnificent room full of sleeping women, all lying on low couches, except one, who was on a sofa, and this one, he knew, must be the princess.

Gently walking up to the side of her bed he looked at her, and saw that she was more beautiful than any woman he had ever seen. But, fascinated though he was, he was well aware of the danger of his

position, as one cry of surprise would awake the guards, and cause his certain death.

So going down quietly on his knees, he took hold of the sleeve of the princess and drew her arm lightly towards him. The princess opened her eyes, and seeing before her a handsome well-dressed man, she remained speechless with astonishment.

This favourable moment was seized by the prince, who bowing low while he knelt, spoke, "You see, Madam, a prince, son to the King of Persia, who, owing to an adventure so strange that you will scarcely believe it, finds himself here, asking for your protection. But yesterday, I was in my father's court, in the celebration of our most important festival. Today, I am in an unknown land, in danger of my life."

Now the princess whose mercy Prince Firouz Schah asked was the eldest daughter of the King of Bengal, who was enjoying rest in the palace her father had built her, at a little distance from the capital. She listened kindly to what he had to say, and then answered, "Prince, don't worry, hospitality is as common in Bengal as it is in Persia. The protection you ask will be given you by all. You have my word for it." And as the prince was about to thank her for her goodness, she added quickly, "However great may be my curiosity to learn by what means you have traveled here so speedily, I know that you must be hungry, so I shall give orders to my women to take you to one of my rooms, where you will be provided with supper, and left to rest."

By this time the princess's attendants were all awake, and listening to the conversation. At a sign from their mistress they rose, dressed themselves quickly, and conducted the prince to a large room, where two of them prepared his bed, and the rest went down to the kitchen, from which they soon returned with all sorts of dishes. Then, they left

the room.

During their absence the Princess of Bengal, who had been greatly impressed by the beauty of the prince, tried in vain to go to sleep again. It was of no use. She felt wide awake, and when her women entered the room, she asked eagerly if the prince had all he wanted, and what they thought of him.

”Madam,” they replied, “We think you would be fortunate if the king your father should allow you to marry anyone so friendly. Certainly there is no one in the Court of Bengal who can be compared with him.”

These ideas were pleasing to the princess, but as she did not wish to show her own feelings she merely said, “You are all chatterboxes. Go back to bed, and let me sleep.”

When she dressed the following morning, her maids noticed that, the princess was very fussy about her appearance, and insisted on her hair being dressed two or three times. She said to herself, “If my appearance was pleasing to the prince when he saw me half asleep, how much more will he be impressed with me when he sees me all prepared.”

Then she placed in her hair the largest and most brilliant diamonds she could find, with a necklace and bracelets, all of precious stones. And over her shoulders her ladies put a robe of the richest cloth in all the Indies, that no one was allowed to wear except members of the royal family. When she was fully dressed according to her wishes, she sent to know if the Prince of Persia was awake and ready to receive her, as she desired to present herself before him.

When the princess’s messenger entered his room, Prince Firouz Schah was about to leave it, to ask if he might be allowed to visit her

mistress, but on hearing the princess's wishes, he at once agreed. "Whatever she wishes," he said, "I am only here to obey her orders."

In a few moments the princess herself appeared, and after greeting each other, the princess sat down on a sofa, and began to explain to the prince her reasons for not meeting him in her own room. "Had I done so," she said, "we might have been interrupted at any time by the chief of the servants, who has the right to enter whenever it pleases him. I am impatient to learn the wonderful accident which has brought you here, and that is why I have come to you here, where no one can interrupt us. Begin then, I beg you, without delay."

So the prince began at the beginning, and told all the story of the festival of Nedrouz held yearly in Persia, and of the splendid shows celebrated in its honour. But when he came to the enchanted horse, the princess declared that she could never have imagined anything half so surprising. "Well then," continued the prince, "you can easily understand how the King my father, who has a passion for all curious things, desperately wanted to possess this horse, and asked the Indian how much he wanted.

"The man's answer was absolutely crazy, as you will agree, when I tell you that it was nothing less than the hand of the princess my sister; but though all the bystanders laughed and mocked, and I was in a rage, I saw to my despair that my father had decided to accept. I tried to argue with him, but in vain. He only begged me to examine the horse."

"To please my father, I mounted the horse, and, without waiting for any instructions from the Indian, turned the peg as I had seen him do. In an instant I was soaring upwards, much quicker than an arrow could fly, and I felt as if I must be getting so near the sky that I should soon hit my head against it! I could see nothing beneath me,

and for some time was so confused that I did not even know in what direction I was traveling. At last, when it was growing dark, I found another screw, and on turning it, the horse began slowly to sink towards the earth. I was forced to trust to chance, and to see what fate had in store, and it was already past midnight when I found myself on the roof of this palace. I crept down the little staircase, and made straight for a light which I noticed through an open door. I peeped cautiously in, and saw, as you will guess, the guards lying asleep on the floor. I knew the risks, but my need was so great that I paid no attention to them, and sneaked safely past your guards, to the curtain which hid your doorway.

”The rest, Princess, you know; and it only remains for me to thank you for the kindness you have shown me, and to tell you of my gratitude. By the law of nations, I am already your slave, and I have only my heart, that is my own, to offer you. But what am I saying? My own? Alas, madam, it was yours from the first moment I saw you!”

”Prince,” replied she as soon as her confusion allowed her to speak, “You have given me the greatest pleasure, and I have listened closely to all your adventures, and though you are sitting before me, I even trembled at your danger in the upper air! As to your being a slave, of course that is merely a joke, and my reception must itself have shown you that you are as free here as at your father’s court. As to your heart,” she continued, “I am quite sure that must have been promised long ago, to some princess who is well worthy of it, and I could not think of being the cause of your unfaithfulness to her.”

Prince Firouz Schah was about to protest that there was no other lady, but he was stopped by the entrance of one of the princess’s attendants, who announced that dinner was served.

Dinner was laid out in a magnificent room, and the table was covered with delicious fruits, while during the meal richly dressed girls sang softly and sweetly to stringed instruments. After the prince and princess had finished, they passed into a small room hung with blue and gold, looking out into a garden stocked with flowers and arbutus trees, quite different from any that were to be found in Persia.

”Princess,” said the young man, “till now I had always believed that Persia had finer palaces and more lovely gardens than any kingdom upon earth. But my eyes have been opened, and I begin to realize that, wherever there is a great king he will surround himself with buildings worthy of him.”

”Prince,” replied the Princess of Bengal, “I have no idea what a Persian palace is like, so I am unable to make comparisons. I can tell you that it is very poor beside that of the King my father, as you will agree when you have been there to greet him, as I hope you will shortly do.”

Now the princess hoped that, by bringing about a meeting between the prince and her father, the King would be so impressed with the young man’s fine manners, that he would offer him his daughter to wife. But the reply of the Prince of Persia to her suggestion was not quite what she wished.

” But, Princess, I believe that you will feel with me, that I cannot possibly present myself before so great a king without the attendants suitable to my position. He would think me false.”

”If that is all,” she answered, “You can get as many attendants here as you please. There are plenty of Persian merchants, and as for money, my treasury is always open to you. Take what you please.”

Prince Firouz Schah guessed what the reason was for so much

kindness on the part of the princess, and was much touched by it. Still his passion, which increased every moment, did not make him forget his duty. So he replied without hesitation, "I do not know, Princess, how to express my gratitude for your kind offer, which I would accept at once if it were not for the uneasiness the King my father must be suffering because of me. I should be unworthy indeed of all the love he showers upon me, if I did not return to him at the first possible moment. For, while I am enjoying the company of the most beautiful of all princesses, he is, I believe, plunged in the deepest grief, having lost all hope of seeing me again. I am sure you will understand my position, and will feel that to remain away one instant longer than is necessary would not only be ungrateful on my part, but perhaps even a crime, for how do I know if my absence may not break his heart?"

