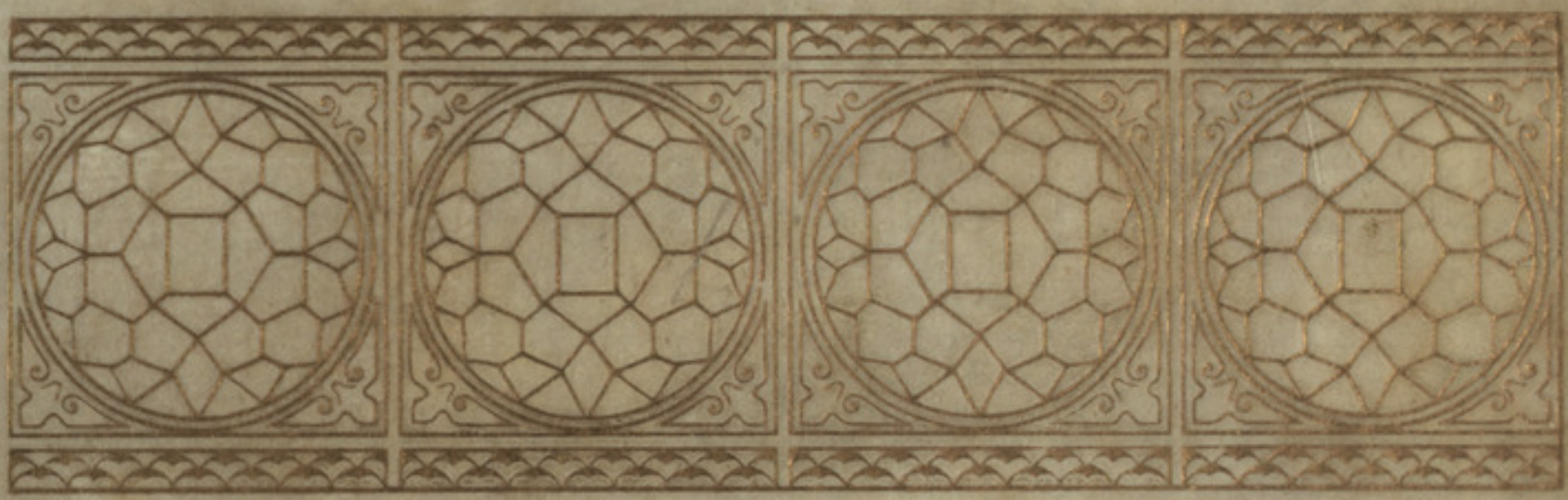
كتاب الف
ليلة و ليلة



كتاب الف
ليلة و ليلة

THE BOOK OF THE THOUSAND NIGHTS AND ONE NIGHT: NOW FIRST COMPLETELY DONE INTO ENGLISH PROSE AND VERSE, FROM THE ORIGINAL ARABIC, BY JOHN PAYNE (AUTHOR OF "THE MASQUE OF SHADOWS," "INTAGLIOS," "SONGS OF LIFE AND DEATH," "LAUTREC," "THE POEMS OF MASTER FRANCIS VILLON OF PARIS," "NEW POEMS," ETC. ETC.). IN NINE VOLUMES: VOLUME THE EIGHTH.

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CONTENTS OF THE EIGHTH VOLUME.

THE BOOK OF THE THOUSAND NIGHTS AND ONE NIGHT.

MESROUR AND ZEIN EL MEWASIF.

There was once, of old days and in bygone ages and times, a merchant named Mesrour, who was of the goodliest of the folk of his day, and he had wealth galore and was in easy case, but loved to take his pleasure in gardens and orchards and to divert himself with the love of fair women. One night, as he lay asleep, he dreamt that he was in a most lovely garden, wherein were four birds, and amongst them a dove, white as polished silver. The dove pleased him and an exceeding love for her grew up in his heart. Presently a great bird swooped down on him and snatched the dove from his hand, and this was grievous to him. Then he awoke and strove with his yearnings till the morning, when he said in himself, 'Needs must I go to-day to some one who will expound to me this dream.' So he went forth and fared right and left, till he was far from his dwelling-place, but found none to interpret the dream to him. Then he set out to return, but on his way the fancy took him to turn aside to the house of a certain rich merchant, and when he drew near to it, he heard from within a plaintive voice, reciting the following verses from a sorrowful heart: Night dccclvi.

The East wind from her traces blows to-us-ward, fragrance-fraught,
With perfume such as heals the sick and soothes the love-distraught.
By the deserted steads I stand and question; but my tears Nought
answers save the witness mute, the ruin time hath wrought.

Breath of the breeze, I prithee tell, quoth I, shall its delight To this abiding-place return, by fairer fortune brought?
And shall I yet a fawn enjoy, whose shape hath ravished me, Yea, and whose languor-drooping lids have wasted me to nought?

When he heard this, he looked in at the door and saw a garden of the goodliest of gardens, and at its farther end a curtain of red brocade, embroidered with pearls and jewels, behind which sat four damsels, and amongst them a young lady over four and under five feet in height, as she were the round of the moon and the shining full moon. She had great liquid black eyes and joined eyebrows, a mouth as it were Solomon's seal and lips and teeth like pearls and coral; and indeed she ravished all wits with her beauty and grace and symmetry. When Mesrour saw her, he entered the garden and went on, till he came to the curtain: whereupon she raised her head and saw him. So he saluted her and she returned his greeting with dulcet speech; and when he beheld her more closely, his reason was confounded and his heart transported. Then he looked at the garden and saw that it was full of jessamine and gillyflowers and violets and roses and orange blossoms and all manner sweet-scented flowers. All the trees were laden with fruits and there ran down water from four estrades, which occupied the four angles of the garden. He looked at the first estrade and found the following verses written around it with vermilion:

May grief ne'er enter thee nor yet dismay, O house, nor fortune e'er thy lord bewray!
Fair fall the house that harbours every guest, When straitened upon him is place and way!

Then he looked at the second estrade and found the following written thereon in red gold:

The garment of fair fortune shine on thee, dwelling, still, Whilst on the garden-branches the song-birds pipe and trill!
May fragrant odours harbour in every part of thee And lovers in thy precincts their hearts' desire fulfil!
In glory and in pleasance still may thy dwellers live, What while a wandering planet shines out on heaven's hill!

Then he looked at the third, on which he found these verses written in ultramarine:

Still mayst thou last in glory and prosper, house of mine, As long as night shall darken, as long as lights shall shine!
All at thy gates who enter good luck embrace and good From thee betide each comer in one unbroken line!

And on the fourth was painted in yellow characters the following verse:

This garden and this lake, a pleasant sitting-place, These, by the clement Lord, are all I ask of grace.

Moreover, in that garden were birds of all kinds, turtle and cushat and culver and nightingale, each carolling his several song, and amongst them the lady, swaying gracefully to and fro and ravishing all who saw her with her beauty and grace and symmetry. 'O man,' said she to Mesrour, 'what brings thee into a house other than thy house and wherefore comest thou in unto women other than thy women, without leave of their owner?' 'O my lady,' answered he, 'I saw this garden, and the goodliness of its verdure pleased me and the fragrance of its flowers and the singing of its birds; so I entered, thinking to gaze on it awhile and go my way.' 'With all my heart,' said she. Mesrour was amazed at the sweetness of her speech and the amorous languor of her glances and the elegance of her shape, and transported by her beauty and grace and the pleasantness of the garden and the birds. So he recited the following verses:

She shone, a moon, amongst the ways, midmost a garden fair, Wherein sweet jessamine and rose and fragrant basil were,
And myrtle and anemones blood-red and eglantine And violets, compassing about the cassia-tree, blew there.
The zephyr steals from it the scents, wherewith it laden is; Its perfume, from the boughs exhaled, breathes fragrance everywhere.
Hail, O thou garden, that all flowers and sweets dost comprehend, That perfect art in every grace and fashion of the fair!
Under the shadow of thy boughs the full moon[1] shineth bright And with the sweetest melodies the song-birds fill thine air.
Thy ringdove and thy mocking-bird, yea, and thy turtle-dove And nightingales stir up my soul to longing and despair;
And yearning harbours in my heart: dazed at thy goodliness Am I, and as one stupefied for drunkenness, I fare.

Then said she to him, 'Harkye, sirrah! Begone about thy business, for we are none of the women who are neither thine nor another's.'[2] And he answered, 'O my lady, I said nothing ill.' Quoth she, 'Thou soughtest to divert thyself with the sight [of the garden] and thou hast looked on it; so go thy ways.' 'O my lady,' said he, 'belike [thou wilt give me] a draught of water, for I am athirst.' Quoth she, 'How canst thou drink of a Jew's water, and thou a Nazarene?' But he replied, 'O my lady, your water is not forbidden to us nor ours to you, for we are all [as] one creature.' So she said to her slave-girl, 'Give him to drink.' And she did so. Then she called for the table of food, and there came four damsels, high-bosomed maids, bearing four trays [of meats] and four flagons full of old wine, as it were the tears of a slave of love for clearness, and [set them down before him on] a table around whose marge were graven the following verses:

[1] *i.e.* the face of the garden's fair mistress.
[2] *i.e.* I am no common woman.

They set a table down before the boon-companions' eyne, For eating, borne on wroughten feet of gold and silver fine;
The Garden of Eternity[1] it seemed, the which unites All that the soul can weary for of costly meat and wine.

Quoth she, 'Thou soughtest to drink of our drink; so up and at our meat and drink!' He could hardly credit his ears and sat down forthright at the table; whereupon she bade her nurse[2] give him a cup, that he might drink. Now her slave-girls were called, one Huboub, another Khutoub and the third Sukoub, and she who gave him the cup was Huboub. Presently, the breeze blew [on the lady] and the scarf[3] fell from her head and discovered a fillet of glittering gold, set with pearls and jewels and jacinths; and on her breast was a necklace of all manner gems and precious stones, to which hung a sparrow of red gold, with feet of red coral and bill of white silver and [body] full of aloes and ambergris and odoriferous musk. Then he looked at the breast of her shift and saw thereon the following verse wroughten in red gold:

The fragrance of musk, that breathes from the breasts of the fair, The zephyr borrows, to sweeten the morning air.

Mesrour marvelled at this with an exceeding wonder and was confounded at her charms and amazement got hold upon him. Then said she to him, 'Begone from us and go about thy business, lest the neighbours hear of us and even us with the lewd.' 'By Allah, O my lady,' replied he, 'suffer me to enjoy the sight of thy beauty and grace.' With this she was wroth with him and leaving him, walked in the garden, followed by her maids [Khutoub and Sukoub], whilst Huboub abode by the curtain with

[1] One of the seven divisions or gardens of the Mohammedan Paradise.
[2] Or confidential waiting-woman.
[3] Or *quære* mantilla à l'Espagnole.

Mesrour, who entered into discourse with her and presently said to her, 'O Huboub, hath thy mistress a husband or not?' 'She hath a husband,' answered the damsel; 'but he is presently abroad on a journey with merchandise of his.'

When he heard that her husband was abroad on a journey, his heart lusted after her and he said, 'O Huboub, extolled be the perfection of Him who created this damsel and fashioned her! How sweet is her beauty and her grace and her shape and symmetry! Verily, my heart is in sore travail for her. O Huboub, [look] how I may come to enjoy her, and thou shalt have of me what thou wilt of money and what not else.' 'O Nazarene,' answered Huboub, 'if she heard thee speak thus, she would kill thee, or else she would kill herself, for she is the daughter of a champion[1] of the Jews nor is there her like amongst them. Moreover, she hath no need of money and keepeth herself still cloistered, discovering not her case to any.' Quoth Mesrour, 'O Huboub, an thou wilt but bring me to enjoy her, I will be thy slave and thy servant and will serve thee all my life and give thee whatsoever thou seekest of me.'

But she said, 'O Mesrour, this woman hath no desire for money nor yet for men, for my lady Zein el Mewasif is straitly cloistered, going not forth of the door of her house, lest the folk see her; and but that she forbore thee by reason of thy strangerhood, she had not suffered thee to pass her threshold; no, not though thou wert her brother.' 'O Huboub,' rejoined he, 'be thou our go-between and thou shalt have of me an hundred gold dinars and a dress worth as much more, for that the love of her hath gotten possession of my heart.' And she said, 'O man, let me go about with her in talk and I will return

[1] or zealot (*ghazi*).

thee an answer and acquaint thee with what she saith. Indeed, she loves those who berhyme her and set forth her charms and her grace and beauty in verse, and we may not avail against her save by beguilement and soft speech and craft.'

Then she rose and going up to her mistress, talked with her privily of this and that and presently said to her, 'O my lady, look at yonder young man, the Nazarene; how sweet is his discourse and how elegant his shape!' When Zein el Mewasif heard this, she turned to her and said, 'An his comeliness like thee, love him thyself. Art thou not ashamed to bespeak the like of me with these words? Go, bid him begone about his business; or it shall be the worse for him.' So Huboub returned to Mesrour, but acquainted him not with that which her mistress had said. Then the latter bade her go to the door and look if she saw any of the folk, lest foul befall them. So she went and returning, said, 'O my lady, there are folk in plenty without and we cannot let him go forth to-night.' Quoth Zein el Mewasif, 'I am troubled because of a dream I have had and am fearful by reason thereof.' And Mesrour said, 'What sawest thou [in thy dream?] May God not trouble thy heart!' 'I was asleep in the middle of the night,' answered she, 'and behold an eagle swooped down upon me from the highest of the clouds and would have carried me off from behind the curtain, wherefore I was affrighted at him. Then I awoke from sleep and bade my women bring me meat and drink, so haply, when I had drunken, the terror of the dream would cease from me.'

When he heard this, he smiled and told her his dream and how he had caught the dove, whereat she marvelled exceedingly. Then he went on to talk with her and said, 'Now am I certified of the truth of my dream, for thou art the dove and I the eagle, and needs must this be, for,

whenas I set eyes on thee, thou tookest possession of my vitals and settest my heart on fire for love of thee!' Thereupon Zein el Mewasif became exceeding wroth and said to him, 'God forfend that this should be! God on thee, begone about thy business, ere the neighbours see thee and there betide us sore reproach.' Then, 'Harkye, fellow!' added she. 'Let not thy soul covet that it shall not attain to. Thou weariest thyself [in vain]; for I am a merchant's wife and a merchant's daughter and thou art a druggist; and when sawst thou a druggist and a merchant's daughter on this wise?' 'O my lady,' answered he, 'never lacked love between folk [of different condition]; so cut thou not off from me hope of this and whatsoever thou seekest of me of money and raiment and trinkets and what not else, I will give thee.'

Then he abode with her in discourse and chiding, whilst she still redoubled in anger, till nightfall, when he said to her, 'O my lady, take this dinar and fetch me a little wine, for I am athirst and heavy at heart.' So she said to Huboub, 'Fetch him wine and take nought from him, for we have no need of his dinar.' [So she went to fetch the wine, whilst] Mesrour held his peace and bespoke not Zein el Mewasif, who improvised the following verses:

Harkye, O man! Desist from this thou dost design Nor to the crooked ways of frowardness incline.
Love is a net, and if thou fall into its snare, The day thereafterward for weariness thou'lt pine;
Occasion to our spy thou'lt give for talk and all The people will reproach me with this love of thine.
Small marvel 'tis if thou a fair one love: gazelles Thou seest lions chase and in their snares entwine.

And he answered her with these:

O cassia-branch, delight of garth and knoll, Spare thou my heart, who dost possess my soul.
The cup of death for love thou'st made me drain, Clad me in wede of abjectness and dole.
How shall I be consoled, since thou hast ta'en My heart, for love of thee a red-hot coal?

'Away from me!' cried she. 'Quoth the adage, "He who giveth loose to his eyes wearieth his heart." By Allah, I am tired of discourse with thee and chiding, and indeed thy soul coveteth that which shall never be thine; nay, though thou gavest me my weight in gold, thou shouldst not get thy wish of me; for, by the bounty of God the Most High, I know nought of the things of the world, save pleasant life.' 'O my lady Zein el Mewasif,' answered he, 'ask of me what thou wilt of the goods of the world.' Quoth she, 'What shall I ask of thee? For sure thou wilt go out into the highway [and discover my case to the folk] and I shall become a laughing-stock among them and they will make a byword of me in verse, me who am the daughter of the chief of the merchants and whose father is known of the notables of the people. I have no need of money or raiment and this love will not be hidden from the folk and I shall be brought to shame, I and my family.'

With this Mesrour was confounded and could make her no answer; but presently she said, 'Indeed, the skilful thief, if he steal, stealeth not but what is worth [the adventuring of] his neck, and every woman who doth lewdness with other than her husband is styled a thief; so, if it must be thus and no help, thou shalt give me whatsoever my heart desireth of money and raiment and trinkets and what not.' Quoth he, 'An thou soughtest of me the world and all that is therein, from East to West, it were but a little thing, compared with thy favour.' And she said, 'I will have of thee three suits, each worth a

thousand dinars, and pearls and jewels and jacinths, and I require of thee, to boot, that thou swear to me that thou wilt keep my secret nor discover it to any and that thou wilt company with none but me; and I in turn will swear to thee a true oath that I will never play thee false.'

So he swore to her the oath she required and she swore to him, and they agreed upon this; after which she said to her nurse Huboub, 'To-morrow go thou with Mesrour to his lodging and seek somewhat of musk and ambergris and aloes and rose-water and see what he hath. If he be a man of condition, we will take him into favour; else will we leave him.' Then said she to him, 'O Mesrour, I desire somewhat of musk and ambergris and aloes-wood; so do thou send it me by Huboub.' And he answered, 'I hear and obey; my shop is at thy commandment.' Then the wine went round between them and their session was pleasant; but Mesrour's heart was troubled for the passion and longing that possessed him; and when Zein el Mewasif saw him in this plight, she said to her slave-girl Sukoub, 'Arouse Mesrour from his stupor; mayhap he will awake.' 'Willingly,' answered Sukoub and sang the following verses:

An if thou be in love, bring gold and gear and in thy lays Set forth thy love, so thou mayst win the aim of thine essays
And taste the favours of a fawn, soft-eyed and smiling-lipped, Whose shape is as the cassia-branch, when to the breeze it sways.
Look on her; in her charms thou'lt see matter for wonderment And pour thy life out, ere the term appointed to thy days.
These be the attributes of love, an thou but knewst thereof; But, if the gold delude thee, leave the gold and go thy ways.

Mesrour apprehended [her meaning] and said, 'I hear and understand. Never was stress but after came relief, and He who afflicteth will order [the issue].' Whereupon Zein el Mewasif recited the following:

Awake, O Mesrour, from love's stupor; for lo, I fear lest our love bring thee travail and woe.
Sure proverbs on us East and West shall be made And the folk our report for a wonder shall know.
Leave loving my like, or for sure thou'lt have blame.—Why cleav'st thou to me of all women? I trow,
One well-born shouldst thou love.—Thou'lt a byword become And find not a pitying friend high or low.
I'm a Pharisee's child and the folk fear my wrath: Would the term of my life were accomplished, heigho!

And Mesrour answered her with these verses:

Leave me to my affliction; to love thee I'm content; And blame me not, for censure my passion doth augment.
Over my heart ye lord it in tyrant-wise, whilst I Fare westward neither eastward for very languishment.
Forbidden 'tis to slay me of passion's law; they say, 'The slain of love's a victim, oppressed and innocent.'
Were there a judge in passion, to him I'd make my moan, Mayhap he'd do me justice in his arbitrament.