"But," continued the prince, "with your permission, I may present myself before the King of Bengal, not as a wanderer, but as a prince, to beg for your hand in marriage. My father has always told me that in my marriage I shall be left quite free, but I believe that I have only to describe your generosity, for my wishes to become his own."

The Princess of Bengal was too reasonable not to accept the explanation offered by Prince Firouz Schah, but she was much disturbed at his plan to depart at once, for she feared that, no sooner had he left her, than the impression she had made on him would fade away. So she made one more effort to keep him, and after telling him that she entirely approved of his desire to see his father, begged him to give her a day or two more of his company.

In common politeness the prince could hardly refuse this request, and the princess set about inventing every kind of amusement for him, and succeeded so well that two months passed almost unnoticed, in balls and in hunting, of which, the princess was very fond. But at last, one day, he declared seriously that he could neglect his duty no

longer, and begged her to put no further obstacles in his way, promising at the same time to return, as soon as he could.

”Princess,” he added, “it may be that in your heart you think me the same as those false lovers whose devotion cannot stand the test of absence. If you do, you are mistaken, and I would beg you to come with me, for my life can only be happy when with you. As for your reception at the Persian Court, it will be as warm as you deserve.”

The princess could not find words in which to reply to the arguments of the Prince of Persia, but her silence and her eyes spoke for her, and declared that she had no objection to accompanying him on his travels.

The only difficulty that occurred to her was that Prince Firouz Schah did not know how to manage the horse, and she feared they might find themselves in the same danger as before. But the prince calmed her fears so successfully, that she soon had no other thought than to arrange for their flight so secretly, that no one in the palace should suspect it.

This was done, and early the following morning, when the whole palace was in sleep, she sneaked up on to the roof, where the prince was already awaiting her, with his horse’s head towards Persia. He mounted first and helped the princess up behind. Then, when she was firmly seated, with her hands holding tightly to his belt, he touched the screw, and the horse began to leave the earth quickly behind him.

He travelled with his usual speed, and Prince Firouz Schah guided him so well that in two hours from the time of starting, he saw the capital of Persia lying beneath him. He decided to land neither in the great square from which he had started, nor in the Sultan’s palace, but in a country house at a little distance from the town. Here he showed the princess a beautiful suite of rooms, and begged her to rest, while

he informed his father of their arrival, and prepared a public reception worthy of her rank. Then he ordered a horse to be saddled, and set out.

All the way through the streets he was welcomed with shouts of joy by the people, who had long lost all hope of seeing him again. On reaching the palace, he found the Sultan surrounded by his ministers, and his father almost went out of his mind with surprise and delight at the mere sound of his son's voice. When he had calmed down a little, he begged the prince to tell of his adventures.

The prince at once told the whole story of his treatment by the Princess of Bengal, not even hiding the fact that she had fallen in love with him. "And, Sire," ended the prince, "having given my royal word that you would not refuse your agreement to our marriage, I persuaded her to return with me on the Indian's horse. I have left her in one of your Highness's country houses, where she is waiting anxiously."

As he said this the prince was about to throw himself at the feet of the Sultan, but his father prevented him, and embracing him again, said eagerly, "My son, not only do I gladly agree to your marriage with the Princess of Bengal, but I will hurry to pay my respects to her, and to thank her in person for what she has done for you. I will then bring her back with me, and make all arrangements for the wedding to be celebrated today."

So the Sultan gave orders that there should be a concert of drums, trumpets and cymbals. Also that the Indian should be taken from prison, and brought before him.

His commands were obeyed, and the Indian was led into his presence, surrounded by guards. "I have kept you locked up," said the Sultan, "So that in case my son was lost, your life should pay the penalty. He has now returned so take your horse, and be gone forever."

The Indian quickly left the presence of the Sultan, and when he was outside, he asked of the man who had taken him out of prison where the prince had really been all this time, and what he had been doing. They told him the whole story, and how the Princess of Bengal was even then awaiting in the country palace the agreement of the Sultan, which at once put into the Indian's head a plan of revenge for the treatment he had experienced. Going straight to the country house, he informed the doorkeeper who was left in charge that he had been sent by the Sultan and by the Prince of Persia to fetch the princess on the enchanted horse, and to bring her to the palace.

The doorkeeper knew the Indian by sight, and was of course aware that nearly three months before he had been thrown into prison by the Sultan; and seeing him free, the man took for granted that he was speaking the truth, and made no difficulty about leading him before the Princess of Bengal. Hearing that he had come from the prince, the lady gladly agreed to do what he wished.

The Indian, delighted with the success of his scheme, mounted the horse, assisted the princess to mount behind him, and turned the peg at the very moment that the prince was leaving the palace in Shiraz for the country house, followed closely by the Sultan and all the court. Knowing this, the Indian deliberately steered the horse right above the city, in order that his revenge for his unjust imprisonment might be all the quicker and sweeter.

When the Sultan of Persia saw the horse and its riders, he stopped short with astonishment and horror, which the Indian heard quite unmoved, knowing that he was perfectly safe. But horrified and furious as the Sultan was, his feelings were nothing to those of Prince Firouz Schah, when he saw the object of his passionate devotion being carried rapidly away. And while he was struck speechless with regret at not having guarded her better, she vanished swiftly out of his sight.

What was he to do?

The sight of the prince showed the doorkeeper his mistake and flinging himself at his master's feet, begged his pardon. "Rise," said the prince, "I am the cause of this misfortune, and not you. Go and find me the robe of a monk, but do not say it is for me."

At a short distance from the country house, there was a monastery of monks, and the head monk, was the doorkeeper's friend. So, it was easy enough to get hold of a monk's robe, which the prince at once put on, instead of his own. Disguised like this and hiding on him a box of pearls and diamonds he had intended as a present to the princess, he left the house at nightfall, uncertain where he should go, but determined not to return without her.

Meanwhile the Indian had turned the horse in such a direction that, before many hours had passed, it had entered a wood close to the capital of the kingdom of Cashmere. Feeling very hungry, and supposing that the princess also might also want food, he brought his horse down to the earth, and left the princess in a shady place, on the banks of a clear stream.

At first, when the princess had found herself alone, the idea had occurred to her of trying to escape and hide herself. But as she had eaten scarcely anything since she had left Bengal, she felt she was too weak to go far, and had to give up her plan. On the return of the Indian with food, she began to eat hungrily, and soon had sufficient courage to reply to his rude words. She sprang to her feet, calling loudly for help, and luckily her cries were heard by a troop of horsemen, who rode up to ask what the matter was.

Now the leader of these horsemen was the Sultan of Cashmere, returning from the chase, and he instantly turned to the Indian to inquire who he was, and whom he had with him. The Indian rudely

answered that it was his wife, and there was no occasion for anyone else to interfere between them.

The princess, who, of course, was ignorant of the rank of her deliverer, denied altogether the Indian's story. "My lord," she cried, "whoever you may be, put no faith in this impostor. He is an abominable magician, who has this day torn me from the Prince of Persia, my destined husband, and has brought me here on this enchanted horse." She would have continued, but her tears choked her, and the Sultan of Cashmere, convinced by her beauty and her distinguished air of the truth of her tale, ordered his followers to cut off the Indian's head, which was done immediately.

But rescued though she was from one peril, it seemed as if she had only fallen into another. The Sultan commanded a horse to be given her, and conducted her to his own palace, where he led her to a beautiful apartment, and selected female slaves to wait on her. Then, without allowing her time to thank him for all he had done, he told her to rest, saying she should tell him her adventures on the following day.

The princess fell asleep, believing that she had only to relate her story for the Sultan to be touched by compassion, and to return her to the prince without delay.

When the King of Cashmere had left her the evening before, he had decided that the sun should not set again without the princess becoming his wife, and at daybreak proclamation of his intention was made throughout the town, by the sound of drums, trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments. The Princess of Bengal was early awakened by the noise, but she did not for one moment imagine that it had anything to do with her, till the Sultan, arriving as soon as she was dressed to inquire after her health, informed her that the trumpet blasts she heard

were part of the marriage ceremonies, for which he begged her to prepare. This unexpected announcement caused the princess such terror that she sank down in a dead faint.

The slaves that were in waiting ran to her aid, and the Sultan himself did his best to bring her back to consciousness. At last her senses began slowly to come back to her, and then, rather than break a promise to the Prince of Persia by agreeing to such a marriage, she decided to pretend to be mad. So she began by saying all sorts of crazy things, and using all kinds of strange gestures, while the Sultan stood watching her with sorrow and surprise. But as this sudden behaviour showed no sign of stopping, he left her to her women, ordering them to take the greatest care of her. Still, as the day went on, the illness seemed to become worse, and by night it was almost violent.

Days passed in this manner, till at last the Sultan of Cashmere decided to summon all the doctors of his court to consult together over her sad state. Their answer was that madness is of so many different kinds that it was impossible to give an opinion on the case without seeing the princess, so the Sultan gave orders that they were to be introduced into her chamber, one by one.

This decision had been foreseen by the princess, who knew quite well that if once she allowed the physicians to feel her pulse, the most ignorant of them would discover that she was in perfectly good health, and that her madness was false, so as each man approached, she broke out into such violent actions, that not one dared to lay a finger on her. A few, who pretended to be cleverer than the rest, declared that they could diagnose sick people only from sight, ordered her certain potions, which she made no difficulty about taking, as she believed they were all harmless.

When the Sultan of Cashmere saw that the court doctors could do nothing towards curing the princess, he called in those of the city, who did no better. Then he called to the most celebrated physicians in the other large towns, but finding that the task was beyond their science, he finally sent messengers into the other neighbouring states, with a memorandum containing full particulars of the princess's madness, offering at the same time to pay the expenses of any physician who would come and see for himself, and a handsome reward to the one who should cure her. In answer to this proclamation many foreign professors flocked into Cashmere, but they naturally were not more successful than the rest had been, as the cure depended neither on them nor their skill, but only on the princess herself.

It was during this time that Prince Firouz Schah, wandering sadly and hopelessly from place to place, arrived in a large city of India, where he heard a great deal of talk about the Princess of Bengal who had gone out of her senses, on the very day that she was to have been married to the Sultan of Cashmere. This was quite enough to make him take the road to Cashmere, and to ask at the first inn at which he stayed in the capital the full details of the story. When he knew that he had at last found the princess whom he had so long lost, he set about creating a plan for her rescue.

The first thing he did was to buy a doctor's robe, so that his robe, added to the long beard he had allowed to grow on his travels, might unmistakably show his profession. He then lost no time in going to the palace, where he obtained an audience of the chief usher and declared that he had the secret of certain remedies, which had before never failed to work.

The chief usher assured him that he was heartily welcome and that the Sultan would receive him with pleasure; and in case of success, he would gain a magnificent reward.

When the Prince of Persia, in the disguise of a physician, was brought before him, the Sultan wasted no time in talking, beyond remarking that the mere sight of a doctor threw the princess into a rage. He then led the prince up to a room under the roof, which had an opening through which he might observe the princess, without himself being seen.

The prince looked, and saw the princess lying on a sofa with tears in her eyes, singing softly to herself a song about her sad destiny, which had taken from her, perhaps for ever, a man she so tenderly loved. The young man's heart beat fast as he listened, for he needed no further proof that her madness was false, and that it was love of him which had caused her to use this trick. He softly left his hiding place, and returned to the Sultan, to whom he reported that he was sure from certain signs that the princess's illness was not incurable, but that he must see her and speak with her alone.

The Sultan made no difficulty in agreeing to this, and ordered that he should be taken into the princess's apartment. The moment she caught sight of his physician's robe, she sprang from her seat in a fury, and threw insults at him. The prince took no notice of her behaviour, and approaching quite close, so that his words might be heard by her alone, he said in a low whisper, "Look at me, princess, and you will see that I am no doctor, but the Prince of Persia, who has come to set you free."

At the sound of his voice, the Princess of Bengal suddenly grew calm, and an expression of joy overspread her face. For some time she was too amazed to speak, and Prince Firouz Schah took advantage of her silence to explain to her all that had occurred, his despair at watching her disappear before his very eyes, the promise he had made to follow her over the world, and his joy at finally discovering her in the palace at Cashmere. When he had finished, he begged in his turn that the

princess would tell him how she had come there, so that he might the better devise some means of rescuing her from the Sultan.

It needed but a few words from the princess to explain the whole situation, and how she had been forced to play the part of a mad woman in order to escape from a marriage with the Sultan, who had not had sufficient politeness even to ask her consent. If necessary, she added, she had made up her mind to die sooner than permit herself to be forced into such a marriage, and break a promise to a prince whom she loved.

The prince then asked if she knew what had become of the enchanted horse since the Indian's death, but the princess could only reply that she had heard nothing about it. Still she did not suppose that the horse could have been forgotten by the Sultan, after all she had told him of its power.

To this the prince agreed, and they discussed a plan by which she might be able to make her escape and return with him into Persia. And as the first step, she was to dress herself with care, and receive the Sultan politely when he visited her next morning.

The Sultan was delighted on learning the result of the interview, and his opinion of the doctor's skill was raised still higher when, on the following day, the princess behaved towards him in such a way as to persuade him that her complete cure would be soon. However he contented himself with assuring her how happy he was to see her health so much improved, and urged her to make every use of so clever a physician, and to have confidence in him. Then he left, without awaiting any reply from the princess.

The Prince of Persia left the room at the same time, and asked if he might be allowed to ask by what means the Princess of Bengal had reached Cashmere, which was so far from her father's kingdom, and

how she came to be there alone. The Sultan thought the question very natural, and told him the same story that the Princess of Bengal had done, adding that he had ordered the enchanted horse to be taken to his treasury as a curiosity, though he was quite ignorant how it could be used.

”Sire,” replied the physician, “your Highness’s tale has supplied me with the clue I needed to complete the recovery of the princess. During her voyage here on an enchanted horse, a part of its enchantment has by some means been passed to her, and it can only be removed by certain perfumes of which I possess the secret. If your Highness will agree, and to give the court and the people one of the most astonishing sights they have ever seen, order the horse to be brought into the big square outside the palace, and leave the rest to me. I promise that in a very few moments, in the presence of all the people, you shall see the princess as healthy both in mind and body as ever she was in her life. And in order to make the spectacle as impressive as possible, I would suggest that she should be richly dressed and covered with the best jewels of the crown.”

The Sultan readily agreed to all that the prince proposed, and the following morning he ordered that the enchanted horse should be taken from the treasury, and brought into the great square of the palace. Soon the rumour began to spread through the town, that something extraordinary was about to happen, and such a crowd began to collect that the guards had to be called out to keep order, and to make a way for the enchanted horse.

When all was ready, the Sultan appeared, and took his place on a platform, surrounded by the chief nobles and officers of his court. When they were seated, the Princess of Bengal was seen leaving the palace, accompanied by the ladies who had been assigned to her by the Sultan. She slowly approached the enchanted horse, and with the

help of her ladies, she mounted on its back. As soon as she was in the saddle, with her feet in the stirrups and the bridle in her hand, the physician placed around the horse some large containers full of burning coals, into each of which he threw a perfume made of all sorts of delicious scents. Then he crossed his hands over his chest, and with lowered eyes walked three times round the horse, muttering the while certain words. Soon there arose from the burning coals a thick smoke which almost hid both the horse and princess, and this was the moment for which he had been waiting. Springing lightly up behind the lady, he leaned forward and turned the peg, and as the horse flew up into the air, he cried aloud so that his words were heard by all present, "Sultan of Cashmere, when you wish to marry princesses who have sought your protection, learn first to get their permission."

It was in this way that the Prince of Persia rescued the Princess of Bengal, and returned with her to Persia, where they landed this time before the palace of the King himself. The marriage was only delayed just long enough to make the ceremony as brilliant as possible, and, as soon as the celebrations were over, a messenger was sent to the King of Bengal, to inform him of what had passed, and to ask for his friendship between the two countries, which he heartily gave.