They ceased not from chiding and discourse till the morning beamed, when Zein el Mewasif said to him, 'O Mesrour, it is time for thee to depart, lest one of the folk see thee and foul befall us.' So he arose and going forth, fared on, accompanied by Huboub, till they came to his lodging, where he talked with her and said to her, 'All thou seekest of me thou shalt presently have, so but thou wilt bring me to her enjoyment.' Quoth Huboub, 'Comfort thy heart;' whereupon he rose and gave her a hundred dinars, saying, 'O Huboub, I have by me a dress worth a hundred dinars.' 'O Mesrour,' answered she, 'make haste with the dresses and what not else thou didst promise her, ere she change her mind, for we may not avail to take her save with craft and beguilement, and she loveth the recitation of verses.' Quoth he, 'I hear and obey,' and bringing her the musk and ambergris and

aloes-wood and rose-water, returned with her to Zein el Mewasif and saluted her. She returned his greeting with the sweetest of speech, and he was confounded at her beauty and improvised the following verses:

O sun, midmost the dark that shinest in the skies, O thou that hast benumbed my wit with great black eyes,
O loveling sweet, that com'st with neck surpassing fair, Whose cheek the garden-rose eclipses and outvies,
Blind not with thy disdain our sights, for thy disdain A grievous matter is, the heart that terrifies.
Passion took up its stead with me, and 'tis forbid To it to carry off the life's last lingering sighs.
Indeed, the love of you doth lord it in my heart, And save to you, I find no issue anywise.
Yet haply thou'lt relent towards a lover sad; So shall his darkness flee and morning bright arise.

When she heard his verses, she cast at him a look, that bequeathed him a thousand regrets and his heart and soul were ravished thereby, and answered him as follows:

Think not from her, of whom thou art enamoured, aye To win delight; so put desire from thee away.
Leave that thou hop'st, for 'gainst her rigours whom thou lov'st Among the fair, in vain is all thou canst essay.
My looks to lovers bring discomfiture and woe: Indeed, I make no count of that which thou dost say.

When he heard this, he dissembled and took patience, saying in himself, 'There is nothing for it but patience against calamity;' and on this wise they abode till nightfall, when she called for food and they set before her a tray, wherein were all manner meats, quails and pigeons and mutton and so forth, of which they ate till they had enough. Then she bade take away the tables and they did so and brought washing gear. So they washed their hands, after which she ordered her women to bring the

candlesticks, and they set on candlesticks and candles therein of camphorated wax.

Then said she, 'By Allah, my breast is straitened tonight and I am fevered.' Quoth Mesrour, 'May God dilate thy breast and do away thy trouble!' And she said, 'O Mesrour, I am used to play at chess: knowest thou aught of the game?' 'Yes,' answered he, 'I am skilled therein;' whereupon she bade her maid Huboub fetch her the chessboard. So she went away and presently returning with the board, set it before her, and behold, it was of ebony inlaid with ivory, with squares traced out in glittering gold, and its pieces were of pearl and ruby. Mesrour was amazed at this and she said to him, 'Wilt thou have red or white?' 'O princess of fair ones and adornment of the morning,' answered he, 'do thou take the red, for they are handsome and fitter for the like of thee, and leave me the white.' 'So be it,' answered she and taking the red pieces, ranged them opposite the white, then put out her hand to make the first move. Night DCCCXLVII.

He looked at her fingers, which were white as paste, and was confounded at their beauty and elegant shape; whereupon she turned to him and said, 'O Mesrour, be not bewildered, but take patience and calm thyself.' 'O thou whose beauty puts the moons to shame,' answered he, 'how shall a lover look on thee and have patience?' 'Checkmate!'[1] said she and beat him; wherefore she knew that he was mad for love of her and said to him, 'O Mesrour, I will not play with thee save for a set stake.' 'I hear and obey,' answered he and she said, 'Swear to me and I will swear to thee that neither of us will cheat the other.' So they swore this and she said, 'O Mesrour, if I beat thee, I will have ten dinars of thee, and if thou beat me, I will give thee nothing.' 'O my lady,' rejoined

[1] *Es shah mat*, the king is dead, origin of our word "checkmate."

he, 'be not false to thine oath, for I see thou art an overmatch for me at this game!' 'Agreed,' said she and they ranged their men and fell again to playing.

Now she had on her head a kerchief of blue brocade; so she laid it aside and tucking up her sleeve, showed a wrist like a shaft of light and passed her hand over the red pieces, saying to him, 'Look to thyself.' But he was dazzled at her beauty and the sight of her charms bereft him of reason, so that he became dazed and stupefied and put out his hand to the white men, but it lit upon the red. 'O Mesrour,' said she, 'where are thy senses? The red are mine and the white thine.' And he replied, 'Who can look on thee, without losing his senses? Then, seeing how it was with him, she took the white from him and gave him the red, and they played and she beat him.

He ceased not to play with her and she to beat him, whilst he paid her each time ten dinars, till, seeing him to be distracted for love of her, she said to him, 'O Mesrour, thou wilt never come to thy desire, except thou beat me; and henceforth, I will not play with thee save for a stake of a hundred dinars a game.' 'With all my heart,' answered he and they went on playing, whilst she still beat him and he won not a single game, but paid her a hundred dinars each time; and on this wise they abode till the morning, when he rose. Quoth she, 'What wilt thou, O Mesrour?' And he replied, 'I mean to go to my lodging and fetch somewhat of money: it may be I shall attain my desire.' 'Do as seemeth good to thee,' said she. So he went home and taking all the money he had, returned to her, reciting the following verses:

Methought I caught a bird in sleep, as I did deem, All in a garden fair with smiling flowers agleam.
That I shall get of thee the amorous delight, Th' interpretation is, meseems, of this my dream.

Then they fell a-playing again; but she still beat him and he could not beat her once; and on this wise they abode three days, till she had gotten of him all his money: whereupon, 'O Mesrour,' said she, 'what wilt thou do now?' And he answered, 'I will stake thee a druggist's shop.' 'What is its worth?' asked she; and he replied, 'Five hundred dinars.' So they played and she won the shop of him in five bouts. Then he staked slave-girls and lands and houses and gardens, and she won them all, till she had gotten of him all he had; whereupon she turned to him and said, 'Hast thou aught left to stake?' 'By Him who made me fall into the snare of thy love,' answered he, 'I have neither money nor aught else left, little or much!' 'O Mesrour,' said she, 'the end of that whose beginning was contentment shall not be repentance; wherefore, if thou repent thee, take back thy good and begone from us, and I will hold thee quit towards me.' 'By Him who decreed these things to us,' replied Mesrour, 'though thou soughtest to take my life, it were a little thing, compared to thine approof, for I love none but thee!'

Then said she, 'Go and fetch the Cadi and the witnesses and make over to me by deed all thy lands and possessions.' 'Willingly,' replied he and going out forthright, returned with the Cadi and the witnesses. When the magistrate saw her, his reason fled and his mind was troubled by reason of the beauty of her fingers, and he said to her, 'O my lady, I will not draw up the deed of conveyance, save upon condition that thou purchase the lands and houses and slave-girls and that they all pass under thy control and into thy possession.' 'We are agreed upon that,' replied she; 'write me a deed, whereby all Mesrour's houses and lands and slave-girls and all his hand possesseth shall pass to Zein el Mewasif and become her property at such a price.' So he wrote out the deed

Night dccccxlviii.

and the witnesses set their hands thereto; whereupon she took it from the Cadi and said to Mesrour, 'Now go thy ways.' But her slave-girl Huboub turned to him and said, 'Recite us some verses.' So he improvised the following verses upon [his own case and] the game of chess:

Of Fate I plain me and for that which hath befall'n me sigh And make my moan of loss by chess and by the [evil] eye,
For love of one, a damsel fair, slender and delicate; Female or male, there's not her like of all beneath the sky.
Arrows upon me from her looks she launched and 'gainst me brought Troops that would conquer all the world and all men, far and nigh;
Red men and white men, ay, and knights for shock of battle ranged; Then came she forth to me and did to single fight defy.
'Look to thyself,' quoth she; but, when she put her fingers out, Midmost a pitch-black night, most like her sable hair in dye,
I had no power to move the white, to rescue them from her And passion caused the tide of tears in me run fierce and high.
On, with the queens, fall pawns and rooks; they charge the host of white, And these give way, discomfited, and turn their backs to fly;
Yea, and she launched at me, to boot, an arrow of her looks, And to the kernel of my heart the quivering shaft did hie.
'Twixt the two hosts she gave me choice, and I chose that which white Was with the whiteness of the moon that shineth in the sky.
'The white, indeed, are those which best beseem to me and they Are what I fain would have; so take the red to thee,' quoth I.
Then played she with me for a stake agreed 'twixt us; but Fate Did unto me the wished-for boon of her consent deny.
Alas, the misery of my heart! Alas, my longing sore For the enjoyment of a maid who with the moon doth vie!
It is not for my goods and lands my heart is all a-fire But that, alack! familiar 'tis grown with the [evil] eye.
Distraught I'm grown and stupefied for dreariment, and Fate, For what's betided me, I chide with many a tear and cry.
'What ails thee to be dazed?' asked she, and I, 'Shall wine-bibbers Be whole of wit, when drunkenness their sense doth stupefy?'
A mortal maid hath ta'en my wit with her fair shape; if it Be soft, her bowels are like rock, uneath to mollify.

Myself I heartened, saying, 'Her to-day I shall possess Upon the wager,' fearing not defeat I should aby.
My heart ceased not to covet her, till I to poverty Became reduced, and beggared now in goods and hope am I.
Will he who is in love forswear a love that irketh him, Though in the oceans of desire he struggle like to die?
So is the slave grown penniless, to love and longing thrall, All unaccomplished yet the hope he staked his all to buy.

Zein el Mewasif marvelled at the eloquence of his tongue and said to him, 'O Mesrour, leave this madness and return to thy senses and go thy ways; for thou hast wasted all thy substance at the game of chess, yet hast not attained to thy desire, nor hast thou any resource whereby thou mayst accomplish it.' But he turned to her and said, 'O my lady, ask of me what thou wilt and I will bring it to thee and lay it at thy feet.' 'O Mesrour,' answered she, 'thou hast no money left.' 'O goal of all hopes,' rejoined he, 'if I have no money, the folk will help me.' Quoth she, 'Shall the giver turn asker?' And he said, 'I have friends and kinsfolk, and whatsoever I seek of them, they will give me.' Then said she, 'O Mesrour, I will have of thee four bladders of musk and four vases of civet and four pounds of ambergris and four thousand dinars and four hundred pieces of coloured brocade, wroughten with gold. Bring me these things, and I will grant thee my favours.' 'This is a light matter to me, O thou that puttest the moons to shame,' replied he and went forth to fetch her what she sought.

She sent Huboub after him, to see what interest he had with the folk of whom he had spoken to her; but, as he went along the streets, he turned and seeing her afar off, waited till she came up to him and said to her, 'Whither away, O Huboub?' So she told him what her mistress had said to her and he said, 'By Allah, O Huboub, I have nothing!' 'Then why didst thou promise her?' asked

she; and he answered, 'How many a promise is unkept of its maker! Fine words needs must be in love-matters.' When she heard this, she said to him, 'O Mesrour, be of good heart and cheerful eye, for, by Allah, I will be the means of thy coming to enjoy her!' Then she left him and returned, weeping sore, to her mistress, to whom said she, 'O my lady, indeed he is a man of great consideration, well-reputed among the folk.' Quoth Zein el Mewasif, 'There is no resource against the ordinance of the Most High! Verily, this man found not in me a compassionate heart, for that I spoiled him of his substance and he got of me neither affection nor complaisance in granting him the amorous mercy; but, if I incline to his desire, I fear lest the thing be bruited abroad.' 'O my lady,' answered Huboub, 'verily, his present plight and the loss of his good is grievous upon us, and thou hast with thee none but myself and thy slave-girl Sukoub; so which of us two would dare prate of thee, and we thy hand-maids?'

With this, she bowed her head and the damsels said to her, 'O my lady, it is our counsel that thou send after him and show him favour and suffer him not ask of the sordid; for how bitter is asking!' So she accepted their counsel and calling for inkhorn and paper, wrote him the following verses:

Fulfilment draws near, O Mesrour: rejoice in fair presage and true, For, to-night, when the darkness falls down, the deed without fail thou shalt do;
And ask not the sordid, O youth, for money to mend thine estate: Indeed, I was drunken, but now my wit is restored me anew.
Moreover, thy good that I took shall all unto thee be restored, And to crown, O Mesrour, my largesse, I'll add thee my favours thereto;
Since patience thou hadst and in thee long-suffering and sweetness there was With a loved one's unkindness to bear, who wronged thee with rigours undue.

So hasten forthright to enjoy my possession, fair fall thee thereof! And tarry not neither neglect, lest my folk come to know of us two.
Then come to us quickly, I pray, and loiter not neither delay, And eat of the fruits of delight, whilst my husband is absent, the Jew.

Then she folded the letter and gave it to Huboub, who carried it to Mesrour and found him weeping and reciting the following verses, in a transport of passion and love-longing:

There blew upon my heart a breeze of love and wantonness, And all my entrails crumbled were with passion pitiless.
My longing, since my loved one's loss, is passing sore on me And still mine eyelids overflow for very tears' excess.
My heart with doubts and fears is racked, which did I but reveal Unto hard rocks and stones, forthright they'd soften for distress.
Ah, would I knew if I shall live to win to my delight, If, in th' enjoyment of my wish, my hope I shall possess!
Shall parting's nights, the wide outspread, be folded up again And shall I e'er of that be healed which doth my heart oppress?

Night dccccxlix.

As he was repeating these verses, Huboub knocked at the door; so he rose and opened to her, and she entered and gave him the letter. He read it and said to her, 'O Huboub, what news bringest thou of thy mistress?' 'O my lord,' answered she, 'in this letter is what dispenses me from answering, for thou art of the folk of understanding.' And he rejoiced with an exceeding joy and repeated the following verses:

The letter came, and its contents rejoiced us, heart and brain, And in my very heart of hearts to keep it I were fain.
Yea, I redouble in desire, whene'er the writ I kiss; For 'tis as if 't the very pearl of passion did contain.

Then he wrote a letter in answer and gave it to Huboub, who returned with it to her mistress and fell to extolling his charms to her and expatiating on his generosity and good qualities; for she was become a helper to him, to

bring about his union with her. 'O Huboub,' said Zein el Mewasif, 'indeed he tarrieth to come to us.' And Huboub answered, 'He will certainly come speedily.' Hardly had she made an end of speaking when he knocked at the door, and she opened to him and brought him in to her mistress, who saluted him and bade him welcome and seated him by her side.

Then she said to Huboub, 'Bring me a suit of the goodliest of apparel;' so she brought a dress embroidered with gold and Zein el Mewasif threw it over him, whilst she herself donned one of the richest of dresses and covered her head with a net of pearls of the finest water. About this she bound a fillet of brocade, embroidered with pearls and rubies and other jewels, from beneath which fell down two tresses [of plaited silk], each looped with a pendant of ruby, charactered with glittering gold, and she let down her hair, as it were the sombre night. Moreover she incensed herself with aloes-wood and scented herself with musk and ambergris, and Huboub said to her, 'God guard thee from the [evil] eye!' Then she began to walk, with a graceful swimming gait, whilst Huboub, who excelled in verse-making, recited the following in her honour:

She shames the cassia-branches with every step she tries And sore besets her lovers with glances from her eyes.
A moon from out the darkness appearing of her hair, It is as from her browlocks the very sun did rise.
Happy by whom the night long with all her charms she lies And happy he who, swearing by her life, for her dies!

Zein el Mewasif thanked her and went up to Mesrour, as she were the full moon all displayed. When he saw her, he rose to his feet and exclaimed, 'Except my thought deceive me, she is no mortal, but one of the brides of Paradise!' Then she called for food and they

brought a table, about whose marge were written the following verses:

Dip thou with spoons in saucers four and gladden heart and eye With many a various kind of stew and fricassee and fry.
Thereon fat quails (ne'er shall I cease to love and tender them) And rails and fowls and dainty birds of all the kinds that fly.
Glory to God for the kabobs, for redness all aglow, And potherbs, steeped in vinegar, in porringers thereby!
Fair fall the rice with sweet milk dressed, wherein the hands did plunge And eke the forearms of the fair were buried, bracelet-high!
How my heart yearneth with regret over two plates of fish That by two manchet-cakes of bread of Tewarij[1] did lie!

Then they ate and drank and made merry, after which the servants removed the table of food and set on the wine service. The cup and the bowl passed round between them and their hearts were gladdened. Then Mesrour filled the cup and saying, 'To her whose I am and who is my mistress!' chanted the following verses:

I marvel at mine eyes that feed their fill upon the charms Of a fair maid whose beauty bright enlightens every place.
In all her time she hath no like nor any may compare With her for very goodliness and sweet harmonious grace.
The willow-sapling envies her the slimness of her shape, When, in her symmetry arrayed, she fares with stately pace.
The crown of her, for radiance, is as the crescent moon, Ay, and the full moon of the dark she shames with shining face.
Whenas she walks upon the earth, her fragrance wafts abroad A breeze that scents her every hill and every level space.

'O Mesrour,' said she, 'whoso keepeth his faith and hath eaten our bread and salt, it behoveth us to give him his due; so put away from thee the thought of what hath passed and I will restore thee thy lands and houses and

[1] Apparently some place celebrated for its fine bread, as Gonesse in seventeenth-century France.

all I have taken from thee.' 'O my lady,' answered he, 'I acquit thee of that whereof thou speakest, though thou hadst been false to the oath we swore to each other, thou and I; for I will go and become a Muslim.'[1] Then said Huboub to her, 'O my lady, thou art young of years and knowest many things, and I claim the intercession of God the Most High with thee, for, except thou do my bidding and heal my heart, I will not lie the night with thee in the house.' 'O Huboub,' replied her mistress, 'it shall be as thou wilt: so rise and make us ready another room.'

So she rose and made ready another room and adorned and perfumed it after the goodliest fashion, on such wise as her mistress loved and preferred, after which she set on fresh food and wine, and the cup went round between them and their hearts were glad. Presently quoth Zein el Mewasif to Mesrour, 'O Mesrour, the time of union and favour is come; so, as thou studiest for my love, recite us some verses, surpassing of fashion.' So he recited the following ode:

Night dccci.

I am ta'en captive; in my heart a fire flames up amain, Over a bond of love-delight by sev'rance shorn in twain;
Ay, and for love of a fair maid, whose shape hath rent my heart, Whose cheeks so soft and delicate my reason do enchain.
Joined brows and arched and melting eyes of liquid black hath she And teeth that like the lightning flash, when she to smile doth deign.
Her years of life are ten and four; my tears, for love of her, Resemble drops of dragon's blood, as from mine eyes they rain.
'Twixt stream and garden first mine eyes beheld her, as she sat, With face the full moon that outshone in heaven's high domain.
I stood to her, on captive wise, for awe, and said, 'The peace Of God for ever light on thee, O dweller in the fane!'
Then she, with sweet and dulcet speech, like pearls in order strung, My salutation graciously returned to me again;

[1] Sic in all three texts. The Breslau Edition adds here, "And Zein el Mewasif followed him." The meaning of the passage is doubtful.