The Story of Two Sisters Who Were Jealous of Their Younger Sister

Once there reigned over Persia a Sultan named Kosrouschah, who from his boyhood had been fond of putting on a disguise and seeking adventures in all parts of the city, accompanied by one of his officers, disguised like himself. And no sooner was his father buried and the ceremonies over that made him king, than the young man hurried to throw off his king's robes, and calling to his vizier to also get ready, sneaked out in the simple clothes of an ordinary person into the streets of the capital.

Passing down a lonely street, the Sultan heard women's voices in loud discussion, and peeping through a crack in the door, he saw three sisters, sitting on a sofa in a large hall, talking in a very lively and serious manner. Judging from the few words that he heard, they were each explaining what sort of men they wished to marry.

"I ask nothing better," cried the eldest, "than to have the Sultan's baker for a husband. Think of being able to eat as much as one wanted, of that delicious bread that is baked for his Highness alone! Let us see if your wish is as good as mine."

"I," replied the second sister, "should be quite content with the Sultan's head cook. What delicate dishes I should feast upon! And, as I believe that the Sultan's bread is used all through the palace, I should have that as well. You see, my dear sister, my taste is as good as yours."

It was now the turn of the youngest sister, who was by far the most beautiful of the three, and had, besides, more sense than the other two. "As for me," she said, "If we are to wish for husbands, nothing less

than the Sultan himself will do for me.”

The Sultan was so much amused by the conversation he had overheard, that he made up his mind to grant their wishes, and turning to the grand-vizier, he told him note the house, and on the following morning to bring the ladies into his presence.

The grand-vizier did as he was told, and hardly giving them time to change their dresses, told the three sisters to follow him to the palace. Here they were presented one by one, and when they had bowed before the Sultan, the king put the question to them, ” Tell me, do you remember what you wished for last night? Fear nothing, but answer me the truth.”

These words, which were so unexpected, threw the sisters into great confusion, their eyes fell. All three remained silent, and he continued: “Do not be afraid, I am not going to hurt you, and let me tell you at once, that I know the wishes you each made. You,” he said, turning to the youngest, “who wanted to have me for a husband, shall be satisfied this very day. And you,” he added, addressing himself to the other two, “shall be married at the same moment to my baker and to my chief cook.”

When the Sultan had finished speaking the three sisters threw themselves at his feet, and the youngest spoke, “Oh, sire, since you know my foolish words, believe, I beg you, that they were only said in joke. I am unworthy of the honour you propose, and I can only ask forgiveness for my foolishness.”

The other sisters also tried to excuse themselves, but the Sultan would hear nothing.

”No, no,” he said, “My mind is made up. Your wishes shall be granted.”

So the three weddings were celebrated that same day, but with a great difference. That of the youngest was marked by all the magnificence that was customary at the marriage of the King of Persia, while the celebrations for the marriage of the Sultan's baker and his chief cook were much less.

This was highly displeasing to the elder sisters, who became extremely jealous, which in the end caused a great deal of trouble and pain to several people. And the first time that they had the opportunity of speaking to each other, which was not till several days later at a public bath, they did not try to hide their feelings.

"Can you possibly understand why the Sultan would want to marry her?" said one to the other

"He must be quite blind," replied the wife of the chief cook. "As for her looking a little younger than we do, what does that matter? You would have made a far better Queen than her."

"Oh," replied the elder, "If the Sultan had chosen you it would have been all right, but it really bothers me that he should have chosen a horrible little creature like that. However, I will take revenge on her somehow, and I ask you to give me your help in the matter, and to tell me anything that you can think of that is likely to hurt her."

In order to carry out their wicked scheme the two sisters met often to talk over their ideas, though all the while they pretended to be as friendly as ever towards the Queen, always treated them with kindness. For a long time no plan occurred to the two women that seemed likely to succeed, but at last the birth of a son for the king gave them the chance for which they had been hoping.

They received permission from the Sultan to stay in the palace for some weeks, and never left their sister night or day. When at last a

little boy, beautiful as the sun, was born, they laid him in his cradle and carried it down to a canal which passed through the grounds of the palace. Then, leaving it, they told the Sultan that instead of the son he had so much wanted the Sultana had given birth to a puppy. At this dreadful news the Sultan was so overcome with rage and grief that it was with great difficulty that the grand-vizier managed to save the Queen from his anger.

Meanwhile the cradle continued to float peacefully along the canal till, on the outskirts of the royal gardens, it was suddenly noticed by the superintendent, one of the highest and most respected officials in the kingdom.

”Go,” he said to a gardener who was working near, “and get that cradle out for me.”

The gardener did as he was told, and soon placed the cradle in the hands of the superintendent.

The official was much astonished to see that the cradle, which he had supposed to be empty, contained a baby, which looked so beautiful. Having no children himself, although he had been married for some years, he at once thought that here was a child which he could take and bring up as his own. And, telling the man pick up the cradle and follow him, he turned towards home.

”My wife,” he exclaimed as he entered the room, “God has refused us any children, but here is one that has been sent in their place. Send for a nurse to look after him.”

The wife accepted the baby with joy, and though the superintendent saw quite well that it must have come from the royal palace, he did not think it was his business to ask more about the mystery.

The following year another prince was born and sent floating down the canal, but happily for the baby, the superintendent of the gardens again was walking by the canal, and carried it home as before.

The Sultan, naturally enough, was still more furious the second time than the first, but when the same curious accident was repeated in the third year he could control himself no longer, and, to the great joy of the jealous sisters, ordered that the Queen should be executed. But the poor lady was so much loved at Court that not even the fear of sharing her fate could prevent the grand-vizier and the courtiers from throwing themselves at the Sultan's feet and begging him not to order so cruel a punishment for what, after all, was not her fault.

"Let her live," begged the grand-vizier, "and send her far away for the rest of her days. That will be punishment enough."

When he had calmed down a little, the Sultan said, "Let her live then. But if I grant her life it shall only be on one condition. Let a box be built for her at the door of the main mosque, and let the window of the box be always open. There she shall sit, in the shabbiest clothes, and every person who enters the mosque shall spit in her face in passing. Anyone that refuses to obey shall have the same punishment himself. You, vizier, will see that my orders are carried out."

The grand-vizier saw that it was useless to say more, and, happily, the sisters watched the building of the box, and then listened to the jeers of the people at the helpless Queen sitting inside. But the poor lady had so much dignity and modesty that it was not long before she had won the sympathy of those among the crowd.

But it is now time to return to the story of the third baby, this time a princess. Like its brothers, it was found by the superintendent of the gardens, and adopted by him and his wife, and all three were brought up with the greatest care and tenderness.

As the children grew older their beauty increased,. The princes had been named by their foster-father Bahman and Perviz, after two of the ancient kings of Persia, while the princess was called Parizade, or the child of the genie.

The superintendent soon employed a tutor to teach the young princes how to read and write. And the princess, determined not to be left behind, showed herself so anxious to learn with her brothers, that the superintendent agreed to allow her to join in their lessons, and it was not long before she knew as much as they did.

From that time all their studies were done together. They had the best teachers for the fine arts, geography, poetry, history and science, and even for sciences which are learned by few, and every subject seemed so easy to them, that their teachers were astonished at the progress they made. The princess had a love for music, and could sing and play upon all sorts of instruments. She could also ride and drive as well as her brothers, shoot with a bow and arrow, and throw a javelin with the same skill as they, and sometimes even better.

The superintendent decided that his children should not be kept any longer in the palace gardens, where he had always lived, so he bought a splendid country house a few miles from the capital, surrounded by an immense park. This park he filled with wild beasts of various sorts, so that the princes and princess might hunt as much as they pleased.

When everything was ready, the superintendent threw himself at the Sultan's feet, and, begged his Highness's permission to resign his job. This was granted by the Sultan in a few gracious words, and he then asked what reward he could give to his faithful servant. But the superintendent said that he wished for nothing, and bowing once more, he left.

Five or six months passed away in the pleasures of the country, when

the superintendent passed away so suddenly that he had no time to tell the secret of their birth to his adopted children, and as his wife had long been dead also, it seemed as if the princes and the princess would never know. Their sorrow for their father was very deep, and they lived quietly on in their new home, without feeling any desire to leave it

One day the princes as usual went out to hunt, but their sister remained alone in her room. While they were gone an old woman appeared at the door, and asked to enter, as it was the hour of prayer. The princess sent orders at once that the old woman was to be taken to the private chapel in the grounds, and when she had finished her prayers was to be shown the house and gardens, and then to be brought before her.

When she had seen it all she was led by the servants before the princess, who was seated in a room which was more beautiful than all the rest all the rest.

”My good woman,” said the princess pointing to a sofa, “come and sit beside me. I am delighted at the opportunity of speaking for a few moments with so holy a person.” The old woman made some objections to so much honour being given her, but the princess refused to listen, and insisted that her guest should take the best seat, and as she thought she must be tired, ordered refreshments.

While the old woman was eating, the princess put several questions about her way of life, and then asked what she thought of the house now that she had seen it.

”Madam,” replied the woman, “It is beautiful, comfortable and it is impossible to imagine anything more lovely than the garden. But since you ask me, I must say that it lacks three things to make it absolutely perfect.”

”And what can they be?” cried the princess. “Only tell me, and I will lose no time in getting them.”

”The three things, madam,” replied the old woman, “are, first, the Talking Bird, whose voice draws all other singing birds to it, to join in chorus. And second, the Singing Tree, where every leaf is a song that is never silent. And lastly the Golden Water, of which it is only needed to pour a single drop into a basin for it to shoot up into a fountain, which will never run out, nor will the basin ever overflow.”

”Oh, how can I thank you,” cried the princess, “For telling me of such treasures! But please tell me where I can find them.”

”Madam,” replied the old woman, “Because of the kindness you have shown me I will tell you. The three things of which I have spoken are all to be found in one place, on the borders of this kingdom, near India. Your messenger has only to follow the road that passes by your house, for twenty days, and at the end of that time, he is to ask the first person he meets for the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Golden Water.” She then rose, and saying farewell to the princess, went on her way.

The old woman had left so suddenly that the Princess Parizade did not realize till she was gone that the directions were hardly clear enough for the search to be successful. And she was still thinking of the subject, and how delightful it would be to have such treasures, when the princes, her brothers, returned from hunting.

”What is the matter, my sister?” asked Prince Bahman; “Why do you look so serious? Are you ill? Or has anything happened?”

Princess Parizade did not answer directly, but at length she raised her eyes, and replied that there was nothing wrong.

”But there must be something,” said Prince Bahman, “for you to have changed so much during the short time we have been absent. Hide nothing from us, I beg you.”

”When I said that it was nothing,” said the princess, “I meant that it was nothing that affected you, although I admit that it is certainly of some importance to me. Like myself, you have always thought this house that our father built for us was perfect in every way, but only today I have learned that three things are still lacking to complete it. These are the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Golden Water.” After explaining the strange qualities of each, the princess continued, “It was a holy woman who told me all this, and where they might all be found. Perhaps you will think that the house is beautiful enough as it is, and that we can do quite well without them, but in this I cannot agree with you, and I shall never be content until I have got them. So advise me who to send on this mission.”

”My dear sister,” replied Prince Bahman, “that you should care about the matter is quite enough. But we both care about you, and I, as the elder, will go to make the first attempt, if you will tell me where I am to go, and what steps I am to take.”

Prince Perviz at first objected that, being the head of the family, his brother should not be allowed to face such danger, but Prince Bahman refused to listen, and left to make the necessary preparations for his journey.

The next morning Prince Bahman got up very early, and after saying farewell to his brother and sister, mounted his horse. But just as he was about to touch it with his whip, he was stopped by a cry from the princess.

”Oh, perhaps after all you may never come back. One never can tell what accidents may happen. Give it up, I beg you, for I would a

thousand times rather lose the Talking Bird, and the Singing Tree and the Golden Water, than that you should run into danger.”

”My dear sister,” answered the prince, “accidents only happen to unlucky people, and I hope that I am not one of them. But as everything is uncertain, I promise you to be very careful. Take this knife,” he continued, handing her one, “and every now and then draw it out and look at it. As long as it keeps bright and clean as it is today, you will know that I am living, but if the blade is spotted with blood, it will be a sign that I am dead, and you may weep for me.”

Prince Bahman said farewell once more, and started on the road. For twenty days he rode straight on, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, till he found himself drawing near the border of Persia. Seated under a tree by the road he noticed a hideous old man, with a long white moustache, and beard that almost fell to his feet. His nails had grown to an enormous length, and on his head he wore a huge hat, which served him as an umbrella.

Prince Bahman, who, remembering the directions of the old woman, had been since sunrise on the look-out for some one, recognized the old man at once to be a monk. He dismounted from his horse, and bowed low before the holy man, saying by way of greeting, “My father, may your life be long, and may all your wishes be fulfilled!”

The monk did his best to reply, but his moustache was so thick that his words were difficult to understand, and the prince, realizing what the matter was, took a pair of scissors from his saddle pockets, and requested permission to cut off some of the moustache, as he had a question of great importance to ask the monk. The monk made a sign that he could do as he liked, and when a few inches of his hair and beard had been cut the prince told the holy man that he would hardly believe how much younger he looked. The monk smiled at his

compliments, and thanked him for what he had done.

”Let me,” he said, “show you my gratitude for making me more comfortable by telling me what I can do for you.”

”Gentle monk,” replied Prince Bahman, “I come from far away, and I seek the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Golden Water. I know that they are to be found somewhere around here, but I do not know the exact spot. Tell me, if you can, so that I have not have traveled on a useless journey.” While he was speaking, the prince noticed a change in the expression on the monk’s face, who waited for some time before he made a reply.

”My lord,” he said at last, “I do know the road, for which you ask, but your kindness and the friendship make me reluctant to point it out.”

”But why not?” asked the prince. “What danger can there be?”

”The very greatest danger,” answered the monk. “Other men, as brave as you, have ridden down this road, and have asked me that question. I did my best to change their minds, but it was of no use. Not one of them would listen to my words, and not one of them came back. Be warned, and go no further.”

”I am grateful to you for your interest in me,” said Prince Bahman, “and for the advice you have given, though I cannot follow it. But what dangers can there be in the adventure which courage and a good sword cannot face?”

”And suppose,” answered the monk, “that your enemies are invisible, what then?”

”Nothing will make me give up,” replied the prince, “and for the last time I ask you to tell me where I am to go.”

When the monk saw that the prince's mind was made up, he drew a ball from a bag that lay near him, and held it out. "If it must be so," he said, with a sigh, "take this, and when you have mounted your horse throw the ball in front of you. It will roll on till it reaches the foot of a mountain, and when it stops you will stop also. You will then throw the bridle on your horse's neck, and will dismount. On each side you will see vast heaps of big black stones, and will hear many insulting voices, but pay no attention to them, and, above all, beware of ever turning your head. If you do, you will instantly become a black stone like the rest. For those stones are men like yourself, who have been on the same journey, and have failed, as I fear that you may fail also. If you manage to avoid this danger, and to reach the top of the mountain, you will find there the Talking Bird in a splendid cage, and you can ask of him where you are to seek the Singing Tree and the Golden Water. That is all I have to say. You know what you have to do, and what to avoid, but if you are wise you will think of it no more, but return home."

The prince smilingly shook his head, and thanking the monk once more, he sprang on his horse and threw the ball before him.

The ball rolled along the road so fast that Prince Bahman had much difficulty in keeping up with it, and it never slowed till the foot of the mountain was reached. Then it came to a sudden halt, and the prince at once got down and flung the bridle on his horse's neck. He paused for a moment and looked round him at the masses of black stones with which the sides of the mountain were covered, and then began to climb. He had hardly gone four steps when he heard the sound of voices around him, although not another creature was in sight.