And when she heard my speech to her, she knew for sure what I Desired, and therewithal her heart was hardened 'gainst her swain.
'Is not this idle talk?' quoth she, and I made answer, 'Spare The longing lover to upbraid, who doth of love complain.'
If thou vouchsafe me thy consent this day, the thing were light; Thy like beloved is and mine still slaves of love in vain.'
And when she knew my wish, she smiled and answered, 'By the Lord, Him who created heaven and earth and all that they contain,
[I am] a Jewess, born and bred in Jewry's straitest sect And thou unto the Nazarenes as surely dost pertain.
How think'st thou to enjoy me, then, and art not of my faith? Tomorrow, sure, thou wilt repent, if thou this thing obtain.
Is 't lawful with two faiths to jest in love? The like of me Were blamed of all and looked upon with flouting and disdain.
Wilt thou thus mock at all belief and all religious rites And doubly guilty, this my faith and eke thine own profane?
An if thou lov'dst me, thou 'dst become a Jew for love of me, And, save my favours, all to thee forbidden would remain,
And by th' Evangel thou wouldst swear a strait and binding oath To keep the secret of the love that is betwixt us twain.'
So by the Pentateuch I swear, a true and certain oath, That, in the time that's past and gone and ne'er will be again,
I swore to her upon my faith, upon my law and creed, And her unto a solemn oath on like wise did constrain.
Quoth I, 'O term of all desire, what is thy name?' And she, 'Zein el Mewasif am I called in this my own demesne.'
'Zein el Mewasif,' then cried I, 'my entrails are enthralled For love of thee; thou hast indeed enslaved me, heart and brain.'
I saw her beauty underneath the chin-veil and became Afflicted sore at heart, distraught for love and longing pain;
Nor neath the curtain did I cease to humble me and eke Of the much passion to make moan that in my heart did reign;
Till, when she saw my plight and all the transport of my love, A smiling visage she unveiled, that did me straight assain.
The wind of amorous delight blew full on us and she Scented with musk her neck and wrists, till all the house had ta'en
Perfume from her and every place, whilst I her lips did kiss And from her sweet and smiling mouth its wine of balm did drain.
Under her robes she swayed, as sways the willow, and delight And union did permit, till then forbidden to the swain.

We lay the night together and with many a clip and kiss And sucking lips, was union perfected for us twain.
There's no adornment of the world, excepting she thou lov'st Be near thee, so thou mayst of her the wished delight obtain.
Whenas day broke, she rose to say farewell, with lovely face Excelling far the moon that shines in heaven's spreading plain;
And at her leave-taking, this verse she chanted, whilst the tears Ran down her cheeks, now one by one, now linked in many a chain,
'By the Great Oath and by the nights so fair, I'll ne'er forget The pact of Allah 'twixt us two, whilst I on life remain!'

Zein el Mewasif was charmed with these verses and said to him, 'O Mesrour, how goodly are thy parts! May he live not who would harm thee!' Then she entered a privy chamber and called him. So he went in to her and taking her in his arms, embraced her and kissed her and got of her that which he had deemed impossible and rejoiced in the attainment of the sweet of amorous delight. Then said she, 'O Mesrour, now we are become lovers, thy good is forbidden to me and is lawfully thine again.' So she restored to him all she had won of him and said to him, 'Hast thou a garden, whither we may go and take our pleasure therein?' 'Yes, O my lady,' answered he, 'I have a garden that hath not its like.'

Then he returned to his house and bade his slave-girls make ready a handsome room and provide a splendid banquet; after which he summoned Zein el Mewasif, who came with her damsels, and they ate and drank and made merry, whilst the cup passed round between them and their hearts were glad. Then the lovers withdrew to a privy chamber and Zein el Mewasif said to Mesrour, 'I have bethought me of some pleasant verses, which I would fain sing to the lute.' And he answered, 'Do so.' So she took the lute and tuning it, sang the following to a pleasant air:

Mirth from the smitten strings o'ercometh me and cheer; Sweet is our morning-draught, when daybreak draweth near.
Love still its bondman's heart uncovereth and in The tearing down of veils doth love-longing appear;
With wine strained bright, so pure and goodly that it seems The sun in hands of moons[1] unveiled and shining clear.
It bringeth us anights its gladness and with joy Obliterates the stains of dreariment and fear.

Then said she to him, 'O Mesrour, recite us somewhat of thy verse and favour us with the fruit of thy wit.' So he recited the following:

In a full moon we do rejoice, that carries round its wine, And in the sweet strains of the lute in gardens fair and fine,
Whose turtles in the dawning-hour sing and whose branches sway And eke their paths the uttermost of all desire enshrine.

When he had finished, she said to him, 'If thou be occupied with love of me, make us some verses on that which hath passed between us.' 'With all my heart,' answered he and recited the following ode: Night dccclí.

Stay thou and hear what me befell For love of yonder fair gazelle.
A white doe shot me with a shaft And fierce her glances on me fell.
Ravished with love, my every shift Straitened on me for passion's spell,
I pined for a coquette, enclosed With spear-points inexpugnable.
I saw her midst a garden fair: In symmetry she did excel.
'Peace be on thee!' quoth I to her: She answered, 'And on thee as well.'
'What is thy name?' asked I; and she, 'My name my qualities doth tell,
Zein el Mewasif[2] am I called.' 'Pity my case deplorable,'
Quoth I, 'such longing with me is, No lover is my parallel.'
'An if thou love and wouldst my charms Enjoy,' said she, 'I will not sell
My favours save for wealth galore, Past count and unattainable.

[1] *i.e.* moon-faced cupbearers.
[2] *i.e.* adornment of qualities.

Raiment of silk I'll have of thee And costly damasks, many an ell,
And musk four quintals, pearls of price, Cornelians uncountable,
Silver and gold and trinkets fine And jewelled gauds I'll have as well;
One night of my possession these Shall buy: I'll bate no particle.'
I showed fair patience, though, God wot, For fires of love I was in hell,
And she to bless me deigned one night The new moon's radiance on us fell.
If th' envious blame me, 'List, O folk,' Quoth I, 'to that I have to tell.
Long locks hath she, as black as night, And in her cheeks a rose doth dwell,
As red as very flames of fire: Her looks are arrows sharp and snell,
And in her lashes is a sword That serves her lovers to repel.
Wine in her mouth is and her lips With dews like limpid water well.
Her teeth are like a necklace strung With pearls of price, fresh from the shell.
Her neck, perfected in all grace, Is as the neck of a gazelle.
As marble white her bosom is, Wherein, like towers, her breasts do swell.
Her belly hath a fold perfumed With essences invaluable;
And underneath it lies a thing, That is my wishes' pinnacle;
Fat, plump, high-cushioned, O my lords, As 'twere a king's throne, sooth to tell,
To whom I plain me of the woes My soul to madness that enspell.
Betwixten columns twain thou'lt find High benches set before the cell.
It hath such attributes as daze Men's wits and wonderment compel;
Wide lips it hath and mouth, to boot, As 'twere a mouth of mule or well;
An eye of red it shows and lips Like camel's lips: its face doth swell,
For very redness, still with wrath. So look, O man, thou guard thee well.
If thou come to it with intent To do, thou'lt find it hot as hell,
Ardent of meeting and endowed With strength to battle fierce and fell;
And well I wot, each champion, eased Of lust of battle, 'twill repel.
Bytimes thou'lt find it with a beard, As 'twere a man's; another spell
Thou'lt find it beardless, hot with lust Of battle 'gainst the infidel.
One who is great of grace and sheen To thee of this doth tidings tell,
One from whom Zein herself alone For all perfection bears the bell.
I came to her by night and got That which was sweet as œnomel;
Yea, and the night I lay with her Did all mine other nights excel.

When daybreak came, with new-moon face She rose and shape as flexible
As swaying boughs or slender spears, And turned to me to say farewell.
Quoth she, 'When shall the nights return Wherein such joyance us befell?'
And I, 'O lustre of mine eyes, Come,' answered, 'when it likes thee well.'

Zein el Mewasif was charmed with these verses and the utmost gladness possessed her. Then said she, 'O Mesrour, the day is at hand and there is nothing for it but to depart, for fear of scandal.' 'I hear and obey,' answered he and rising, carried her to her house, after which he returned home and passed the rest of the night meditating on her charms. When the morning appeared and gave forth its light and shone, he made ready a sumptuous present and carried it to her and sat with her.

They abode thus awhile, in all delight and solace of life, till one day there came to Zein el Mewasif a letter from her husband, advising her of his speedy return. 'May God not preserve him nor quicken him!' exclaimed she. 'If he come hither, our life will be troubled. Would I might despair of him!' Presently came Mesrour and sat talking with her, as of wont, and she said to him, 'O Mesrour, I have received a letter from my husband, announcing his speedy return from his travels. What is to be done, since neither of us can live without the other?' 'I know not,' answered he; 'but thou art better able to judge, being acquainted with thy husband's ways, more by token that thou art one of the keenest-witted of women and mistress of devices such as contrive that whereof men fail.' Quoth she, 'He is a hard man and jealous of the people of his household: but, when thou hearest of his coming, do thou repair to him and salute him and sit down by his side, saying, "O my brother, I am a druggist." Then buy of him various kinds of drugs and spices and

pay him frequent visits and talk long with him and gainsay him not in whatsoever he shall bid thee; so haply that may betide, [as] of chance, for which I would fain contrive.' 'I hear and obey,' answered Mesrour and went out from her, with a heart on fire for love.

When her husband came home, she rejoiced in him and bade him welcome; but he looked in her face and seeing it pale and sallow, (for she had washed it with saffron, making usage therein of one of women's arts,) asked her how she did. She replied that she had been sick, she and her women, from the time of his setting out on his journey, and said, 'Verily, our hearts have been troubled for thee by reason of the length of thine absence.' And she went on to complain to him of the misery of separation and to weep copious tears, saying, 'Hadst thou but a companion with thee, my heart had not suffered all this anxiety for thee. So, God upon thee, O my lord, travel not again without a companion and keep me not without news of thee, that my heart and mind may be at rest concerning thee!' 'With all my heart,' answered he. 'Thy counsel is good, and by thy life, it shall be as thou wishest.'

Night DCCCLII.

Then he took some of his goods and carrying them to his shop, opened it and sat down to sell in the bazaar. Presently up came Mesrour and saluting him, sat down by his side and talked with him awhile. Then he pulled out a purse and taking forth gold, handed it to the Jew and said, 'Give me the worth of this money in various kinds of drugs and spices, that I may sell them in my shop.' 'I hear and obey,' answered he and gave him what he sought. Mesrour continued to pay him frequent visits, till, one day, the merchant said to him, 'I have a mind to take me a man to partner in trade.' 'And I also,' replied Mesrour, 'desire to take a partner; for my father was a merchant in the land of Yemen and left me great

wealth and I fear lest it go from me.' Quoth the Jew, 'Wilt thou be my partner, and I will be thine and a true friend and comrade to thee at home and abroad, and I will teach thee to sell and buy and give and take?' And Mesrour said, 'With all my heart.'

So the merchant carried him to his house and seated him in the vestibule, whilst he went in to his wife and said to her, 'I have taken me a partner and have bidden him hither as a guest; so do thou prepare us a handsome entertainment.' When she heard this, she rejoiced, doubting not but this was Mesrour, and made ready a magnificent banquet, of her joy in the success of her device. Then said her husband to her, 'Come out with me to him and bid him welcome and say, "Thou gladdenest us [with thy company]."' But she made a show of anger, saying, 'Wilt thou have me discover myself to a strange man? God forbid! Though thou cut me in pieces, I will not appear before him!' 'Why shouldst thou be abashed at him,' rejoined he, 'seeing that he is a Nazarene and we are Jews and we are become associates, he and I?' Quoth she, 'It liketh me not to present myself before a strange man, on whom I have never set eyes and whom I know not.'

He thought she spoke sooth and ceased not to importune her, till she rose and veiling herself, took the food and went out to Mesrour and bade him welcome; whereupon he bowed his head, as he were ashamed, and the Jew, seeing this, said in himself, 'Doubtless, this man is a devotee.' They ate their fill and the table being removed, wine was set on. As for Zein el Mewasif, she sat over against her lover and gazed on him and he on her till ended day, when Mesrour went home, with a heart on fire and the Jew abode pondering the grace and goodliness of his new partner. As soon as it was night, his wife brought him the evening meal and they sat down to eat.

Now he had a mocking-bird, that was used, whenas he sat down to meat, to come and eat with him and hover about his head; but in his absence it was grown familiar with Mesrour and used to eat with him and hover about him. When its master returned, it knew him not and would not draw near him, and this made him thoughtful. As for Zein el Mewasif, she could not sleep for thinking of Mesrour, and thus it was with her three nights, till the Jew became aware of her distraction and watching her, began to suspect something wrong. On the fourth night, he awoke in the middle of the night and heard his wife talking in her sleep and calling upon Mesrour, what while she lay in her husband's arms, wherefore he misdoubted of her; but he dissembled his suspicions and on the morrow betook himself to his shop and sat there. Presently, up came Mesrour and saluted him. He returned his greeting and said to him, 'Welcome, O my brother! I have wished for thee;' and he sat talking with him awhile, after which he said to him, 'O my brother, come with me to my house, that we may enter into the pact of brotherhood.'[1] 'With all my heart,' replied Mesrour and they went to the Jew's house, where the latter went in and told his wife of Mesrour's coming, saying, 'Make us ready a goodly entertainment, and needs must thou be present and witness our brotherhood.' But she answered, 'God on thee, cause me not show myself to this strange man, for I have no mind to company with him.' So he forbore to press her and bade the waiting-women bring meat and drink. Then he called the mocking-bird, but it knew him not and settled in Mesrour's lap; and the Jew said to him, 'O my lord, what is thy name?' And he answered, 'Mesrour.' Whereupon the Jew remembered that this was the name which his wife had repeated all night long in her sleep.

[1] *i.e.* enter into a formal agreement for partnership.

Presently, he raised his head and saw her making signs to Mesrour and motioning to him with her eyebrows; wherefore he knew that he had been tricked and said, 'O my lord, excuse me awhile, till I fetch my kinsmen, so they may be present at our treaty of brotherhood.' 'Do what seemeth good to thee,' answered Mesrour; whereupon the Jew went forth the house and returning privily by a back way, betook himself to a window that gave upon the saloon and whence he could watch them, unseen of them. Quoth Zein el Mewasif to her maid Sukoub, 'Whither is thy master gone?' And she said, 'He is gone without the house.' 'Lock the door,' said Zein, 'and bar it with iron and open not till he knock, after thou hast told me.' 'So be it,' answered Sukoub. Night dccclliii.

Then she rose and filling a cup with wine, flavoured with powdered musk and rose-water, went up to Mesrour, who rose to meet her, saying, 'By Allah, the water of thy mouth is sweeter than this wine!' 'Here it is for thee,' quoth she and filling her mouth with wine, gave him to drink thereof, whilst he did the like with her; after which she sprinkled him with rose-water from head to foot, till he scented the whole place. All this while, the Jew was looking on and marvelling at the greatness of the love that was between them, and his heart was filled with rage for what he saw and he was jealous with an exceeding jealousy. Then he went out again and coming to the door, found it locked and knocked loudly, of the excess of his anger; whereupon quoth Sukoub, 'O my lady, here is my master.' 'Open to him,' replied Zein el Mewasif; 'would God had not brought him back in safety!'

So she went and opened the door to the Jew, who said to her, 'What ailed thee to lock the door?' Quoth she, 'It hath never ceased to be locked thus during thine absence; nor hath it been opened night nor day.' 'Thou hast done well,' answered he; 'this pleases me.' Then

he went in to Mesrour, laughing and dissembling his chagrin, and said to him, 'O Mesrour, let us put off the conclusion of our treaty of brotherhood till another day.' 'As thou wilt,' replied Mesrour and went away, leaving the Jew pondering his case and knowing not what to do; for his heart was sore troubled and he said in himself, 'Even the mocking-bird disavows me and the slave-girls shut the door in my face and favour another.' And of the excess of his chagrin, he fell to reciting the following verses:

A life made fair with all delight of days and solacement Mesrour doth live, what while my life is severed and forspent.
Fortune hath played the knave with me in her whom I adore And all my heart's on flames of fire, that rage without relent.
Once with the fair a time was bright for thee; 'tis past and gone; Yet art thou ever love-distraught that lovely one anent.
Mine eyes her goodly beauty saw and in the love of her, My heart to passion thrall became, for very ravishment.
Of the sweet water of her lips she poured me out, fine wine On thirst, whilst yet the time endured of favour and content.
What ails thee, O my mocking-bird, that thou forsakest me And to another than myself in love dost yield consent?
Strange things, indeed, mine eyes have seen, that from my lids, if they Were ever drowsed with slumber, sleep would chase incontinent.
I see my loved one hath forsworn the love of me and eke My mocking-bird round me no more hovers with blandishment.
By the worlds' Lord, who, when upon His creatures He'd fulfil His ordinance, afflicteth them with many a dour event,
The evil-doer I'll requite with that which he deserves Who frowardly to her draws near, on her enjoyment bent!

When Zein el Mewasif heard this, she trembled in every nerve and said to her handmaid, 'Heardest thou that?' Quoth she, 'I never heard him recite the like of these verses; but let him say what he will.' Then the Jew, having assured himself of the truth of his suspicions,

began to sell all his property, saying in himself, 'Except I remove her from her native land [and separate them], they will never turn back from this that they are engaged in.' So, when he had turned all his possessions into money, he forged a letter, purporting to come from his kinsmen and inviting him to visit them, him and his wife, and read it to her. 'How long shall we tarry with them?' asked she, and he replied, 'Twelve days.' So she consented to this and said, 'Shall I take any of my maids with me?' 'Take Huboub and Sukoub,' answered he, 'and leave Khutoub here.'

Then he made ready a handsome camel litter for his wife and her women and prepared to set out with them; whilst she sent to Mesrour, telling him what had happened and saying, 'If the trysting-time[1] that is between us pass and I come not [back], know that he hath put a cheat on us and laid a plot to separate us from each other; so forget thou not the plighted faith betwixt us, for I fear his craft and perfidy.' Then she fell a-weeping and lamenting and no peace was left her, night or day. Her husband saw this, but took no note thereof; and when she saw there was no help for it, she gathered together her clothes and gear and deposited them with her sister, telling her what had befallen her. Then she took leave of her and going out from her, weeping, returned to her own house, where she found her husband had brought the camels and was busy loading them, having set apart the handsomest for her riding; and when she saw this and knew that needs must she be separated from Mesrour, she was distracted.

Now it chanced that the Jew went out on some occasion of his; so she went forth to the outer door and wrote thereon the following verses: Night dccclib.

[1] *i.e.* the twelve days aforesaid.

O dove of this our dwelling-place, our parting greeting bear From lover to belovéd one and tell him I shall ne'er
Cease to regret the past delight and all its ravishments And all the sweetness of the days for us whilom that were;
And bid him also never leave to be the slave of love, Fulfilled of grief for our content that's past and gone for e'er.
Indeed, we passed our time awhile in solace and in cheer And love-delight both night and day we did enjoy whilere;
But, when we woke, the raven gave us morrow[1] with his croak And did against us twain the doom of severance declare.
Now must we journey far away and leave the dwellings void: Would we might ne'er depart the lands nor breathe a foreign air!

Then she went to the second door and wrote thereon the following verses:

O thou to this door that comest, by Allah, watch for the grace Of my loved one midmost the darkness and tell him I weep apace,
When I think of the time of union with him, and the tears that come Of my weeping for him cease never to ripple adown my face;
And say to him, 'If no patience for what is fallen on me Thou findest, I rede thee sprinkle thy head with the dust of the place
And travel the lands to Eastward and Westward and look thou live In patience, for God hath ordered and yet will order the case.'

Then she went to the third door and wept sore and wrote thereon these verses:

Harkye, Mesrour, an if thou come to this her dwelling, see Thou read upon the doors the lines that she hath writ for thee.
How oft thou'st tasted of the sweet and bitter of the nights! Forget thou not the pact of love, if thou a true man be.
By Allah, do not thou forget her neighbourhood, Mesrour; For in thyself her solace all and gladness leaveth she!
Weep for the days of love-delight and all their sweets and all The goodly nights that with their shade encurtained thee and me;
And to the farthest of the lands, for my sake, journey thou; Search all its deserts after us and plunge into its sea.

[1] See note, Vol. VII. p. 267.

The nights of our delight are gone from us; estrangement's dark Hath quenched their radiance and made an end of all our glee.
God's blessing on the bygone days! How glad indeed they were, When in the gardens of desire their blossoms gathered we!
We would have had them stay; but God denied the wished-for boon; Only their rose and our true hearts to last permitted He.
Will the returning days renew our union? An they do, Their every vow unto my Lord accomplished then shall be.
Think, in His hand, who writes upon the table of the brows Their lines,[1] are all things, and submit to that He doth decree.

Then she wept sore and returned to the house, lamenting and recalling what had passed and saying, 'Glory be to God who hath decreed this to us!' And her affliction redoubled for the loss of her beloved and her departure from the lands, and she recited these verses:

Upon thee be the peace of God, O empty house! Ah me, The days indeed have made an end of all their cheer in thee!
Dove of the house, ne'er mayst thou leave to mourn for her who from Her moons and her full moons[2] is torn by Fate's unkind decree!
Harkye, Mesrour! Make thou thy moan for loss of us; indeed Mine eyes in losing thee have lost their lustre, verily.
Would God thine eyes our parting day and eke the flaming fire, That in my heart redoubles still unquenchably, might see!
Forget not thou our plighted troth within the garden's shade, That held our loves and with its veils encurtained thee and me.

Then she presented herself before her husband, who set her in the litter he had let make for her; and when she found herself on the camel's back, she recited the following verses:

God's peace on thee, O lonely house, for evermore alight, Wherein whilere we fed our fill of solace and delight!
Would that my time within thy shade its nights accomplished had, So I for passion had been slain, a martyr in Love's right!

[1] The Arabs believe that each man's destiny is written in the sutures of his skull, could we but read it.
[2] *i.e.* her moon-faced beloved ones.

For parting I am sore concerned and longing for the home I love: I knew not what should hap nor looked for Fate's despite.
Would God I knew if I shall e'er return to it again, And will it ever, as of yore, be pleasant to our spright!

'O Zein el Mewasif,' said her husband, 'grieve not for thy departure from thy dwelling; for, God willing, thou shalt return to it before long.' And he went on to comfort her heart and soothe her. Then they set out and fared on till they came without the town and struck into the high road, whereupon she knew that separation was assured, and this was grievous to her.

Meanwhile, Mesrour sat in his house, pondering his case and that of his mistress, and his heart forewarned him of separation. So he rose forthright and repairing to her house, found the outer door shut and read the verses she had written thereon; whereupon he fell down in a swoon. When he came to himself, he opened the door and entering, read what was written upon the two other doors; whereupon passion and love-longing and distraction waxed on him. So he went forth and hastened in her track, till he came up with the caravan and found her at the rear, whilst her husband rode in the van, because of his goods. When he saw her, he clung to the litter, weeping and lamenting for the anguish of separation, and recited the following verses:

Would I knew for what crime we are shot, wellaway! With the shafts of estrangement for ever and aye!
O desire of the heart, to thy dwelling I came, When distress for thy love sorely irked me, one day,
And I found the house empty, laid waste, and complained Of estrangement and groaned, in my spirit's dismay,
Then I questioned the walls of my loves that are gone And have taken my heart as a pledge, 'Where are they?'
And they said, 'They made passion in ambush to lie In the entrails and fared from the dwellings away.'
They wrote for me lines on the portals, the deed Of the folk that keep faith nor their troth-plight betray.

When Zein el Mewasif heard this, she knew that it was Mesrour and wept, she and her maidens, and said to him, 'I conjure thee by Allah, O Mesrour, turn back, lest my husband see us!' At these words he swooned away; and when he revived, they took leave of each other and he recited the following verses:

The chief of the caravan to depart calls loud and high, In the darkness ere the dawn, and the zephyr wafts the cry.
They gird their burdens on and hasten to depart, And on, at the leader's voice, the caravan doth hie.
They perfume the lands, through which they journey, on every side, And still through the valley's midst their travel in haste they ply.
Possession they took of my soul in passion and fared away And left me to toil in vain in the track of their passing by.
Beloved, I purposed indeed to part with you never in life And the earth is drenched with the tears that flow from the wanderer's eye.
Alack! How hath parting's hand with mine entrails wroughten! Woe's me For my heart! Since my loves are gone, it irketh me like to die.

Then he clung to the litter, weeping and lamenting, whilst she besought him to turn back ere morning, for fear of discovery. So he came up to her and bidding her farewell a second time, fell down in a swoon. He lay a great while without life, and when he came to himself, he found the caravan out of sight. So he turned in the direction of their travel and inhaled the breeze that blew from their quarter, chanting the following verses:

No wind of nearness to the lover's blown But of the pains of longing he makes moan.
The breeze of dawning blows on him; he wakes And in the world he finds himself alone.
Blood, mingled with his streaming tears, he weeps, For languor on the bed of sickness prone;
For loved ones lost he weeps; his heart with them Fares midst the camels over sand and stone.

No breeze blows from their quarter but I stand, With eyes attent and nostrils open thrown,
And on the South wind snuff their musky gale, Whose scent is grateful to the lover lone.

Then he returned, mad with love-longing, to her house, and finding it empty and deserted, wept till he wet his clothes; after which he swooned away and his soul was like to depart his body. When he revived, he recited the following couplet:

O house, on my abjection have ruth and on my plight, My tears for ever flowing and body wasted quite,
And waft me the aroma of their sweet-scented breeze, So haply with its fragrance it heal my anguished spright.

Then he returned to his own house and abode there, confounded and tearful-eyed, for the space of ten days.

Meanwhile, the Jew journeyed on with Zein el Mewasif half a score days, at the end of which time he halted at a certain city and she wrote to Mesrour a letter and gave it to Huboub, saying, 'Send this to Mesrour, so he may know how we have been tricked and how the Jew hath cheated us.' So Huboub despatched it to Mesrour, whom when it reached, its news was grievous to him and he wept till he wet the ground. Then he wrote a reply and sent it to his mistress, subscribing it with the following couplets:

Where is the road unto the doors of solace? How shall he, Who's all for love-longing on flames of fire consoléd be?
How pleasant were the days of yore, that now are past away! Ah would some scantling of their times were yet with thee and me!

When the letter reached Zein el Mewasif, she read it and gave it to her maid Huboub, bidding her keep it secret. However, the Jew came to know of their correspondence and removed with her to another city, at a distance of twenty days' journey.

As for Mesrour, sleep was not sweet to him nor was peace or patience left unto him, and he ceased not to be thus till, one night, his eyes closed for weariness and he dreamt that he saw Zein el Mewasif come to him in the garden and embrace him; but presently he awoke and found her not: whereupon he fell into a passion of grief. His reason fled and his eyes ran over with tears; love-longing to the utterest possessed his heart and he recited these verses:

Peace be on her, whose image came to visit me by night And passion straight in me renewed and longings did excite!
Indeed, from that my dream I rose, distracted with desire, Fulfilled of love and longing pain for that fair vision's sight.
Do the imbroglios of sleep say sooth of her I love? Will she yet quench my thirst and heal the sickness of my spright?
Anon she spoke with me, anon she strained me to her breast And now with pleasant speech she soothed my pain and my affright;
And when our lovers' chiding was accomplished in the dream And in unceasing floods, the tears streamed from mine eyes contrite,
From out her damask lips, for me, as 'twere the best of wine, Whose scent was as the scent of musk, she poured, that lady bright.
I marvel at what chanced 'twixt us in dreams; for lo! I got My wish of her and that I sought of solace and delight;
But, when from sleep I woke, no whit of that fair dream found I Save love-longing and pain; the rest had fled with morning-light.
And since I've looked on her, I'm grown, by day, as I were mad; Anights I'm drunken without wine, a love-distracted wight.
O waftings of the zephyr, go, to them I prithee bear The salutation of my love and longing for their sight,
And say to them, 'Him, whom ye knew, the shifts of sorry Fate Have given to drink the cup of death, of destiny's despite.'

Then he went out and ceased not to weep till he came to her house and looking on it, saw it deserted. Presently, it seemed to him he saw her image before him, whereupon fires flamed in him and his sorrows redoubled and he fell

down in a swoon. When he came to himself, he recited the following verses:

I snuff the scent of balm from them, wherewith the air is fraught And fare away, with heart fulfilled of passion, love-distraught.
A miserable slave of love, my longings with the sight Of dwellings, void of all their charms, to salve in vain I've sought.
It doth but sicken me for woe and severance and desire And all the past-time with my friends recalleth to my thought.

When he had made an end of these verses, he heard a raven croak beside the house and wept, saying, 'Glory be to God! The raven croaks not save over a ruined house.' Then he sighed and groaned and recited the following verses:

What aileth the raven to croon o'er the house of my love? As I hear, The fires in my bosom rage high; their burning my entrails doth sear,
For regret for the days of their love, bygone; my heart wanders, for woe, In the mountains of misery lost, distracted with passion and fear.
I die of love-longing; the flames of desire in my liver still rage, And letters I write, which, alas! I have none to convey to my dear.
Alas for my body worn waste and my sorrow! My loved one is gone. Will they ever, I wonder, return, her nights, with their solace and cheer?
O breeze of the East, in the dawn if thou visit the camp of her tribe, Salute her, I prithee, for me, and stay by her stead thy career.

Now Zein el Mewasif had a sister, by name Nesim,[1] who was looking on him from a high place; and when she saw him in this plight, she wept and sighed and recited these verses:

Harkye! How oft, bewailing the steads, wilt come and go? Indeed, the house its builder bemoaneth, of its woe.
Gladness, ere they departed who did inhabit here, Was rife within the dwelling and suns[2] in it did glow.
Where are the full moons[2] vanished, that shone so bright? The shifts Of fate their lucent beauties have blotted out, I trow.

[1] *i.e.* breeze. [2] *i.e.* fair-faced women.

Leave what is past of fair ones, with whom thou didst consort: Mayhap, the days, returning, them forth again will show:
Except for thee, its dwellers had not departed hence Nor thou in its high places hadst seen the corby-crow.

When Mesrour heard these verses and apprehended their meaning, he wept sore. Now Nesim knew that which was between him and her sister of love and longing and passion; so she said to him, 'God on thee, O Mesrour, forbear this house, lest any see thee and deem thou comest on my account! Thou hast caused my sister depart and now thou wouldst drive me also away. Thou knowest that, but for thee, the house would not now be void of its inhabitants: so be consoled for her and leave her; for what is past is past.' When he heard this, he said to her, 'O Nesim, if I could, I should fly for longing after her; so how can I be comforted for her?' Quoth she, 'Thou hast nothing for it but patience.' And he said, 'I beseech thee, for God's sake, write me a letter to her, as from thyself, and get me an answer from her, to comfort my heart and quench the fire that rages in my vitals.'

'With all my heart,' answered she and took inkhorn and paper, whilst Mesrour began to set out to her the violence of his longing and what he suffered for the anguish of separation, saying, 'This letter is from the despairing and sorrowful lover, the wretched bereaved one, with whom no peace abides, night nor day, but he still weeps copious tears. Indeed, tears have ulcerated his eyelids and his sorrows have kindled a fire in his liver. His lamentation is prolonged and restlessness is sore on him, as he were a bird that hath lost its mate, and his death is at hand. Alas, my desolation for the loss of thee and my yearning affliction for thy companionship! Indeed, emaciation hath wasted my body and my tears are become a torrent; mountains and plains are

straitened upon me, and of the excess of my passion, I go saying:

My yearning o'er this stead's eternal and my pain, And longings for its folk still wax on me amain.
I send to you my tale of love; the cupbearer Still giveth me the cup of love for you to drain.
And for your faring hence and absence from the lands, With ever-streaming tears my wounded eyelids rain.
O litter-leader, stay; turn back with the belov'd; For all my heart's afire with flames that never wane.
My greeting to my love bear thou and say to her, "There's nought but damask lips his sorrows can assain.
Time bore him off and rent his loves apart and cleft His entrails with a shaft of severance in twain."
Give them to know of all my transport for their loss And what I bear for love and longing all in vain.
Yea, by the love of you, I swear I will fulfil The covenant of love, whatever Fate ordain.
I'll never change nor yet forget your love: how shall Forgetfulness betide the wistful, longing swain?
Peace, salutation-wise, from me, with musk commixt In letters, be on you again and yet again!'

Nesim marvelled at his eloquence and the goodliness of his speech and the elegance of his verses and was moved to compassion for him. Then she sealed the letter with virgin musk and incensed it with aloes-wood and ambergris, after which she committed it to a merchant, bidding him deliver it not save to Zein el Mewasif or her maid Huboub.

When the letter reached her sister, she knew it for Mesrour's inditing and recognized himself in the grace of its expression. So she kissed it and laid it on her eyes, whilst the tears streamed from her lids and she gave not over weeping, till she fainted. When she came to herself, she called for pen and paper and wrote him the following answer: 'This letter is to my lord and

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master, the king of my heart and my secret soul. Indeed, wakefulness agitateth me and melancholy increaseth on me and I have no patience to endure thine absence, O thou whose beauty excels the sun and moon! Desire deprives me of rest and passion destroys me; and how should it be otherwise with me, seeing that I am of the number of the perishing? O glory of the world and ornament of life, shall her cup be sweet, whose vital spirits are cut off? For that she is neither with the quick nor with the dead.' And she added these verses:

Thy letter, O Mesrour, hath stirred affliction up in me; I have no patience for thy loss nor solacement, perdie.
My bowels, when I read the script, yearn and the desert herbs I water with my tears that flow for ever like a sea.
Were I a bird, I'd fly to thee, upon the wings of night: I know not, after thee, if wine or sweet or bitter be.
Forbidden unto me is life, since thy departure hence: I have no power to brook the fire of severance from thee.

Then she sprinkled the letter with powdered musk and ambergris and committed it to a merchant, bidding him deliver it to none save her sister Nesim. When it reached the latter, she sent it to Mesrour, who kissed it and laid it on his eyes and wept till he fainted.

Presently, the Jew heard of their correspondence and began again to travel from place to place with Zein el Mewasif and her damsels, till she said to him, 'Glory to God! How long wilt thou journey with us and carry us afar from our homes?' Quoth he, 'I will fare on with you a year's journey, so no more letters may reach you from Mesrour. I see how you take all my good and give it to him; so all that I miss I shall take from you: and I shall see if Mesrour will profit you or avail to deliver you from my hand.' Then he stripped her and her damsels of their silken apparel and clad them in raiment of hair-cloth; after which he repaired to a blacksmith and

bade him make three pairs of iron shackles. When they were ready, he brought the smith in to his wife and said to him, 'Put the shackles on the legs of these three damsels.'

The first that came forward was Zein el Mewasif, and when the blacksmith saw her, his reason forsook him and he bit his fingers and his wit fled forth his head and sore was his transport. So he said to the Jew, 'What is these women's crime?' 'They are my slave-girls,' answered the other, 'and have stolen my good and fled from me.' 'May God disappoint thine expectation!' cried the smith. 'Were this girl before the Chief Cadi, he would not reprove her, though she committed a hundred offences a day. Indeed, she hath no thief's favour and she may not brook the laying of irons on her legs.' And he went on to intercede with him, beseeching him not to fetter her. When she saw this, she said to her husband, 'I conjure thee by Allah, bring me not forth before yonder strange man!' Quoth he, 'Why then camest thou out before Mesrour?' And she made him no reply. Then he accepted the blacksmith's intercession, so far as to allow him to put a light pair of shackles on her legs, for that she had a delicate body, which might not brook harshness, whilst he laid her handmaids in heavy irons, and they ceased not, all three, to wear hair-cloth day and night, till their bodies became wasted and their colour changed.

As for the blacksmith, he returned home in great concern, for that exceeding love was fallen on his heart for Zein el Mewasif; and he fell to reciting the following verses:

Blacksmith, may thy right hand wither, in that it did ill entreat Yon fair maid by clapping fetters on her ankles and her feet.
Thou hast chained a lovely lady, gentle, soft and delicate: Of the wonderful'st of wonders was she fashioned and complete.

Not of iron were her anklets, were she justly used, I trow: Gold, indeed, alone were worthy of that loveling fair and sweet.
If the Cadi of the Cadis saw her charms, he'd pity her And upon the highest places in her glory would her seat.

Now it chanced that the Chief Cadi passed by the smith's house and heard him repeat these lines; so he sent for him and said to him, 'O blacksmith, who is she on whom thou callest so instantly and with whose love thy heart is occupied?' The smith rose to his feet and kissing the Cadi's hand, answered, 'May God prolong the days of our lord the Cadi and give him ease of his life!' Then he set forth to him Zein el Mewasif's beauty and grace and symmetry and elegance and perfection and how she had a lovely face and a slender waist and heavy buttocks and acquainted him with the sorry plight in which she was for abasement and duresse and lack of victual.

When the Cadi heard this, he said, 'O blacksmith, send her to us, that we may do her justice, for thou art become accountable for her, and except thou guide her to us, God will punish thee at the Day of Resurrection.' 'I hear and obey,' replied the smith and betook himself forthright to Zein el Mewasif's lodging, but found the door locked and heard her reciting the following verses, in a plaintive voice, that came from a sorrowful heart:

In mine own land I was, conjoined with those I hold most dear, And my belovéd filled me cups of gladness bright and clear.
They passed 'twixt us with what we would of solace and of mirth; Nor knew we, morn or even, aught of dreariment or fear.
Indeed, a time we did fulfil, that gladdened us whilere With cup and lute and dulcimer and festival and cheer,
Till fortune and its shifts dissolved our fellowship; my love Departed and the time of peace with him evanished sheer.
Would that the crow of parting might be caused forbear our stead And would the dawn of my delight in passion might appear!

When he heard this, he wept like the downpouring of the clouds. Then he knocked at the door and the women said, 'Who is at the door?' 'It is I, the blacksmith,' answered he and told them what the Cadi had said and how he would have them appear before him and make their plaint to him, that he might do them justice on their adversary. 'How can we go to him,' replied Zein el Mewasif, 'seeing the door is locked on us and our feet shackled and the Jew hath the keys?' Quoth the smith, 'I will make keys for the locks and open the door and the shackles therewith.' 'But who will show us the Cadi's house?' asked she; and he said, 'I will describe it to you.' 'But how,' continued she, 'can we appear before him, clad as we are in hair-cloth, smoked with sulphur?' And he answered, 'He will not reproach this to you, considering your case.' So saying, he went forthright and made keys for the locks, wherewith he opened the door and the shackles, and loosing the latter from their legs, carried them forth and directed them to the Cadi's house. Then Huboub did off the hair-cloth garments from her mistress's body and carried her to the bath, where she washed her and clad her in silken raiment, and her colour returned to her.