"Who is this imbecile?" cried some, "Stop him at once." "Kill him," shrieked others, "Help! Robbers! Murderers! Help! Help!" "Oh, let him alone," sneered another, "He is such a beautiful young man; I am

sure the bird and the cage must have been kept for him.”

At first the prince paid no attention to all this noise, but continued on his way. Unfortunately, instead of silencing the voices, it only seemed to irritate them the more, and they doubled their fury, in front as well as behind. After some time he grew bewildered, his knees began to tremble, and finding himself in the act of falling, he forgot altogether the advice of the monk. He turned to flee down the mountain, and in one moment became a black stone.

As may be imagined, Prince Perviz and his sister were all this time very anxious, and looked at the magic knife, not once but many times a day. Before the blade had remained bright and spotless, but at the moment at which Prince Bahman and his horse were changed into black stones, large drops of blood appeared on the surface. “Ah! My beloved brother,” cried the princess in horror, throwing the knife from her, “I shall never see you again, and it is I who have killed you. Fool that I was to listen to the voice of that holy woman, who probably was not speaking the truth. What are the Talking Bird and the Singing Tree to me in comparison with you?”

Prince Perviz’s grief at his brother’s loss was as great as that of Princess Parizade, but he did not waste his time on useless crying.

”My sister,” he said, “why should you think the old woman was deceiving you about these treasures, and what would have been her reason for doing so! No, no, our brother must have met his death by some accident, and tomorrow I will start on the same quest.”

Terrified at the thought that she might lose her only remaining brother, the princess begged him to give up his quest, but he remained firm. Before setting out, however, he gave her a string of a hundred pearls, and said, “When I am absent, look this over daily for me. But if you should find that the beads stick, so that they will not slip one

after the other, you will know that my brother's fate has befallen me. Still, we must hope for better luck."

Then he departed, and on the twentieth day of his journey met the monk on the same spot as Prince Bahman had met him, and began to question him as to the place where the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree and the Golden Water were to be found. As in the case of his brother, the monk tried to make him give up his quest, and even told him that only a few weeks since a young man, looking very much like him, had passed that way, but had never come back again.

"That, holy monk," replied Prince Perviz, "was my elder brother, who is now dead, though how he died I cannot say."

"He changed into a black stone," answered the monk, "like all the rest who have gone on the same quest, and you will become one likewise if you are not more careful in following my directions." Then he told the prince, if he valued his life, to pay no attention to the voices that would pursue him up the mountain, and handing him a ball from the bag, which still seemed to be half full, he sent him on his way.

When Prince Perviz reached the foot of the mountain he jumped from his horse, and paused for a moment to recall the instructions the monk had given him. Then he walked on, but had scarcely gone five or six paces when he was startled by a man's voice that seemed close to his ear, exclaiming: "Stop, rash fellow, and let me punish your foolishness." This insult completely made the prince forget the monk's advice. He drew his sword, but almost before he had realized that there was nobody there, he and his horse were two black stones.

Not a morning had passed since Prince Perviz had ridden away without Princess Parizade looking at her beads, and at night she even hung them round her neck, so that if she woke she could be sure of her brother's safety. She was moving them through her fingers at the

moment that the prince turned to stone, and her heart sank when the first pearl remained fixed in its place. However she had long made up her mind what she would do in such a case, and the following morning the princess, disguised as a man, set out for the mountain.

As she was used to riding from her childhood, she managed to travel as many miles every day as her brothers had done, and it was, as before, on the twentieth day that she arrived at the place where the monk was sitting. “Good monk,” she said politely, “Will you allow me to rest by you for a few moments, and perhaps you will be so kind as to tell me if you have ever heard of a Talking Bird, a Singing Tree, and some Golden Water that are to be found somewhere near here?”

”Madam,” replied the monk, “for in spite of your manly dress your voice betrays you, I shall be proud to serve you in any way I can. But may I ask the purpose of your question?”

”Good monk,” answered the princess, “I have heard such wonderful descriptions of these three things that I cannot rest till I possess them.”

”Madam,” said the monk, “they are far more beautiful than any description, but you seem ignorant of all the difficulties that stand in your way, or you would hardly have undertaken such an adventure. Give it up, I beg you, and return home, and do not ask me to help you to a cruel death.”

”Holy father,” answered the princess, “I come from far, and I should be in despair if I turned back without having got my object. You have spoken of difficulties. Tell me, I beg you, what they are, so that I may know if I can overcome them, or see if they are beyond my strength.”

So the monk repeated his tale, of the voices, the horrors of the black stones, which were once living men, and the difficulties of climbing

the mountain, and pointed out that the main means of success was never to look behind till you had the cage in your hand.

”As far as I can see,” said the princess, “The first thing is not to mind the voices that follow you till you reach the cage, and then never to look behind. As to this, I think I have enough self-control to look straight before me; but as it is quite possible that I might be frightened by the voices, as even the bravest men have been, I will block my ears with cotton, so that I shall hear nothing.”

”Madam,” cried the monk, “out of all the number who have asked me the way to the mountain, you are the first who has ever suggested such a means of escaping the danger! It is possible that you may succeed, but all the same, the risk is great.”

“Good monk,” answered the princess, “I feel in my heart that I shall succeed, and it only remains for me to ask you the way I am to go.”

Then the monk said that it was useless to say more, and he gave her the ball, which she rolled before her.

The first thing the princess did on arriving at the mountain was to block her ears with cotton, and then, making up her mind which was the best way to go, she began her climb. In spite of the cotton, some echoes of the voices reached her ears, but not so as to trouble her. Indeed, though they grew louder and more insulting the higher she climbed, the princess only laughed, and said to herself that she certainly would not let a few rough words stand between her and the goal. At last she saw in the distance the cage and the bird, whose voice called out, “Return, return! Never dare to come near me.”

At the sight of the bird, the princess hurried, and without worrying about the noise which by this time had grown deafening, she walked straight up to the cage, and seizing it, she said, “Now, my bird, I have

got you, and I shall take good care that you do not escape.” As she spoke she took the cotton from her ears, for it was needed no longer.

”Brave lady,” answered the bird, “Although kept in a cage, I was happy, but if I must become a slave, I could not wish for a better mistress than one who has shown so much bravery, and from this moment I promise I will serve you faithfully. Some day you will need you to prove this, for I know who you are better than you do yourself. Meanwhile, tell me what I can do, and I will obey you.”

”Bird,” replied the princess, who was filled with joy, “Let me first thank you for your good will, and then let me ask you where the Golden Water is to be found.”

The bird described the place, which was not far away, and the princess filled a small silver flask that she had brought with her for the purpose. She then returned to the cage, and said: “Bird, there is still something else, where shall I find the Singing Tree?”

”Behind you, in that wood,” replied the bird, and the princess wandered through the wood, till a sound of the sweetest voices told her she had found what she was looking for. But the tree was tall and strong, and it was hopeless to think of carrying it away.

”You need not do that,” said the bird, when she had returned to ask what to do. “Break off a twig, and plant it in your garden, and it will take root, and grow into a magnificent tree.”

When the Princess Parizade held in her hands the three wonders promised her by the old woman, she said to the bird: “All that is not enough. It was because of you that my brothers became black stones. I cannot tell them from the others, but you must know, and point them out to me, I beg you, for I wish to carry them away.”

For some reason that the princess could not guess these words seemed to displease the bird, and he did not answer. The princess waited a moment, and then continued in severe tones, "Have you forgotten that you yourself said that you are my slave to do my bidding, and also that your life is in my power?"

"No, I have not forgotten," replied the bird, "but what you ask is very difficult. However, I will do my best. If you look round," he went on, "you will see a jug standing near. Take it, and, as you go down the mountain, scatter a little of the water it contains over every black stone and you will soon find your two brothers."

Princess Parizade took the pitcher, and, carrying with her besides the cage the twig and the flask, returned down the mountain side. At every black stone she stopped and sprinkled it with water, and as the water touched it the stone instantly became a man. When she suddenly saw her brothers before her, her delight was mixed with astonishment.

"Why, what are you doing here?" she cried.

"We have been asleep," they said.

"Yes," replied the princess, "But without me your sleep would probably have lasted forever. Have you forgotten that you came here in search of the Talking Bird, the Singing Tree, and the Golden Water, and the black stones that were heaped up along the road? Look round and see if there is one left. These gentlemen, and yourselves, and all your horses were changed into these stones, and I have saved you by sprinkling you with the water from this jug. As I could not return home without you, even though I had obtained the treasures on which I had set my heart, I forced the Talking Bird to tell me how to break the spell."

On hearing these words Prince Bahman and Prince Perviz understood what they owed their sister, and the knights who stood by declared themselves her slaves and ready to carry out her wishes. But the princess, while thanking them for their politeness, explained that she wished for no company but that of her brothers, and that the rest were free to go where they would.

So saying the princess mounted her horse, and, refusing to allow even Prince Bahman to carry the cage with the Talking Bird, she gave him with the branch of the Singing Tree, while Prince Perviz took care of the flask containing the Golden Water.

Then they rode away, followed by the knights and gentlemen, who begged to be allowed to escort them.

It had been the plan of the party to stop and tell their adventures to the monk, but they found to their sorrow that he was dead, whether from old age, or whether from the feeling that his task was done, they never knew.

As they continued their journey their numbers grew smaller every day, for the knights turned off one by one to their own homes, and only the brothers and sister finally arrived at the gate of the palace.

The princess carried the cage straight into the garden, and, as soon as the bird began to sing, nightingales, larks, thrushes, finches, and all sorts of other birds joined their voices in chorus. The branch she planted in a corner near the house, and in a few days it had grown into a great tree. As for the Golden Water it was poured into a great marble basin specially prepared for it, and it swelled and bubbled and then shot up into the air in a fountain twenty feet high.

The fame of these wonders soon spread abroad, and people came from far and near to see and admire.

After a few days Prince Bahman and Prince Perviz continued their life, and passed most of their time hunting. One day it happened that the Sultan of Persia was also hunting in the same direction, and, not wishing to interfere with his sport, the young men, on hearing the noise of the hunt approaching, prepared to leave, but, as luck would have it, they turned into the very path down which the Sultan was coming. They threw themselves from their horses and bowed, but the Sultan was curious to see their faces, and ordered them to rise.

The princes stood up respectfully, and the Sultan looked at them for a few moments without speaking, then he asked who they were and where they lived.

”Sire,” replied Prince Bahman, “We are sons of your Highness’s late superintendent of the gardens, and we live in a house that he built a short time before his death.”

”You seem fond of hunting,” answered the Sultan.

”Sire,” replied Prince Bahman, “It is our usual exercise, and one that should be practiced by any man who expects to serve his country in times of war.”

The Sultan was delighted with this remark, and said at once, “In that case I shall take great pleasure in watching you. Come, choose what sort of animal you would like to hunt.”

The princes jumped on their horses and followed the Sultan at a little distance. They had not gone very far before they saw a number of wild animals appear at once, and Prince Bahman started to chase a lion and Prince Perviz a bear. Both used their javelins with such skill that, soon the lion and the bear fell. Then Prince Perviz pursued a lion and Prince Bahman a bear, and in a very few minutes they, too, lay dead. As they were making ready for a third time the Sultan, called

them, and said smiling, “If I let you go on, there will soon be no animals left to hunt. Besides, your courage and manners have so won my heart that I will not have you expose yourselves to further danger. I am convinced that some day or other I shall find you useful as well as agreeable.”

He then gave them a warm invitation to stay with him, but with many thanks for the honour done them, they begged to be excused, and to be allowed to remain at home.

The Sultan who was not used to seeing his offers rejected asked their reasons, and Prince Bahman explained that they did not wish to leave their sister, and were accustomed to do nothing without consulting all three together.

”Ask her advice, then,” replied the Sultan, “and tomorrow come and hunt with me, and give me your answer.”

The two princes returned home, but they quite forgot to speak to their sister on the subject. The next morning when they went to hunt they met the Sultan in the same place, and he inquired what advice their sister had given. The young men looked at each other and blushed. At last Prince Bahman said, “Sire, we must throw ourselves on your Highness’s mercy. Neither my brother nor myself remembered anything about it.”

”Then be sure you do not forget today,” answered the Sultan, “and bring me back your reply tomorrow.”

When, however, the same thing happened a second time, they feared that the Sultan might be angry with them for their carelessness. But he just laughed, and, taking three little golden balls from his pocket, he held them out to Prince Bahman, saying, “Put these round your neck and you will not forget a third time, because when you remove

your clothes tonight the noise they will make in falling will remind you of my wishes.”

It all happened as the Sultan had foreseen, and the two brothers told their tale to their sister.

The Princess Parizade was much disturbed at the news. “Your meeting with the Sultan is very honourable to you,” she said, “But it places me in a very awkward position. It is because of me, I know, that you have resisted the Sultan’s wishes, and I am very grateful to you for it. But kings do not like to have their offers refused, and in time he would become angry with you, which would make me very unhappy. Ask the Talking Bird, who is wise and far-seeing, and let me hear what he says.”

So the bird was sent for.

”The princes must not refuse the Sultan’s proposal,” said he, “And they must even invite him to come and see your house.”

”But, bird,” objected the princess, “You know how dearly we love each other; will not all this spoil our friendship?”

”Not at all,” replied the bird, “It will make it all the closer.”

”Then the Sultan will have to see me,” said the princess.

The bird answered that it was necessary that he should see her, and everything would turn out for the best.

The following morning, when the Sultan inquired if they had spoken to their sister and what advice she had given them, Prince Bahman replied that they were ready to agree to his Highness’s wishes, and that their sister had scolded them for their hesitation about the matter. The Sultan received their excuses with great kindness, and told them

that he was sure they would be equally faithful to him, and kept them by his side for the rest of the day.

When they entered the gates of the capital, the eyes of the people who crowded the streets were fixed on the two young men, strangers to every one.

”Oh, if only the Sultan had had sons like that!” they murmured, “They look so handsome and are about the same age that his sons would have been!”

The Sultan ordered that splendid rooms should be prepared for the two brothers, and even insisted that they should have dinner with him. During dinner he talked about various scientific subjects, and also history, of which he was especially fond, but whatever topic they might be discussing he found that the views of the young men were always worth listening to. “If they were my own sons,” he said to himself, “they could not be better educated!” and he complimented them on their knowledge.

At the end of the evening the princes once more bowed before the throne and asked to return home; and then, encouraged by the kind words of farewell spoken by the Sultan, Prince Bahman said, “Sire, may we ask whether you would do us and our sister the honour of resting for a few minutes at our house the first time the hunt passes that way?”

”With the greatest pleasure,” replied the Sultan; “And as I am impatient to see the sister of such talented young men you may expect me the day after tomorrow.”

The princess was of course most anxious to entertain the Sultan in a suitable way, but as she had no experience in court customs she ran to the Talking Bird, and begged him to advise her as to what dishes

should be served.

”My dear mistress,” replied the bird, “Your cooks are very good and you can safely leave all to them, except that you must be careful to have a dish of cucumbers, stuffed with pearl sauce, served with the first course.”

”Cucumbers stuffed with pearls!” exclaimed the princess. “Why, bird, whoever heard of such a dish? The Sultan will expect a dinner he can eat, and not one he can only admire! Besides, if I were to use all the pearls I possess, they would not be enough.”

”Mistress,” replied the bird, “do what I tell you and it will all turn out well. And as to the pearls, if you go at dawn tomorrow and dig at the foot of the first tree in the park, on the right hand, you will find as many as you want.”