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Now, as luck would have it, her husband was abroad at a bride-feast in the house of one of the merchants; so she adorned herself after the fairest fashion and betook herself to the Cadi, who rose to receive her. She saluted him with dulcet speech and sweet words, transfixing him the while with the arrows of her glances, and said, 'May God prolong the life of our lord the Cadi and strengthen him to do justice!' Then she acquainted him with the affair of the blacksmith and that which he had done them of kindness and with the heart-confounding torments that the Jew had inflicted on her and her women and how they had been like to perish, nor was there any deliverance

found for them [till the smith set them free]. 'O damsel,' said the Cadi, 'what is thy name?' 'My name is Zein el Mewasif,' answered she, 'and this my maid's name is Huboub.' Quoth he, 'Thy name accordeth with its owner and its words conform to its meaning.' Whereupon she smiled and veiled her face, and he said to her, 'O Zein el Mewasif, hast thou a husband or not?' 'I have no husband,' answered she. 'And what is thy faith?' asked he. 'That of Islam,' replied she, 'and the religion of the best of men.' Quoth he, 'Swear to me by the Law, full of instances and admonitions, that thou art a Muslim.' So she swore to him and pronounced the profession of the faith.

Then said he, 'How comes it that thou wastest thy youth with this Jew?' And she answered, 'Know, O Cadi (may God prolong thy days in contentment and bring thee to thy hopes and seal thine acts with benefits!), that my father left me, after his death, fifteen thousand dinars, which he put into the hands of this Jew, that he might trade therewith and share the profit with me, the capital being secured by acknowledgment according to law. When my father died, the Jew coveted me and sought me in marriage of my mother, who said, "How shall I cause her leave her faith and become a Jewess? By Allah, I will denounce thee to the authorities!" He was affrighted at her words and taking the money, fled to the town of Aden. When we heard where he was, we came to Aden in search of him, and when we foregathered with him, he told us that he was trading in stuffs [with the money] and buying goods upon goods. So we believed him and he ceased not to beguile us till he cast us into prison and fettered us and tortured us exceeding sore; and we are strangers and have no helper save God the Most High and our lord the Cadi.'

When the Cadi heard this, he said to Huboub, 'Is this

indeed thy mistress and are ye strangers and is she unmarried?' And she answered, 'Yes.' Quoth he, 'Marry her to me and be manumission [of my slaves] and fasting and pilgrimage and almsgiving [of all my estate] incumbent on me, if I do you not justice on this dog and punish him for that which he hath done!' And she answered, 'I hear and obey.' Then said he, 'Go, comfort thy heart and that of thy lady; and to-morrow, if it please God the Most High, I will send for this infidel and do you justice on him and ye shall see wonders of his punishment.' So Huboub called down blessings upon him and went forth from him, [she and her mistress,] leaving him distracted with passion and love-longing and desire. Then they enquired for the house of the second Cadi and presenting themselves before him, told him the same story. On like wise did she with the third and the fourth, till she had made her complaint to all the four Cadis, each of whom lusted after her and besought her to marry him, to which she consented; nor knew any one of the four that which had happened to the others. All this passed without the knowledge of the Jew, who spent the night in the house of the bride feast.

On the morrow, Huboub clad her mistress in her richest raiment and presented herself with her before the four Cadis in the hall of justice. As soon as she entered, she uncovered her face and saluted the magistrates, who returned her salutation and every one of them knew her. One was writing, and the pen dropped from his hand, another was talking, and his tongue became embarrassed, and a third was reckoning and blundered in his reckoning; and they said to her, 'O delightsome of attributes and surpassing of loveliness, be not thy heart other than easy, for we will assuredly do thee justice and bring thee to thy desire.' So she called down blessings on them and going forth, proceeded to beseech the notaries and scribes

Night dccclix.

to succour her against that unbelieving miscreant and deliver her from the torment she suffered from him. Then she wrote a letter to Mesrour, setting forth to him all that the Jew had done with her from first to last and ending with the following verses:

Rain down tears, O mine eyes, as the deluge they were, So perchance in their flood may be quenched my despair.
Once I clad me in raiment of gold-wroughten silk: Now the raiment of monks and of friars I wear;
Yea, and sulphur's the scent of my clothes; betwixt that And sweet basil and musk what a difference is there!
Thou wouldst never permit my abasement, Mesrour, Nor my bondage, if but of my case thou wert ware;
And Huboub too 's in fetters with one who denies The One, the Requiter of foul and of fair.
Lo, the ways of the Jews and their faith I've renounced And my faith is the noblest of faiths hence fore'er.
To the Clement a Muslim's prostration I make And to follow the law of Mohammed I swear.
Forget not our loves of old time, O Mesrour, And keep thou our vows and our troth plight with care.
My faith for thy love and thy sake I have changed And my secret for passion I'll never declare;
So, if, like to the noble, our love thou've preserved, Be no laggard, but hasten to us to repair.

Then she folded the letter and gave it to her maid Huboub, saying, 'Keep it in thy pocket, till we send it to Mesrour.'

Presently in came the Jew and seeing them joyous, said to them, 'How comes it that I find you merry? Hath a letter reached you from your friend Mesrour?' 'We have no helper against thee save God, blessed and exalted be He!' replied Zein el Mewasif. 'He will deliver us from thy tyranny, and except thou restore us to our country and home, we will complain of thee to-morrow to the Cadi and governor of this town.' Quoth

he, 'Who did off the shackles from your legs? But needs must I let make each of you shackles ten pounds in weight and go round about the city with you.' 'All that thou purposest against us,' replied Huboub, 'thou shalt fall into thyself, so it please God the Most High, by token that thou hast exiled us from our homes, and to-morrow we shall stand, we and thou, before the governor of the city.'

On this wise they passed the night and the next morning the Jew went out to order fresh shackles, whereupon Zein el Mewasif rose and repaired with her women to the court-house, where she found the four Cadis and saluted them. They all returned her salutation and the Chief Cadi said to those about him, 'Verily this damsel is lovely as Ez Zehra[1] and all who see her love her and prostrate themselves to her beauty and grace.' Then he despatched four sergeants, who were sherifs,[2] to fetch the Jew after the most abject fashion: so, when he returned with the shackles and found none in the house, he was confounded; but, as he abode in perplexity, up came the officers and laying hold of him, beat him soundly and dragged him, face downward, before the Cadi. When the latter saw him, he cried out in his face and said to him, 'Out on thee, O enemy of God, is it come to such a pass with thee that thou dost thus and bringest these women far from their country and stealest their good and wouldst make them Jews? How darest thou seek to pervert Muslims?' 'O my lord,' answered the Jew, 'this woman is my wife.'

When the Cadis heard this, they all cried out, saying,

[1] A name given to the Prophet's daughter Fatimeh, in commemoration of her supposed exemption from the periodical infirmity peculiar to women. It is also the Arabic name of Venus.

[2] Strictly descendants of the Prophet's grandson Hassan; but the title is commonly (though erroneously) applied to any descendant of Mohammed.

'Cast this dog on the ground and smite him on the face with your sandals and beat him soundly, for his offence is unpardonable.' So they pulled off his silken clothes and clad him in his wife's raiment of hair-cloth, after which they threw him down and plucked out his beard and belaboured him about the face with sandals. Then they set him on an ass, face to crupper, and causing him take its tail in his hand, paraded him round about the town, after which they brought him back to the Cadis, who all condemned him to have his feet and hands cut off and after be crucified. When the accursed wretch heard this, his wit forsook him and he was confounded and said, 'O my lords the Cadis, what would ye of me?' 'Say,' answered they, "This damsel is not my wife and the money is her money, and I have transgressed against her and brought her far from her country."' So he confessed to this and the Cadis recorded his confession in legal form and taking the money from him, gave it to Zein el Mewasif, together with their voucher. Then she went away and all who saw her were confounded at her beauty and grace, whilst each of the Cadis looked for her to fall to his share. But, when she came to her lodging, she made ready all that she needed and waited till night. Then she took what was light of carriage and heavy of worth, and setting out with her maids, under cover of the darkness, fared on three days and three nights without stopping.

Meanwhile, the Cadis ordered the Jew to prison and on the morrow they looked for her coming to them, they and their assessors; but she presented herself not to any of them. Then said the Chief Cadi, 'I wish to-day to go a-pleasuring without the town on an occasion I have.' So he mounted his mule and taking his servant with him, went coasting about the streets of the town, searching high and low for Zein el Mewasif, but to no effect. Night dccclx.

Presently he came upon the other three Cadis, going about on the same errand, each deeming himself the only one to whom she had pledged herself. He asked them what they did there and they told him their business, whereby he saw that their plight was as his plight and their quest as his quest. So they all four went round about the city, seeking her, but could light on no trace of her and returned to their houses, sick for love, and lay down on the bed of languor. Presently the Chief Cadi bethought himself of the blacksmith; so he sent for him and said to him, 'O blacksmith, knowest thou what is come of the damsel whom thou didst direct to me? By Allah, an thou discover her not to me, I will beat thee with whips.' When the smith heard this, he recited the following verses:

Her, that possesseth me in love, kind Fortune did endow With beauty all nor aught thereof to others did allow.
The eye of a gazelle she hath; her scent is ambergris; She shines, a sun, and undulates, a lake, and sways, a bough.

Then said he, 'By Allah, O my lord, since she went out from thy worshipful presence, I have not set eyes on her! Indeed, she took possession of my heart and senses and all my talk and thought is of her. I went to her house, but found her not, nor found I any who could give me news of her, and it is as if she had plunged into the abysses of the sea or been caught up into the sky.'

When the Cadi heard this, he gave a groan, that his soul was like to depart therefor, and said, 'By Allah, it would have been well, had we never seen her!' Then the smith went away, whilst the Cadi fell down on his bed and became sick of languor for her sake, and on like wise fared it with the other three Cadis and the assessors. The physicians paid them frequent visits, but found in them no ailment requiring a leach: so the chief men of the city went in to the Chief Cadi and saluting him, questioned

him of his case; whereupon he sighed and discovered to them that which was in his heart, reciting the following verses:

Spare me your blame, for sickness' pains enough on me are keen, And hold excused the Cadi who doth judge the folk between.
Let him who blameth me for love excuse me and not blame, For still unblameworthy the slain of passion are, I ween.
Cadi was I and fortune fair raised me to high estate, By script and pen, and life to me was pleasant and serene,
Till from a girl's looks, who to shed my blood came, with a shaft I was transfixed, whose deadly stroke no leach might countervene.
A Muslim maid, she came to me, complaining of unright; Her mouth with teeth like strings of pearls unvalued was beseen.
Under her veil I looked and she a full moon straight displayed That through the middle dark of night breaks out in all its sheen.
A lustrous visage, sugared lips and smiling, wonder-sweet, Beauty indeed enveloped her from head to foot, my queen.
'Midst Arabs and barbarians, by Allah, to mine eyes, To see the like of her fair face hath ne'er vouchsafed been!
Sweet, what didst promise me and saidst, 'O Cadi of the folk, Whenas I promise, I perform, and what I say I mean.'
This is my case and that wherewith I have afflicted been; So question me no more, good folk, of this my dole and teen.

Then he wept sore and gave one sob and his soul departed his body. When they saw this, they washed him and shrouded him and prayed over him and buried him, graving the following verses on his tomb:

The traits of lovers were fulfilled in him who comes, by her He loved and by her rigours slain, unto the sepulchre.
Cadi above the folk was he and him it did rejoice The sword of justice in its sheath to keep a prisoner.
But Fate against him did decree, nor e'er before his time Saw we the lord unto his slave abase him and defer.

Then they committed him to the mercy of God and went away to the second Cadi, in company with the physician, but found in him no hurt or ailment requiring

a leach. So they questioned him of his case and he told them what ailed him, whereupon they blamed him and chid him for his folly, and he answered them with these verses:

I'm cursed with her,—my like was blameless aye,—and dead I'm shotten with a shaft from hand of archer sped.
A woman unto me there came, Huboub by name, Complaining of unright and Fortune's drearihead;
And with her came a girl, who showed a face that passed The full moon's light athwart the middle darkness spread.
Her beauties she displayed and her complaint preferred What while in floods there ran the tears her eyelids shed.
I hearkened to her speech and looked upon her face And sore she made me pine with smiling lips and red.
Then with my heart away she fared and left me here, The hostage of desire. Ah, whither hath she fled?
This then is all my case; have ruth upon my plight And take my servant here to Cadi in my stead.

Then he gave one sob and his soul departed his body; whereupon they buried him and commending him to the mercy of God, repaired to the third Cadi and the fourth, and there befell them the like of what befell their brethren. Moreover, they found the assessors also sick for love of her, and indeed all who saw her died of her love, or, if they died not, lived, afflicted with the agonies of passion [in vain], may God have mercy on them all!

Night dccclxi.

Meanwhile Zein el Mewasif and her women fared on with all diligence till they came to a convent by the way, in which dwelt a prior called Danis and forty monks. When the prior saw her beauty, he went out to her and invited her to alight, saying, 'Rest with us ten days and after go your ways.' So she and her damsels alighted and entered the convent; and when Danis saw her beauty and grace, she debauched his faith and he was seduced by her: wherefore he fell to sending her love-messages by

the monks, one after another, till he had sent all the forty; but each who saw her fell in love with her and plied her with blandishments galore and sought her favours for himself, without naming Danis, whilst she denied herself to them and rebuffed them all with harsh answers.

When Danis's patience was at an end and his passion was sore on him, he said in himself, 'Verily, the proverb says, "Nothing scratches my body but my own nail and nought runs my errands like my own feet."' So he rose and made ready rich meats, and it was the ninth day of her sojourn in the convent. Then he carried them in to her and set them before her, saying, 'In the name of God, favour us [by partaking] of the best of the food at our command.' So she put out her hand, saying, 'In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful!' and ate, she and her maidens. When she had made an end of eating, he said to her, 'O my lady, I wish to recite to you some verses.' 'Say on,' quoth she; and he recited the following:

Thou hast made conquest of my heart by dint of cheek and eye; In love of thee my prose and verse with one another vie.
Wilt thou forsake a lover sick with passion and desire? E'en in my dreams 'gainst love I strive, with many a tear and sigh.
With my delights, I have th' affairs of this my convent left: Leave me not prostrate, love-distraught, to languish and to die.
O lovely one, that holdest right the shedding of my blood In love, have pity on my case, give ear unto my cry.

When she heard this, she answered him with these verses:

O thou that seek'st of me delight, let not vain hope thy wit Delude; of thy soliciting I prithee hold me quit.
Let not thy spirit covet that which it may not possess: Disquietude with covetise was ever straitly knit.

Thereupon he returned to his place, pondering in himself and knowing not how he should do in her affair, and passed the night in very sorry case. But, as soon as it was dark night, Zein el Mewasif arose and said to her maids, 'Come, [let us depart hence], for we cannot avail against forty men, monks, each of whom requireth me of himself.' 'Willingly,' answered they. So they mounted their beasts and issuing forth of the convent gate, under favour of the night, rode on till they overtook a caravan, with which they mingled and found it came from the city of Aden. Presently, Zein el Mewasif heard the people of the caravan discoursing of her own case and telling how the Cadis and assessors were dead of love for her and how the townsfolk had appointed others in their stead and released her husband from prison. Whereupon she turned to her maids and said to them, 'Heard ye that?' And Huboub answered, 'If the monks were ravished with love of thee, whose belief it is that to abstain from women is to do God worship, how should it be with the Cadis, who hold that there is no monkery in Islam? But let us make our way to our own country, whilst our affair is yet undiscovered.' So they journeyed on with all diligence.

Night DCCCLXII.

On the morrow, as soon as it was day, the monks repaired to Zein el Mewasif's lodging, to salute her, but found the place empty, and their hearts sank within them. So the first monk rent his clothes and recited these verses:

Give ear, companions dear, to that I shall to you impart; For I must say farewell to you full shortly and depart.
The pangs of passion and desire within mine entrails rage And eke a slayer from the flame of love is in my heart,
By reason of a lovely maid, who came into our land: The full moon in the height of heaven is as her counterpart.
She went and left me by her charms cast down and done to death, Slain of a shaft that from her lids death-dealing she did dart.

Then another monk recited the following verses:

O ye that with my soul have fled, on your unhappy swain Have pity and to his despair your blest returning deign.
They fared away and my repose departed after them; But still the sweetness of their speech doth in mine ears remain.
They're distant, yea, and distant is their visitation-place: Would they'd vouchsafe, though but in dreams, their sight to us again!
When they departed hence, they took my heart with them and left Me all dissolved in floods of tears, that from mine eyes did rain.

A third monk followed with these lines:

Heart, eyes and ears to set thee in the highest room agree; For, lo, my heart and all of me's a dwelling-place for thee.
Sweeter than honey in my mouth thy name is and thy thought Runs, as the vital spirit runs, in every rib of me.
Lean as a skewer hast thou made my frame for languishment; Yea, and thou'st drowned me with my tears in very passion's sea.
Let me but look on thee in sleep; mayhap thy lovely sight Shall from the torment of my tears avail my cheeks to free.

Then a fourth recited the following verses:

Dumb is my tongue for sorrow; my speech of thee doth fail; Of passion comes my anguish, my sickness and my bale.
O thou full moon, whose place is in heaven, sore for thee Love-longing and distraction my spirit do assail.

And a fifth these:

I love a moon, shapely and slim and well-grown; Her waist of the weight of her buttocks makes moan.
Like the first pressed-out wine are the dews of her mouth And her lips to mankind for distraction are known.
My heart burns with passion; the lover lies slain, Midst the dark, whence the moon and its lustre are flown,
And his tears like the rains flow, nor ever run dry, For a cheek that is red as cornelian-stone.

And a sixth these:

Thou, whose exceeding rigour hath slain me for desire, O cassia-branch, whose planet mounts ever high and higher,
To thee of my affliction, my passion, I complain, O thou whose cheeks consume me with roses red as fire!
Is there his like for lover, who damns his soul for thee, Prayers and prostrations leaving, for all he is a friar?

And a seventh these:

My heart she prisoned and the tears from out mine eyes set free, My patience rent and love-longing she fortified in me.
Sweet are her attributes, but, ah, how sour her rigour is! The hearts of all, who light on her, with arrows shooteth she.
O thou who blamest me, desist; repent thee for the past; For, in the case of passion, thou mayst not believéd be.

And on like wise all the rest of the monks repeated verses and wept. As for Danis, lamentation and weeping redoubled on him, for that he found no way to her enjoyment, and he chanted the following verses:

My patience failed me, when my loves took leave and fared away, When they, my wish and my desire, forsook me, sooth to say.
Soft with their camels, O thou guide o' the litters! Haply yet They to my dwelling to return may deign some blessed day.
Slumber forsook my lids the day we parted; my delight Departed with them and my woes waxed on me for dismay.
To God I make my moan of that I suffer for her love; My body's wasted sore and she hath caused my strength decay.

Then, despairing of her, they took counsel together and agreed to fashion her image [and set it up] with them, and applied themselves to this till there came to them the Destroyer of Delights and Sunderer of Companies.

Meanwhile, Zein el Mewasif fared on, without ceasing, till she reached her own house and opened the doors. Then she entered and sent to her sister Nesim, who rejoiced exceedingly at the news of her return and brought

her the furniture and precious stuffs [she had left in her charge]. So she furnished the house and hung up the curtains over the doors and burnt aloes-wood and musk and ambergris and other perfumes, till the whole house reeked with the most delightful fragrance: after which she donned her finest clothes and ornaments and sat talking with her maids, whom she had left behind, and relating to them all that had befallen her. Then she turned to Huboub and giving her money, bade her fetch them something to eat. So she brought meat and drink and when they had made an end of eating and drinking, Zein el Mewasif bade Huboub go and see where Mesrour was and how it fared with him.

Night dccclxiii.

Now Mesrour knew not of her return, but abode in sore concern and sorrow that might not be overpast; no peace remained to him nor was patience possible to him. Whenas love and passion and yearning and distraction waxed on him, he would solace himself by reciting verses and go to the house and kiss its walls. It chanced that he went out that day to the place where he had parted from his mistress and repeated the following verses:

That which for thee I suffer I would have hid; but, nay, 'Twould out, and sleep for waking mine eyes have bartered aye.
Since that wanhope doth canker my heart both night and day, I cry aloud, 'O Fortune, hold back thy hand, I pray,
For lo, my soul is straitened 'twixt peril and dismay.
If but the Lord of passion were just, indeed, to me, Sure slumber from mine eyelids he had not bidden flee.
Have ruth upon a lover, who languishes for thee, The great one of a people, cast down by Love's decree,
The rich, whom love hath beggared and brought him to decay.
The censors still revile thee; I heed them not, not I, But stop mine ears against them and give them back the lie.
Still will I keep my troth-plight with her I love. They cry, 'Thou lovest one departed and gone;' and I reply,
'Enough; when Fate descendeth, the sight is blinded aye.'

Then he returned to his lodging and sat there weeping, till sleep overcame him, when he saw in a dream as if Zein el Mewasif were come to the house, and awoke, weeping. So he set off to go thither, repeating the following verses:

How shall I be consoled for her whose am I, every jot, When all my heart's aglow with flames than coals of fire more hot?
To Allah of the shifts of Fate, the nights' vicissitudes And of her absence I complain, whom well I love, God wot.
When shall we meet, O term of heart's desire? O full-moon face, When shall the favouring Fates to me reunion allot?

As he made an end of his recitation, he found himself in Zein el Mewasif's street and smelt the sweet savour of the perfumes with which she had incensed the house; wherefore his heart fluttered and was like to leave his breast and desire flamed up in him and distraction redoubled upon him, when, behold, up came Huboub, on her way to do her mistress's errand. When she saw him, she went up to him and saluting him, gave him the glad news of her mistress's return, saying, 'She hath sent me to bid thee to her.' Whereat he rejoiced with an exceeding joy and she took him and returned with him to the house.

When Zein el Mewasif saw him, she came down to him from the couch and kissed him and embraced him and he her; nor did they leave kissing and embracing till they swooned away for stress of love and separation. They lay a long while senseless, and when they revived, Zein el Mewasif bade Huboub fetch her a gugglet of sherbet of sugar and another of sherbet of lemons. So she brought what she desired and they sat eating and drinking till nightfall, when they fell to recalling all that had befallen them, first and last. Then she acquainted him with her conversion to Islam, whereat he rejoiced and became a Muslim. On like wise did her women, and they all repented to God the Most High [of their infidelity]. On

the morrow she sent for the Cadi and the witnesses and told them that she was a widow and had completed the period of purification and was minded to marry Mesrour. So they drew up the marriage-contract between them and they abode in all delight of life.

Meanwhile, the Jew, when the people of Aden released him from prison, set out homeward and fared on, without stopping, till he came within three days' journey of the city, when Zein el Mewasif heard of his coming and calling Huboub, said to her, 'Go to the Jews' burial-place and there dig a grave and plant on it sweet basil and jessamine and sprinkle water thereabout. If the Jew come and ask thee of me, answer, "My mistress died twenty days ago of chagrin on thine account." If he say, "Show me her tomb," take him to the [mock] grave and weep over it and make moan and lament before him.'[1] And Huboub answered, 'I hear and obey.' Then they laid up the furniture in the store-closets, and Zein el Mewasif removed to Mesrour's lodging, where he and she abode eating and drinking, till the three days were past; at the end of which time the Jew arrived and knocked at the door of his house. Quoth Huboub, 'Who is at the door?' And he answered. 'Thy master.' So she opened to him and he saw the tears coursing down her cheeks and said to her, 'What ails thee to weep and where is thy mistress?' Quoth she, 'My mistress is dead of chagrin on thine account.' When he heard this, he wept sore and was confounded and said, 'O Huboub, where is her tomb?' So she carried him to the Jews' burial-ground and showed him the grave she had dug; and he wept sore and recited the following verses:

[1] The Calcutta and Boulac Editions add here, 'And contrive to bury him therein alive.' I have followed the less extravagant reading of the Breslau text.

Two things there are, for which if eyes wept tear on tear Of blood, till they were like, indeed, to disappear,
They never could fulfil the tithe of all their due; And these are prime of youth and loss of lovelings dear.

Then he wept again and recited these also:

Alas my grief! My fortitude bewrays me for my fair: Since she I love is gone, I die of misery and despair.
Woe's me for my beloved's loss! How sore it is on me! And O the rending of my heart for that I did whilere!
Would I my secret in my time had not revealed and eke The passion in my heart that seethed had still kept hidden there!
I was in all delight of life and solace; now she's gone, To misery and abjectness, alack! I'm vowed fore'er.
Huboub, thou 'st stirred me to lament with tidings of her death Who of all creatures was my stay and solace against care.
Zein el Mewasif, would to God that severance had not been! Would he,[1] through whom my soul forsook my body, had been ne'er!
I do repent me of the breach of vows and blame myself For my neglect of her on whom my hopes still builded were.

When he had made an end of saying this, he wept and groaned and lamented till he fell down in a swoon, whereupon Huboub made haste to drag him to the grave and throw him in, whilst he was yet insensible. Then she stopped up the grave on him and returning to her mistress, told her what had passed, whereat she rejoiced with an exceeding joy and recited the following verses:

Fate swore 'twould plague me without cease nor leave to make me rue: Thine oath is broken, Fate; so look thou fitting penance do.
The censor's dead and he I love conjoinéd is with me; Up then unto the summoner of joys, and quickly too!

Then she and Mesrour abode with each other in eating and drinking and sport and pleasure and good cheer, till there came to them the Destroyer of Delights and Sunderer of Companies and Slayer of sons and daughters.

[1] *i.e.* Mesrour.

ALI NOUREDDIN AND THE FRANK KING'S DAUGHTER.

There was once, of old days and in bygone ages and times, in the parts of Cairo, a merchant named Tajeddin, who was of the most considerable of the merchants and of the chiefs of the freeborn [of the city]. He was given to travelling to all parts and loved to fare over desert and down and stony waste and to journey to the islands of the seas, in quest of dirhems and dinars: wherefore he had in his time encountered dangers and suffered hardships of travel, such as would make little children gray. He was possessed of slaves and servants, white and black and male and female, and was the wealthiest of the merchants of his time and the goodliest of them in speech, owning horses and mules and Bactrian and other camels and sacks, great and small, and goods and merchandise and stuffs beyond compare, such as Hems muslins and Baalbek silks and brocades and Merv cottons and Indian stuffs and Baghdad gauzes and Moorish burnouses and Turkish white slaves and Abyssinian eunuchs and Greek slave-girls and Egyptian boys; and the coverings of his bales were of gold-embroidered silk, for he was abundantly wealthy. Moreover he was accomplished in goodliness, stately of port and pleasant of composition, even as saith of him one of his describers:

A certain merchant once I did espy, Between whose lovers war raged fierce and high.
Quoth he, 'What ails the folk to clamour thus?' ''Tis for thy sake, O merchant,' answered I.

And saith another in his praise and saith well and accomplisheth the wish of him:

A merchant came to visit us, whose eye Did with its glance my heart still stupefy.
Quoth he, 'What ails thee to be thus amazed?' 'On thine account, O merchant,' answered I.

He had a son called Ali Noureddin, as he were the full moon whenas it waxeth on its fourteenth night, a marvel of beauty and grace, elegant of shape and accomplished in symmetry, who was sitting one day in his father's shop, selling and buying and giving and taking, as was his wont, when the sons of the merchants encompassed him about and he was amongst them as the moon among stars, with flower-white forehead and rosy cheeks, covered with tender down, and body like alabaster, even as saith of him the poet:

A fair one said, 'Describe me well;' And I, 'In grace thou dost excel.
Yea, speaking briefly, all in thee Is lovely and acceptable.'

And as saith of him one of his describers:

A mole on 's cheek he hath, as 'twere a grain Of ambergris on alabaster plate,
And swordlike glances that proclaim aloud Against Love's rebels, 'Allah is Most Great!'[1]

The young merchants invited him [to go with them], saying, 'O my lord Noureddin, we wish thee to go this day a-pleasuring with us in such a garden.' And he answered, '[Wait] till I consult my father, for I cannot go without his consent.' As they were talking, up came Tajeddin, and his son turned to him and said, 'O my father, the sons of the merchants have invited me to go a-pleasuring with them in such a garden. Dost thou give me leave to go?' 'Yes, O my son,' answered his father; 'go with them;' and gave him money.

[1] *Allah akber!* the well-known war-cry of the Muslim against the infidel.

So he mounted a mule and the other young men mounted mules and asses, and they all rode till they came to a garden, wherein was all the soul desireth and that charmeth the eye. It was high walled and had a vaulted gateway, with a portico like a saloon and a sky-blue door, as it were one of the gates of Paradise. Moreover, the name of the door-keeper was Rizwan,[1] and over the gate were trained a hundred trellises of grapes of various colours, the red like coral, the black like negroes' faces and the white like pigeons' eggs, growing in clusters and singly, even as saith of them the poet: Night dccclxiv.

Grapes, as the taste of wine their savour is, I trow: The black thereof in hue are as the corby-crow,
And shining midst the leaves, like women's fingers dipped In henna or the like of dye, the white grapes show.

And as saith another:

Grape-clusters, that show, on their stalks as they sway, Like my body for languishment wasted away.
Like honey and water in vases are they And their juice becomes wine, after sourness, one day.

Then they entered the arbour [that led into the garden] and saw there the gate-keeper sitting, as he were Rizwan, guardian of Paradise, and on the door were written these verses:

A garden watered was of God, until its clusters leant And dangled all and for excess of drink, its branches bent.
When in the Eastern zephyr's hand its saplings dance and sway, The clouds with fresh pearls handsel[2] them for very ravishment.

[1] The name of the gate-keeper of Paradise.

[2] A play upon the double meaning (to spot and to handsel) of the Arabic word *neket*. In its second sense, it is almost exclusively used to signify the giving of money to dancing and singing women on festive occasions and in this acceptation is practically equivalent to the English phrase "to mark (or cross) the palm with silver."

And within the arbour were written the following verses:

Enter with us, O friend, this garden fair, That cleanses from the heart its rust of care.
Its zephyrs stumble in their skirts [for haste] And in their sleeve[1] its flowers laugh everywhere.

So they entered and found within fruits of all kinds and birds of all sorts and colours, such as the ringdove and the nightingale and the curlew and the turtle and the cushat, carolling on the branches. Therein were streams that ran with limpid water and delightsome flowers, and it was even as saith of it the poet:

The zephyr o'er its branches breathes and sways them to and fro, As they were girls that in their skirts still stumble as they go;
And like to swords, whenas the hands of horsemen draw them forth From out their scabbards' envelope, its silver channels show.

And again:

The river passes by and laves the branches with its flood And still it mirrors in its heart the younglings of the wood;
Which when the zephyr notes, it hastes to them for jealousy And forces them to bend away from out its neighbourhood.

On the trees of the garden were all manner fruits, each in two kinds, and amongst them the pomegranate, as it were a ball of silver dross, whereof saith the poet and saith well:

Pomegranates, fine-skinned, like the breasts of a maid, Whenas, rounded and firm, to the sight they're displayed.
When I peel them, appear to us rubies galore, Such as well may the wit with amazement invade.

And as quoth another:

To him, who seeks to come at its inside, there are displayed Rubies together pressed and clad in raiment of brocade.
I liken the pomegranate, when I look on it, to domes Of alabaster or to breasts of unpolluted maid.

[1] Syn. bud or petals (*kumm*).

Therein is healing for the sick and thereanent to us A saying[1] of the Prophet pure tradition hath conveyed,
Yea, and a word most eloquent, written in the Book,[2] thereof God (may His majesty fore'er be magnified!) hath said.[3]

There were apples, sugar and musk and Damani, amazing the beholder, whereof saith the poet:

The apple in itself two hues, that image to the sight The cheeks of lover and belov'd foregathering, doth unite;
Upon the boughs like two extremes of wonder they appear, This dark and swarthy[4] to behold, and ruddy that and bright.
Whenas they clipped, a spy appeared and frighted them; so this Flushed for confusion and that paled for passion and despite.

There also were apricots of various kinds, almond and camphor and Jilani and Antabi, whereof says the poet:

The almond-apricot most like a lover is, To whom his loved one came and dazed his wit and will.
The traits of passion's slave that mark it are enough; Its outward's yellow,[5] and its heart is broken still.[6]

And saith another and saith well:

In the apricot's flowerage whole gardens there be: Consider them straitly, their brightness thou'lt see.
When the boughs bloom in spring-time, it blossoms with them, Like the soft-shining stars, midst the leaves on the tree.

[1] Mohammed is fabled, in a tradition of doubtful authenticity, not found in the Mishcat el Mesabih, to have said that every pomegranate contains a seed from Paradise.

[2] *i.e.* the Koran.

[3] "And the pomegranate, alike and unlike, consider its fruit, when it fruiteth, and the ripening thereof: verily, therein ye have signs for a people that believe."—*Koran* vi. 99.

[4] Lit. black (*asvad*), but the Arabs constantly use this word in the sense of green and vice versâ.

[5] Syn. pale.

[6] *i.e.* Every one who eats an almond-apricot (see note, Vol. VI. p. 67) cracks the stone, to get at the sweet kernel.

There likewise were plums and cherries and grapes, that heal the sick of [all] diseases and do away giddiness and bile from the head; and figs on the branches, parcel red and green, amazing sight and sense, even as saith the poet:

'Tis as the fig, whose whiteness, with mingling green bedight, Amongst the tree-leaves fruited, appeareth to the sight,
Were Greeks[1] on palace-turrets that keep the ward: the shades Close o'er them and in darkness they watch the livelong night.

And saith another and saith well:

Hail to the fig! It comes to us On dishes in fair order laid,
As 'twere a table-cloth,[2] drawn up Into a bag, without string's aid.

And saith a third alike well:

Give me the fig, with beauty that's clad and good to eat: Its outward with its inward accordeth, as is meet.
It fruiteth and thou pluckst it, and when thou eatst thereof, As camomiles its smell is, its taste as sugar sweet;
And when into its platters 'tis poured, it seemeth balls Made of green silk and fashioned in goodliness complete.

And how excellent is the saying of one of them!

Quoth they (and I on the fig, forsooth, was wont my fill to feed And made no count of the other fruits to which they gave the meed,)
'Why dost thou love the fig?' And I, 'The fig hath its folk,' replied; 'And the sycamore fruit hath folk and folk thereto, in very deed.'[3]

And still goodlier that of another:

The fig to me is pleasing above all fruits that be, Whenas it's ripe and dangles upon its shining tree.
What while the clouds are raining, for fear of God Most High, Full many a tear it sheddeth, as 'twere a devotee.

[1] *i.e.* Greeks of the Lower Empire (*Roum*), much sought after for slaves by the Arab conquerors of Syria, etc., on account of their beauty.
[2] *Sufreh.* See note, Vol. IV. p. 150.
[3] Double-entendre. See notes, Vol. III. p. 179 and Vol. VI. p. 242.

There were also pears of various kinds, Sinaï, Aleppo and Greek, growing singly and in clusters, parcel green and parcel yellow, amazing the beholder, as saith of them the poet:

Fair fall thee of a pear, whose hue is grown Even as a lover pale[1] for love and moan;
Like to a virgin in her harem shut, Her face by curtains half concealed, half shown.

And Sultani[2] peaches of various shades of red and yellow, whereof saith the poet:

'Tis as the peach, i' the gardens, when with red, Like unto dragon's blood, 'tis all o'erspread,
Were very balls of yellow gold, whose cheeks Are dyed with gouts of blood upon them shed.

And green almonds of exceeding sweetness, resembling the heart[3] of the palm-tree, with their kernels hidden within three tunics of the handiwork of the Munificent King, even as is said of them:

A tender body, various of attributes and pent In tunics three, the handiwork of God Omnipotent.
Duresse envelopes it both night and day and therewithin It doth, though guiltless of offence, endure imprisonment.

And as well saith another:

Dost thou not see the almonds, when from the parent stem The gentle hand of a plucker pulls and detaches them?
The peeling of them shows us the kernels therewithin, As when from out an oyster one pulls the hidden gem.

And as saith a third better than he:

How goodly is the almond green! The smallest fills the hand, I ween.
Its nap is as the down upon A minion's cheeks of satin sheen.
Double and single, as may chance, Its kernels in the husk are seen,
As pearls they were of lucent white, That cased and lapped in beryls been.

[1] Syn. yellow. [2] *Quære* from Sultaniyeh, a town near Baghdad.
[3] Eaten by the Arabs with honey.

And as saith yet another and saith well:

Mine eyes have not looked on the like of the almond For beauty, with blossoms in spring-time bedight.
Whilst the down on its cheek in the leaf-time yet sprouteth, Its head is already for hoariness white.

And jujube-plums of various colours, growing singly and in clusters, whereof saith one, describing them:

Look at the jujube-plums, upon the branches all arrayed, Like wonder-goodly apricots [to dry] on osiers laid.[1]
Such is their brightness that they seem, to the beholders' eyes, As cascabels of gold they were, of purest bullion made.

And as saith another and saith well:

The lote-tree doth itself array In some fresh beauty every day.
'Tis as the fruit upon it were (And th' eye so deems it, sooth to say,)
Hawks' bells of vegetable gold That swing from every branch and spray.

And [blood] oranges, as they were galingale,[2] whereof quoth the poet El Welhan:

Red oranges, that fill the hand, upon the boughs arow, Shining with loveliness; without they're fire, within they're snow.
Snow, for a marvel, melting not, though joined with fire it be, And fire that burns not, strange to say, for all its ruddy glow.

And quoth another and quoth well:

Trees of blood-oranges, whose fruit, in beauty manifold, Unto his eye who draweth near, its brightness to behold,
Like unto women's cheeks appears, who have adorned themselves And decked them out for festival in robes of cloth of gold.

[1] "La ville [El Aghouat] dort au-dessous de moi, avec ses terrasses vides, où le soleil éclaire une multitude de claies pleines de petits abricots roses, exposés la pour sécher."—Eugène Fromentin, Un Été dans le Sahara, Paris, 1857, p. 194.