The princess had faith in the bird, who generally proved to be right, and taking the gardener with her early next morning followed his directions carefully. After digging for some time they came upon a golden box.

The box was found to be full of pearls, not very large ones, but well-shaped and of a good colour. So leaving the gardener to fill up the hole he had made under the tree, the princess took up the box and returned to the house.

The two princes had seen her go out, and had wondered what could have made her rise so early. Full of curiosity they got up and dressed, and met their sister as she was returning with the box under her arm.

”What have you been doing?” they asked, “Did the gardener come to tell you he had found a treasure?”

”On the contrary,” replied the princess, “it is I who have found one,”

and opening the box she showed her astonished brothers the pearls inside. Then, on the way back to the palace, she told them of what advice the bird, had given her. All three tried to guess the meaning, but they were forced at last to admit the explanation was beyond them.

The first thing the princess did on entering the palace was to send for the head cook and to order the dinner for the Sultan. When she had finished she suddenly added, "Besides the dishes I have mentioned there is one that you must prepare for the Sultan, and that no one must touch but yourself. It consists of a stuffed cucumber, and the stuffing is to be made of these pearls."

The head cook, who had never in all his experience heard of such a dish, stepped back in amazement.

"You think I am mad," answered the princess, who could see what he was thinking. "But I know quite well what I am doing. Go, and do your best, and take the pearls with you."

The next morning the princes started for the forest, and were soon joined by the Sultan. The hunt began and continued till mid-day, when the heat became so great that they were forced to rest. Then, as arranged, they turned their horses' heads towards the palace, and while Prince Bahman remained by the side of the Sultan, Prince Perviz rode on to warn his sister of their approach.

The moment his Highness entered the courtyard, the princess threw herself at his feet, but he bent and raised her, and gazed at her for some time, impressed with her grace and beauty. "They are all worthy," he said to himself, "And I am not surprised that they think so much of her opinions. I must find out more about them."

By this time the princess had recovered from the first embarrassment

of meeting, and made her speech of welcome.

”This is only a simple country house, sire,” she said, “suitable for people like ourselves, who live a quiet life. It cannot compare with the smallest of the Sultan’s palaces.”

”I cannot quite agree with you,” He replied, “Even the little that I have seen I admire greatly.”

The princess then led the way from room to room, and the Sultan examined everything carefully. “Do you call this a simple country house?” he said at last. “Why, if every country house was like this, the towns would soon be deserted. I am no longer astonished that you do not wish to leave it. Let us go into the gardens, which I am sure are no less beautiful than the rooms.”

A small door opened straight into the garden, and the first object that met the Sultan’s eyes was the Golden Water.

”What lovely coloured water!” he exclaimed, “where is the spring, and how do you make the fountain rise so high? I do not believe there is anything like it in the world.” He went forward to examine it, and when he had satisfied his curiosity, the princess conducted him towards the Singing Tree.

As they drew near, the Sultan was startled by the sound of strange voices, but could see nothing. “Where have you hidden your musicians?” he asked the princess; “Are they up in the air, or under the earth? Surely the owners of such charming voices should not hide themselves!”

”Sire,” answered the princess, “The voices all come from the tree which is straight in front of us, and if you will take a few steps, you will see that they become clearer.”

The Sultan did as he was told, and was so delighted at what he heard that he stood some time in silence.

”Tell me madam,” he said at last, “How this marvelous tree came into your garden? It must have been brought from a great distance, or else, I could not have missed hearing of it! What is its name?”

”The only name it has, sire,” replied she, “Is the Singing Tree, and it is not a native of this country. Its history is mixed up with those of the Golden Water and the Talking Bird, which you have not yet seen. If your Highness wishes I will tell you the whole story, when you have recovered from your tiredness.”

”Indeed, madam,” replied he, “You show me so many wonders that it is impossible to feel any tiredness. Let us go once more and look at the Golden Water and I am dying to see the Talking Bird.”

The Sultan could hardly tear himself away from the Golden Water, which puzzled him more and more. “You say,” he observed to the princess, “That this water does not come from any spring, or brought by pipes. All I understand, is that neither it nor the Singing Tree is a native of this country.”

”It is as you say, sire,” answered the princess, “And if you examine the basin, you will see that it is all in one piece, and therefore the water could not have been brought through it. What is more astonishing is, that I only emptied a small flaskful into the basin, and it increased to the quantity you now see.”

”Well, I will look at it no more today,” said the Sultan. “Take me to the Talking Bird.”

On approaching the house, the Sultan noticed a vast quantity of birds, whose voices filled the air, and he inquired why they were so much

more numerous here than in any other part of the garden.

”Sire,” answered the princess, “Do you see that cage hanging in one of the windows of the room? That is the Talking Bird, whose voice you can hear above them all, even above that of the nightingale. And the birds crowd to this spot, to add their songs to his.”

The Sultan stepped through the window, but the bird took no notice, continuing his song as before.

”My slave,” said the princess, “this is the Sultan. Make him a pretty speech.”

The bird stopped singing at once, and all the other birds stopped too.

”The Sultan is welcome,” he said. “I wish him long life and all prosperity.”

”I thank you, good bird,” answered the Sultan, seating himself before the meal, which was spread at a table near the window, “And I am enchanted to see you, the King of the Birds.”

The Sultan, noticing that his favorite dish of cucumber was placed before him, started to help himself to it, and was amazed to find that the stuffing was of pearls. “A novelty, indeed!” cried he, “But I do not understand the reason for it. One cannot eat pearls!”

”Sire,” replied the bird, before either the princes or the princess could speak, “Surely your Highness cannot be so surprised at seeing a cucumber stuffed with pearls, when you believed without any difficulty that the Sultana had given birth to a dog, a cat, and a log of wood.”

”I believed it,” answered the Sultan, “because the women looking after her told me so.”

”The women, sire,” said the bird, “were the sisters of the Sultana, who were full of jealousy at the honour you had given her, and in order to revenge themselves invented this story. Have them questioned, and they will admit their crime. These are your children, who were saved from death by the superintendent of your gardens, and brought up by him as if they were his own.”

Like a flash the truth came to the mind of the Sultan. “Bird,” he cried, “my heart tells me that what you say is true. My children,” he added, “let me embrace you.”

When the first moments of emotion were over, the Sultan hurried to finish his meal, and then turning to his children he exclaimed, “Today you have met your father. Tomorrow I will bring you the Sultana your mother. Be ready to receive her.”

The Sultan then mounted his horse and rode quickly back to the capital. Immediately he sent for the grand-vizier, and ordered him to seize and question the Sultana’s sisters that very day. This was done. They were tried and found guilty, and were executed in less than an hour.

But the Sultan did not wait to hear that his orders had been carried out before going on foot, followed by his whole court to the door of the great mosque, and drawing the Sultana with his own hand out of the narrow prison where she had spent so many years, “Madam,” he cried, embracing her with tears in his eyes, “I have come to ask your forgiveness for what I have done for you. I have already begun by punishing your sisters for this terrible crime, and I hope you will forgive me when I introduce you to our children, who are the most charming and talented people in the whole world. Come with me, and take back your position and all the honour that is due to you.”

This speech was delivered in the presence of an enormous number of

people, who had gathered from all parts when they heard what was happening, and the news was passed from mouth to mouth in a few seconds.

Early the next day the Sultan and Sultana followed by all the court, set out for the country house of their children. Here the Sultan presented them to the Sultana one by one, and for some time there was nothing but embraces and tears and tender words. Then they ate the magnificent dinner which had been prepared for them, and after they were all refreshed they went into the garden, where the Sultan pointed out to his wife the Golden Water and the Singing Tree. As to the Talking Bird, she had already met him.

In the evening they rode together back to the capital, the princes on each side of their father, and the princess with her mother. Long before they reached the gates the way was lined with people, and the air filled with shouts of welcome, with which were mingled the songs of the Talking Bird, sitting in its cage on the lap of the princess, and of the birds who followed it.

And in this manner they came back to their father's palace.