[2] *Khulenjan.* Sic all editions; but *Khelenj*, a dark sweet-scented wood, to which a blood-orange might fairly be likened, is probably intended as the object of comparison.

And yet another:

The hills of oranges, what time the zephyrs o'er them glide And to their touch the branches bend and sway from side to side,
Are like to cheeks, wherein there glows the light of loveliness And to meet which come other cheeks at salutation-tide.

And a fourth:

One day of a young gazelle that he should praise Our garden and oranges we did require.
Quoth he, 'Your garden to me is as my face, And whoso gathers its oranges gathers fire.'

And citrons, in colour as virgin gold, dropping from on high and dangling among the branches, as they were ingots of vegetable gold, as saith thereof the poet El Welhan:

Hast thou not seen a fruited wood of citrons, laden all So heavily that, when they bend, one feareth lest they fall?
When the breeze passed o'er them, as 'twere with ingots of pure gold It seemed the boughs were laden, cast in many a gleaming ball.

And shaddocks, that hung among their boughs, as they were the breasts of gazelle-like virgins, contenting the utmost of desire, as saith of them the poet and saith well:

A shaddock, midst the garden ways, I saw, its leaves between, On a fresh branch, as a maid's shape with symmetry beseen.
When the wind bent it here and there, its fruits all rolled about, As balls of gold they were, at end of malls of beryl green.

And the lemon, sweet of savour, which resembles a hen's egg, but yellowness is the ornament of its ripe fruit, and its fragrance heartens him who plucks it, as saith the poet of it:

Behold'st not the lemon, that, whenas on high It shineth, for brilliancy dazzles the eye?
Meseemeth as if 'twere a hen's egg, indeed, That the hand of the huckster with saffron doth dye.

Moreover in this garden were all manner sweet-scented herbs and plants and fragrant flowers, such as jessamine and henna and water-lilies[1] and spikenard and roses of all kinds and plaintain and myrtle and so forth: and indeed it was without parallel, seeming as it were a piece of Paradise to him who beheld it. If a sick man entered it, he came forth from it like a raging lion, and the tongue availeth not to its description, by reason of that which was therein of wonders and rarities that are not found but in Paradise: and how should it not be thus, when its door-keeper's name was Rizwan? Though widely different were their stations.

When the sons of the merchants had walked about the garden and taken their pleasure therein [awhile], they sat down in one of its pavilions and seated Noureddin in their midst on a rug of leather of Et Taïf,[2] embroidered with gold, leaning on a round cushion of minever, stuffed with ostrich down. And they gave him a fan of ostrich feathers, whereon were written the following verses:

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A fan, whose breath is fragrant; it calleth aye to mind The days of joy and solace, when fortune still was kind,
And to the face of noble and freeborn youths restores Their sweetness at all seasons, with its perfuméd wind.

Then they laid by their turbans and [upper] clothes and sat talking and contending with one another in discourse, while they all kept their eyes fixed on Noureddin and gazed on his beauty. Presently, up came a slave with a tray on his head, wherein were dishes of china and crystal containing meats of all sorts, whatever walks [the earth] or wings the air or swims the waters, such as grouse and

[1] *Ful*, sic Breslau Edition. Syn. Arabian jessamine. The Boulac and Macnaghten Editions read *filfil*, pepper, which is a manifest error.

[2] A town near Mecca, renowned for the manufacture of scented goats' leather.

quails and pigeons and mutton and chickens and the most delicate of fish, for one of the young men had given the people of his house a charge of this, before coming forth to the garden. So, the tray being set before them, they fell to and ate their fill; and when they had made an end of eating, they rose from meat and washed their hands with pure water and soap scented with musk, and dried them with napkins embroidered with silk and bugles; but to Noureddin they brought a napkin laced with red gold, on which he wiped his hands.

Then coffee was served up and each drank what he would, after which they sat talking, till presently the keeper of the garden went away and returning with a basket full of roses, said to them, 'What say ye to flowers, O my masters?' Quoth one of them, 'They are welcome,[1] especially roses, which are not to be refused.' 'It is well,' answered the gardener: 'but it is of our wont not to give roses but in exchange for some contribution to the general amusement; so whoso would have aught thereof, let him recite some apposite verses.' Now they were ten in number; so one of them said, 'Agreed: give me [of them], and I will recite thee somewhat of verse apt to the case.' So the gardener gave him a bunch of roses and he recited these verses:

The rose I honour over all, Because its beauties never pall.
All fragrant flowers are troops and it Their Amir most majestical.
When it's away, they're proud; but if It come, straightway they own them thrall.

Then he gave another a bunch and he recited the following verses:

Glory to thee my lord the rose! The scent Of musk recalls the fragrance thou dost shed.
Thou'rt like a maid, on whom her lover looks And with her sleeves[2] she covers up her head.

[1] Lit. there is no harm in them.

[2] Syn. petals (*akmam*).

Then he gave a third a bunch and he recited these verses:

A precious rose, the heart of man it gladdeneth with its sight; Its scent the best of ambergris recalleth to the spright.
The branches strain it in its leaves for joyance, e'en as one Kisseth a mouth that knoweth nought of rigour or despite.

Then he gave a fourth a bunch and he recited these verses:

Seest not the rose-bush in blossom? Each mounted on its cane, Full many a marvel it holdeth, that ravish heart and brain.
As they were rubies with beryl encompassed about, they show, And each in the midst of its calyx doth somewhat of gold contain.

Then he gave a bunch to a fifth and he recited these verses:

Wands of green beryl fruit did bear, and when 'twas ripe, behold, As ingots to the sight it was of vegetable gold.
Ay, and the crystal drops that fell from out the tender leaves, Meseemed, were like to very tears from languorous eyelids rolled.

Then he gave a sixth a bunch and he recited the following verses:

O rose, thou dost all charms comprise, that may amaze the wit, And God to thee the pleasantest of secrets doth commit.
Meseems as if a loved one's cheek it were and eke as if A longing lover with a piece of gold had handselled it.[1]

Then he gave a bunch to a seventh and he recited these verses:

[1] A metaphor taken from the Eastern practice of showing approbation of the performance of a female singer or dancer by sticking small pieces of money on her face and cheeks, whilst still wet with perspiration. The same practice obtains at weddings, where one method of giving presents is to stick money on the bride's cheeks, freshly plastered with cosmetics.

I said unto the rose, 'What ails thy thorns to be So swift to wound and hurt all those that touch thy charms?'
It answered, 'All the flowers my soldiers are, in sooth, And I their Sultan am and these my thorns my arms.'

And he gave an eighth a bunch and he recited the following:

God watch o'er a rose that's grown yellow and bright, Resplendent, pure gold as it were to the sight,
And guard the fair boughs that have borne it, to boot, With the mock yellow suns of its flowerage bedight!

Then he gave a bunch to a ninth and he recited these verses:

The yellow roses stir to gladness uncontrolled The heart of every slave of passion, young or old.
A shrub that, strange to say, is water given to drink Of silver and for fruit, bears vegetable gold!

Then he gave a bunch of roses to the tenth and last and he recited the following verses:

Seest not the hosts of the rose, in raiment red And yellow that glitter from out their blossoming-stead?
I liken the yellow rose, with its thorn therein, To an emerald lance, through a golden target sped.

Then the gardener brought the wine-service and setting it before them, on a tray of porcelain sprayed with red gold, recited the following verses:

Dawn heraldeth the light; so pour me out, I pray, Of wine, such wine as makes the faintest-hearted gay.
So pure and bright it is, that whether wine in cup Or cup in wine be held, i' faith, 'tis hard to say.

Then he filled and drank and the cup went round, till it came to Noureddin's turn, whereupon the gardener filled the cup and handed it to him; but he said, 'I know not this thing nor have I ever drunken thereof, for therein

is a great sin and the Almighty Lord hath forbidden it in His Book.' 'O my lord Noureddin,' answered the gardener, 'if thou forbear to drink only by reason of the sin, verily God (blessed and exalted be He!) is bountiful, mild, forgiving and compassionate and pardoneth the greatest sins. His mercy embraceth all things and be it upon the poet who says:

Be as thou wilt and banish dread and care, For God is bountiful and debonair;
So of two things, the doing hurt to men And giving God a partner, thou beware.'

Then said one of the sons of the merchants, 'My life on thee, O my lord Noureddin, drink of this cup!' And another conjured him by the oath of divorce and yet another stood before him, till he was ashamed and taking the cup from the gardener, drank a mouthful, but spat it out again, saying, 'It is bitter.' 'O my lord Noureddin,' said the gardener, 'knowest thou not that the sweetest things, when taken by way of medicine, are bitter? Were this not bitter, it would lack of the [many] virtues it possesseth; amongst which are that it digesteth food and doth away care and anxiety and dispelleth vapours and clarifieth the blood and cleareth the complexion and enliveneth the body and hearteneth the poltroon and fortifieth the sexual power; but to name all its virtues would be tedious. Quoth one of the poets:

We'll drink, for God His clemency encompasseth the soul On every side: I medicine my ailments with the bowl;
And nought (for well I know its sin) save God His saw, 'Therein Are for the folk advantages,'[1] doth me thereto cajole.

Then he opened one of the cupboards there and taking

[1] "They will ask thee of wine and casting of lots; say, 'In them both are great sin and advantages to mankind; but the sin of them both is greater than the advantage thereof.'"—*Koran* ii. 216.

out a loaf of refined sugar, broke off a great piece, which he put in Noureddin's cup, saying, 'O my lord, if thou fear to drink wine, because of its bitterness, drink now, for it is sweet.' So he took the cup and emptied it: whereupon one of his comrades filled him another, saying, 'I am thy slave,' and another [did the like], saying, 'I am one of thy servants,' and a third said, 'For my sake!' and a fourth, 'God on thee, O my lord Noureddin, heal my heart!' And so they plied him with wine, till they had made him drink ten cups.

Now Noureddin's body was virgin [of wine-bibbing], nor all his life had he drunken wine till then, wherefore its fumes mounted to his brain and drunkenness was stark upon him and he stood up (and indeed his tongue was embarrassed and his speech thick) and said, 'O company, by Allah, ye are fair and your speech and place are goodly, but there needs the hearing of sweet music; for drink without music lacks the chief of its essentials, even as saith the poet:

Pass round the cup to the old and the young man, too, And take the bowl from the hand of the shining moon,[1]
But without music, I charge you, forbear to drink; I see even horses drink to a whistled tune.'[2]

Therewith up rose the gardener and mounting one of the young men's mules, was absent awhile, after which he returned with a girl of Cairo, as she were a delicate fat sheep's tail or pure silver or a dinar in a porcelain dish or a gazelle in the desert. She had a face that put to shame the shining sun and bewitching eyes[3] and brows like

[1] *i.e.* a fair-faced cup-bearer.
[2] It is the custom of the Arabs to call their cattle to water by whistling.
[3] Lit. Babylonian eyes. According to Arab tradition, Babylon (Babel) is the metropolis of sorcery, the two offending angels, Harout and Marout (who teach men witchcraft), being suspended in a well there. See antè, note, Vol. III. p. 104.

bended bows and rosy cheeks and pearly teeth and sugared lips and languishing glances and ivory breasts and slender body, full of folds and dimples, and buttocks like stuffed pillows and thighs like columns of Syrian marble, and between them what was like a sachet [of spices] folded in a wrapper. Quoth the poet of her:

A fair one, to idolaters if she herself should show, They'd leave their idols and her face for only Lord would know.
If in the Eastward she appeared unto a monk, for sure He'd cease from turning to the West [1] and to the East bend low;
And if into the briny sea one day she chanced to spit, Assuredly the salt sea's floods straight fresh and sweet would grow.

And quoth another:

More brilliant than the moon at full, with liquid languorous eyes, She seems an antelope that takes the lion-whelps to prize.
The midnight of her locks lets fall o'er her a tent of hair,[2] Unfixed of tent-pegs, that protects her beauty from the spies.
The fire, that in th' unfading rose still burneth of her cheek, Is fed with entrails that consume and hearts and lovers' sighs.
An if the beauties of the time beheld her, unto her, Saying, 'Unto the precedent the palm,' they would arise.

And how well saith a third:

Three things for ever hinder her to visit us, for fear Of the intriguing spy and eke the rancorous envier;
Her forehead's lustre and the sound of all her ornaments And the sweet scent her creases hold of ambergris and myrrh.
Grant with the border of her sleeve she hide her brow and doff Her ornaments, how shall she do her scent [3] away from her?

[1] The Syrian and Mesopotamian Christian, in turning towards Jerusalem, would naturally face the West, instead of the East, as with his European brethren.

[2] *beit shar*, lit. a *house* of hair, the distinctive name of the Bedouin tent, which is made of camels' hair. Syn. a line of verse.

[3] The bodies of Eastern women of the higher classes by dint of continual maceration, Esther-fashion, in aromatic oils and essences, would naturally become impregnated with the sweet scent of the cosmetics used.

She was like the moon, when it appears on its fourteenth night, and was clad in a garment of blue, with a veil of green, over a flower-white forehead, that amazed all wits and confounded those of understanding. And indeed she was possessed of the utmost grace and beauty and symmetry, as it were she of whom the poet would speak when he saith: Night dccclxvii.

She comes in a robe the colour of ultramarine, Blue as the stainless sky unflecked with white.
I view her with yearning eyes and she seems to me A moon of the summer set in a winter's night.

And how goodly is the saying of another and how excellent!

She came unto me, straitly veiled, and I to her did say, 'Thy face, the bright, resplendent moon, uncover and display.'
Quoth she, 'I fear reproach,' and I, 'Forbear this idle talk: Let not the shifts of time and fate affright thee or dismay.'
So from her face she raised the veil that hid her charms and tears Upon the jewels of her cheeks fell, like a crystal spray.
Indeed, I thought to kiss her cheek, that thereanent to God She might make moan of me upon the Resurrection Day;
So were we twain the first to plead of lovers, each 'gainst each, Whenas the dead shall rise, before the Lord whom all obey;
And I, 'Prolong our standing-up and reckoning,' would say, 'That so mine eyes may feed their fill upon my loved one aye.'

Then said the gardener to her, 'O lady of fair ones and mistress of every shining star, know that we sought not, in bringing thee hither, but that thou shouldst entertain this comely youth here, my lord Noureddin, for he hath only come to this place this day.' And she answered, saying, 'Would thou hadst told me, that I might have brought what I have with me!' 'O my lady,' rejoined the gardener, 'I will go and fetch it to thee.' 'As thou wilt,' replied she: and he said, 'Give me a token.' So she gave him a handkerchief and he went away in haste and

returned after awhile, bearing a bag of green satin, with cords of gold. She took the bag from him and opening it, shook it, whereupon there fell thereout two-and-thirty pieces of wood, which she fitted, one into another, till they became a polished lute of Indian workmanship.

Then she uncovered her wrist and laying the lute in her lap, bent over it, as the mother bends over her child, and swept the strings with the tips of her fingers; whereupon it moaned and resounded and yearned after its former habitations; and it remembered the waters that gave it to drink, [whilst yet in the tree,] and the earth whence it sprang and wherein it grew up and the carpenters who cut it and the polishers who polished it and the merchants who exported it and the ships that carried it; and it cried out and wailed and lamented; and it was as if she questioned it of all these things and it answered her with the tongue of the case, reciting the following verses:

Whilom I was a tree, wherein the nightingales did nest; Whilst green my head, I swayed for them with longing and unrest.
They made melodious moan on me, and I their plaining learnt, And so my secret was by this lament made manifest.
The woodman felled me to the earth, though guiltless of offence, And wrought of me a slender lute, by singers' hands carest;
But, when their fingers sweep my strings, they tell that I am slain, One with duresse amongst mankind afflicted and oppprest;
Wherefore each boon-companion, when he heareth my lament, Grows mad with love and drunkenness o'ermasters every guest,
And God inclineth unto me their hearts and I indeed Am to the highest place advanced in every noble breast.
All who in loveliness excel do clip my waist and in The arms of every languorous-eyed gazelle my form is prest.
May God the Lord ne'er sever us, nor live the loved one aye Who with estrangement and disdain her lover would molest!

Then she was silent awhile, but presently taking the lute in her lap, bent over it, as the mother bends over her

child, and preluded in many different modes; then, returning to the first, she sang the following verses:

An they'd unto the lover incline or visit pay, From off his back the burden of longing he might lay.
A nightingale o' the branches vies with him, as she were A lover whose belovéd hath lighted far away.
Up and awake! The midnights of love-delight are clear And bright, with union's splendour, as very break of day.
Behold, to love and joyance the lute-strings summon us And eke to-day our enviers are heedless of our play.
Seest not that unto pleasance four several things, to wit, Rose, gilly-flower and myrtle and lights[1] unite alway?
And here to-day assemble four things, by favouring fate, Lover, belovéd, money and wine, to make us gay.
So seize upon thy fortune i' the world; for its delights Pass by and but traditions and chronicles do stay.

When Noureddin heard this, he looked on her with eyes of love and could scarce contain himself for the violence of his inclination to her; and on like wise was it with her, because she looked at the company who were present of the sons of the merchants and at Noureddin and saw that he was amongst the rest as the moon among stars; for that he was sweet of speech and full of amorous grace, perfect in beauty and brightness and loveliness and accomplished in symmetry, pure of all defect, blander than the zephyr and more delicate than Tesnim,[2] as saith of him the poet:

By his cheeks' unfading damask and his smiling teeth I swear, By the arrows that he feathers with the witchery of his air,
By his sides so soft and tender and his glances bright and keen, By the whiteness of his forehead and the blackness of his hair,
By his arched imperious eyebrows, chasing slumber from my lids With their yeas and noes that hold me 'twixt rejoicing and despair,

[1] Syn. any yellow flower, particularly orange-blossoms (*anwar*).
[2] Name of a fountain of Paradise.

By the scorpions that he launches from his ringlet-clustered brows,
Seeking still to slay his lovers with his rigours unaware,
By the myrtle of his whiskers and the roses of his cheek, By his lips' incarnate rubies and his teeth's fine pearls and rare,
By the straight and tender sapling of his shape, which for its fruit Doth the twin pomegranates, shining in his snowy bosom, wear,
By his heavy hips that tremble, both in motion and repose, And the slender waist above them, all too slight their weight to bear,
By the silk of his apparel and his quick and sprightly wit, By all attributes of beauty that are fallen to his share;
Lo, the musk exhales its fragrance from his breath, and eke the breeze From his scent the perfume borrows, that it scatters everywhere.
Yea, the sun in all his splendour cannot with his brightness vie And the crescent moon's a fragment that he from his nails doth pare.

Night dccclxviii. Her verses pleased him and he swayed from side to side for drunkenness and fell a-praising her and saying:

A luting maiden stole away Our wits for drunkenness one day.
''Twas God the Lord that gifted us With speech,' her strings to us did say.

When she heard this, she looked at him with eyes of love and redoubled in passion and desire for him increased upon her, and indeed she marvelled at his beauty and grace and symmetry, so that she could not contain herself, but took the lute again and sang the following:

He chides me, if I look on him, and with disdain Entreats me, though my life is his for weal and bane;
Yea, he repelleth me; yet what is in my heart He knows, as if God's self to him had made it plain.
His likeness have I drawn midmost my palm and charged Mine eyes make moan for him and over him complain.
Mine eyes will look on none save him, nor will my heart Aid me his cruelty with patience to sustain.
Wherefore, O thou my heart, I'll tear thee from my breast, For that thou art of those that envy me the swain.
Whenas I say, 'O heart, be comforted,' 'tis vain; To turn to any else than him it will not deign.

Noureddin wondered at the beauty of her song and the sweetness of her voice and the eloquence of her speech and his wit fled for stress of love and longing and distraction, so that he could not refrain from her a moment, but bent to her and strained her to his bosom; and she in like manner abandoned herself to his caresses and kissed him between the eyes. Then he kissed her on the mouth and they played at kisses with one another, after the manner of the billing of doves, till the others were distracted and rose to their feet; whereupon Noureddin was abashed and held his hand from her. Then she took her lute and preluding thereon in many different modes, returned to the first and sang the following verses:

A moon, he draws from out his lids, whenas he turns and sways, A sword and puts gazelles to shame, whenas he stands at gaze.
A king, his all-surpassing charms his troops are, and for arms, His shape is like the spear of cane, whose straightness all men praise.
An if his heart were but as soft as is his waist, no more Would he against his lovers sin nor fright them with affrays.
Alas the hardness of his heart and softness of his waist! Why is not this to that transferred? Is there no way of ways?
O thou that blam'st me for his love, excuse me rather thou: Thine be his beauty's part etern and mine that which decays![1]

When Noureddin heard the sweetness of her voice and the beauty of her verses, he inclined to her for delight and could not contain himself for excess of wonderment; so he recited these lines:

Methought she was the very sun of morning's self, until She veiled her; but the fire she lit flames in my entrails still.
What had it irked her, had she signed and with her finger-tips A friendly salutation waved to us? Where were the ill?

[1] *i.e.* Thou mayst have his company in the life to come, provided I enjoy it in this life.

The railer saw her face and said (what while her charms that pass All other beauty did his wit with stupefaction fill,)
'Is this then she for whom thou rav'st with longing for her love? Indeed, thou hast excuse.' And I, ''Tis she who doth me thrill
With arrows of her looks, nor can my abject, broken case Of stranger-hood to pity move her unrelenting will.'
I am become a slave of love, with heart enchained; I groan Day long and night long, ay, and weep with tears, as 'twere a rill.

She marvelled at his eloquence and grace and taking her lute, smote thereon after the goodliest of fashions, repeating all the melodies, and sang the following verses:

As thy face liveth, O thou the life of my spirit, I swear, I cannot remove from thy love, if I do or I do not despair.
If, indeed, thou be cruel, in dreams thy phantom is favouring and kind, And if thou be absent, thy thought is my cheering companion fore'er.
O thou that hast saddened my sight, though thou knowst that I seek not for aught To cheer me, nor aught but thy love I long for, to solace my care,
Thy cheeks are twin roses, the dews of thy mouth are as wine to the taste; Wilt thou not then vouchsafe us thereof to drink in this pleasaunce so fair?

Her song moved Noureddin to the utmost wonder and delight and he answered her as follows:

The face o' the sun is not unveiled in the darkness of the night, But in the far horizon's marge the full moon hides its light,
Nor doth her forehead meet the eye o' the morning, but, outfaced By contrast, to the break of day for refuge it takes flight.[1]
Take of the currents of my tears, as, chain on chain, they fall, And on the readiest way of ways, the tale of love recite.
Oft unto her, who shoots at me her arrows, have I said, 'Hold thou thy hand; indeed my heart is cleft in sunder quite.

[1] *Quære* an allusion to the 113th Chapter (known as the Chapter of the Daybreak) of the *Koran*, "I take refuge with the Lord of the Day-break from the evil of that which He hath created, etc."

An if unto the River Nile my tears may likened be, Meseems the love I bear to thee El Melec[1] should be hight.'
Quoth she, 'Then bring me all thy good.' 'Take it,' said I and she, 'And thy sleep.' '[Take it] from mine eyes,' I answered her forthright.

When she heard Noureddin's words and noted the beauty of his eloquence, she was transported and her wit was dazed and love of him got hold upon her whole heart. So she pressed him to her bosom and fell to kissing him after the manner of doves billing, whilst he returned her caresses; but the vantage is to the first comer. When she had made an end of kissing, she took the lute and recited the following verses:

Ah, woe's us for a blamer, to censure ever prone, Whether or no of passion to him I make my moan!
O thou that dost reject me, I had not thought that I Should in thy love abasement meet with, and thou mine own.
I used to rail at lovers for love, and now to those, Who blame thee, my abasement for thee I have made known.
The votaries of passion whilom I blamed; but now I do excuse all lovers for passion overthrown;
And if, for thine estrangement, distress be sore on me, God in thy name, O Ali, I'll pray and thine alone.

And also these:

Quoth his lovers, 'Except of the nectar so rare Of his mouth he vouch-safe us to drink, debonair,
To the Lord of all creatures we'll make our complaint And "O Ali!" we'll say with one voice in our prayer.'

Noureddin marvelled at the fluency of her tongue and praised her grace and exceeding seductiveness; whereupon she rose and putting off all that was upon her of [outer] clothes and trinkets, sat down on his knees and kissed

[1] *Melec* means level ground; but *quære* some place or tract on the banks of the Nile meant.

Night dccclxix.

him between the eyes and on the mole of his cheek. Then she gave him all she had put off, saying, 'O beloved of my heart, the gift is after the measure of the giver's capacity.' So he accepted this from her and gave it back to her and kissed her on the mouth and cheeks and eyes.

When this was done, (for nought endureth save God, the Living, the Eternal, Provider of the peacock and the owl), Noureddin rose from the place of session and stood upon his feet, for the darkness was now fallen and the stars shone out; whereupon quoth the damsel to him, 'Whither away, O my lord?' And he said, 'To my father's house.' Then the sons of the merchants conjured him to pass the night with them, but he refused and mounting his mule, rode, without stopping, till he reached his father's house, where his mother met him and said to him, 'O my son, what hath kept thee abroad till this hour? By Allah, thou hast troubled thy father and myself by thine absence from us, and our hearts have been occupied with thee.' Then she came up to him, to kiss him on his mouth, and smelling the fumes of the wine, said, 'O my son, how is this? Art thou, after prayer and worship, become a wine-bibber and a transgressor of His word to whom belong creation and commandment?' But Noureddin threw himself down on the bed and lay there.

Presently in came his father and said, 'What ails Noureddin to lie thus?' And his mother answered, saying, 'It would seem his head irketh him for the air of the garden.' So Tajeddin went up to his son, to question him of his ailment and salute him, and smelt the wine he had drunk. Now he loved not wine-drinkers; so he said to Noureddin, 'Out on thee, O my son! Is folly come to such a pass with thee, that thou drinkest wine?' When Noureddin heard this, he raised his hand, being yet in his drunkenness, and dealt him a buffet. As

fate would have it, the blow lit on his father's right eye [and struck it out] and it ran down on his cheek; whereupon he fell down in a swoon and lay therein awhile. They sprinkled rose-water on him till he came to himself, when he would have beaten Noureddin; but his wife withheld him, and he swore, by the oath of divorcement from her, that, as soon as it was day, he would assuredly cut off his son's right hand. When she heard her husband's words, her breast was straitened and she feared for her son and ceased not to soothe and appease Tajeddin, till sleep overcame him.

Then she waited till the moon was risen, when she went in to her son, whose drunkenness had now ceased from him, and said to him, 'O Noureddin, what is this foul thing thou hast done with thy father?' 'And what did I with him?' asked he. Quoth she, 'Thou dealtest him a buffet on the right eye and struckest it out; and he hath sworn by the oath of divorcement that, as soon as it is day, he will without fail cut off thy right hand.' Noureddin repented him of that which he had done, whenas repentance profited him nothing, and his mother said to him, 'O my son, this repentance will not profit thee; nor will aught serve thee but that thou arise forthright and seek safety in flight. Go forth the house privily and take refuge with one of thy friends and there await what God shall do, for He changeth case after case.'

Then she opened a chest and taking out a purse of a hundred dinars, said to Noureddin, 'O my son, take these dinars and provide thyself therewith, and when they are at an end, send and give me to know thereof, that I may send thee other than these, and at the same time send me news of thyself privily. It may be God will decree thee relief and thou shalt return to thy dwelling.' And she bade him farewell and wept passing sore. Noureddin took the purse and was about to go forth, when he espied

a great purse containing a thousand dinars, which his mother had forgotten beside the chest. So he took this also and tying the two purses about his middle, set out before dawn in the direction of Boulac, where he arrived whenas the day broke and all creatures arose, attesting the unity of God the Opener [of the gates of sustenance and mercy] and went forth each upon his several business, to suffer that which God had allotted to him.

He walked on along the river-bank till he saw a ship with her gangway out and her four grapnels made fast to the land. The folk were going up into her and coming down from her, and Noureddin, seeing some sailors standing there, asked them whither they were bound.' 'To the city of Rosetta,' answered they; and he said, 'Take me with you.' Quoth they, 'Welcome and fair welcome to thee, O goodly youth!' So he betook himself forthright to the market and buying what he needed of victual and bedding and covering [for the voyage], returned to the port and went on board the ship, which was ready to sail and tarried with him but a little while before it weighed anchor and fared on, without stopping, till it reached Rosetta, where Noureddin saw a small boat going to Alexandria. So he embarked in it and traversing the [Mehmoudiyeh] canal, fared on till he came to a bridge called El Jami, where he landed and entered Alexandria by the gate called the Gate of the Lote-tree.

God protected him, so that none of those who stood at the gate saw him, and he entered the city, which he found a strongly fortified city, goodly of pleasaunces, delightful to its inhabitants and inviting to abide therein. The season of winter had departed from it with its cold and the season of spring was come to it with its roses: its flowers were in blossom and its trees in full leaf; its fruits were ripe and its waters welled forth. Indeed, it was a city goodly of ordinance and construction; its folk were

Night dccclxx.

of the best of men, and when the gates thereof were shut, its people were in safety. And it was even as is said of it in the following verses:

'Describe Alexandria, I pray,' Quoth I to a comrade one day,
A man of glib speech and quick wit. ''Tis a fair frontier town,'[1] did he say.
Quoth I, 'Is there living therein?' And he, 'If the wind blow that way.'

Or as saith one of the poets:

Alexandria's a frontier seat;[1] The water of its lips is sweet.
How fair the coming to it is, So one therein no raven meet!

Noureddin walked about the city till he came to the merchants' bazaar, whence he passed on to the bazaar of the money-changers and so on in turn to those of the confectioners and fruiterers and druggists, marvelling, as he went, at the city, for that its qualities accorded with its name.[2] As he walked in the druggists' bazaar, an old man came down from his shop and saluting him, took him by the hand and carried him to a fair by-street, swept and sprinkled, whereon the zephyr blew and was pleasant and the leaves of the trees overshaded it. Therein stood three houses and at the upper end a mansion, whose foundations were stablished in the water and its roofs rose up to the confines of the sky. The space before it was paved with marble, swept and sprinkled, and those who approached it smelt the fragrance of flowers, borne on the zephyr, which breathed upon the place, as it were one of the gardens of Paradise.

The old man carried Noureddin into the house and set food before him, whereof he ate with him. When they had made an end of eating, the druggist said to him, 'When camest thou hither from Cairo?' And Noureddin answered, 'This very night, O my father.' Quoth the

[1] Syn. the opening of the lips showing the teeth (*theghr*).
[2] *i.e.* Iskenderiyeh, the city of Iskender or Alexander the Great.

old man, 'What is thy name?' And he replied, 'Ali Noureddin.' 'O my son, O Noureddin,' said the druggist, 'be the triple divorcement incumbent on me, if thou leave me so long as thou abidest in this town; and I will set thee apart a place wherein to dwell.' Quoth Noureddin, 'O my lord, let me know more of thee.' And the other answered, 'Know, O my son, that years ago I came to Cairo with merchandise, which I sold there and bought other, and I had occasion for a thousand dinars. So thy father paid them down for me, for all he had no knowledge of me, and would take no security of me, but had patience with me till I returned hither and sent him the amount by one of my servants, together with a present. I saw thee, whilst thou wast little, and if it please God the Most High, I will repay thee somewhat of the kindness thy father did me.' When Noureddin heard the old man's story, he smiled and showed joy and pulling out the purse of a thousand dinars, gave it to his host and said to him, 'Take charge of this for me, against I buy me therewith somewhat of merchandise whereon to trade.'

Then he abode some days in Alexandria, eating and drinking and making merry and taking his pleasure in its thoroughfares, till he had made an end of the hundred dinars he had kept by way of spending-money; whereupon he repaired to the old druggist, to take of him somewhat of the thousand dinars to spend, but found him not in his shop and sat down there, to await his return. As he sat thus, gazing right and left and amusing himself with watching the merchants and passers-by, there came into the bazaar a Persian riding on a mule and having behind him a damsel, as she were virgin silver or a turbot in a tank or a gazelle in the desert. Her face outvied the shining sun and she had bewitching eyes and breasts of ivory, teeth of pearl, slender body and dimpled sides and legs like fat sheep's tails; and indeed

she was perfect in beauty and grace and symmetry, even as saith one, describing her:

As she wished, she was created, after such a wise that lo, She in beauty's mould was fashioned, perfect, neither less nor mo'.
In her cheeks the roses redden for confusion and the fruit[1] On the sapling of her figure makes a fair and stately show.
In her face the full moon glitters and the branch is as her shape: Musk her breath is, nor midst mortals is her equal, high or low.
'Tis as if she had been moulded out of water of pure pearls: In each member of her beauty is a very moon, I trow.

The Persian lighted down from his mule and making the damsel alight also, called the broker and said to him, 'Take this damsel and cry her for sale in the market.' So he fetched a stool of ebony, inlaid with ivory, and setting it amiddleward the bazaar, seated her thereon. Then he raised her veil and discovered a face as it were a Median targe[2] or a sparkling star: and indeed she was like the full moon, when it appears on its fourteenth night, accomplished to the utmost in surpassing beauty. As saith the poet:

The full moon ignorantly vied in beauty with her face, But was eclipsed and split in twain for wrath at its disgrace;
And if the willow-wand be fit to even with her shape, Perish her hands who is become o' the faggot-bearing race![3]

And how well saith another:

Say to the fair in the muffler laced and wrought with gold, 'Hark ye! What hast thou done with a pious man was like a monk to be?'
The gleam of the veil and the brilliancy of thy visage under it The hosts of the darkness put to rout and cause them turn and flee;
And when my glance cometh to steal a look at thy cheek so fresh and fair, Its guardian sprites with a shooting star still cast at them and me.[4]

[1] *i.e.* her breasts. [2] Presumably of silver.

[3] Alluding to the curse denounced by Mohammed against his recalcitrant uncle, Abou Leheb. "May Abou Leheb's hands perish . . . . and his wife [be] a bearer of faggots!"—*Koran* cxi. 184.

[4] Likening her eyes to the angels who (according to the Muslim legend) are appointed to watch for the Jinn that listen by stealth to what is said in heaven and drive them off with shooting stars.

Then said the broker to the merchants, 'How much do ye bid for the pearl of the diver and prize of the fowler?' Quoth one, 'She is mine for a hundred dinars.' And another said, 'Two hundred,' and a third, 'Three hundred;' and they ceased not to bid, one against another, till they made her price nine hundred and fifty dinars, and there the biddings stopped. Then the broker went up to the Persian and said to him, 'The biddings for this thy slave-girl have reached nine hundred and fifty dinars: wilt thou sell her at that price and take the money?' 'Doth she consent to this?' asked the Persian. 'I desire to consult her wishes, for I fell sick on my journey hither and she tended me with all possible care, wherefore I swore not to sell her but to him of whom she should approve, and I have put her sale in her own hand. So do thou consult her and if she say, "I consent," sell her to whom thou wilt: but if she say "No," sell her not.'

Night dccclxxi.

So the broker went up to her and said to her, 'Know, O princess of fair ones, that thy master putteth thy sale in thine own hands, and thy price hath reached nine hundred and fifty dinars; dost thou give me leave to sell thee?' 'Show me him who is minded to buy me,' answered she, 'before thou clinch the bargain.' So he brought her up to one of the merchants, a very old and decrepit man, and she looked at him awhile, then turned to the broker and said to him, 'O broker, art thou mad or afflicted in thy wit?' 'Why dost thou ask me this, O princess of fair ones?' said he. And she answered, 'Is it permitted of God to sell the like of me to yonder decrepit old man, who saith of his wife's case the following verses:

Quoth she to me,—and sore enraged for wounded pride was she, For she in sooth had bidden me to that which might not be,—
"An if thou swive me not forthright, as one should swive his wife, If thou be made a cuckold straight, reproach it not to me.
Meseems thy yard is made of wax, for very flaccidness; For when I rub it with my hand, it softens instantly."

And quoth he likewise of his yard:

I have a yard that sleeps on base and shameful wise, Whenever one I love with my desire complies;
But, when I'm by myself, at home, it's all agog To thrust and ply its lone the amorous exercise.

And again quoth he thereof:

I have an ill yard, passing froward, to wit: Him who honoureth it, with reproach it doth quit.
If I sleep, it stands up; if I rise, it lies down; God no ruth have on him who hath ruth upon it!'

When the old merchant heard this scurvy gibing from the damsel, he was exceeding wroth and said to the broker, 'O unluckiest of brokers, thou hast not brought this ill-conditioned wench into the market but to flout me and make mock of me before the merchants.' Then the broker took her aside and said to her, 'O my lady, be not lacking in manners. The old man whom thou didst mock at is the syndic of the bazaar and inspector of weights and measures thereof and one of the council of the merchants.' But she laughed and said:

'It behoveth the folk that bear rule in our time, Yea, 'tis one of the duties of magistrateship,
To hang up the chief of police o'er his door And beat the inspector of weights with a whip.

By Allah, O my lord,' added she, 'I will not be sold to yonder old man; so sell me to other than him, for belike he will be abashed at me and sell me again and I shall become a servant and it beseems not that I sully myself with menial service; and indeed thou knowest that the matter of my sale is committed to myself.' 'I hear and obey,' answered he and carried her to one of the chief merchants. 'How sayst thou, O my lady?' asked he. 'Shall I sell thee to my lord Sherifeddin here for nine

hundred and fifty dinars?' She looked at him and seeing him to be an old man, with a dyed beard, said to the broker, 'Art thou mad, that thou wouldst sell me to this worn-out old man? Am I cotton refuse or threadbare rags that thou marchest me about from graybeard to graybeard, each like a wall ready to fall or an Afrit smitten down of a [shooting] star? As for the first, the poet had him in mind when he said:

'I sought of a fair maid to kiss her lips of coral red, But, "No, by Him who fashioned things from nothingness!" she said.
"Unto the white of hoary hairs I never had a mind, And shall my mouth be stuffed, forsooth, with cotton, ere I'm dead?"[1]

And how goodly is the saying of the poet:

They say that hoary hair is as a shining light, The face with venerance and lustre that doth dight;
Yet, till the writ of eld appear upon my crown, I hope I may not lack o' the colour of the night.
Although the beard of him, who's hoary grown, should be His book[2] i' the world to come, I would not choose it white.

And yet goodlier is the saying of another:

A guest unhonoured on my head hath stolen by surprise, With my side-locks the sword than he had dealt on milder wise.
Begone from me, O whiteness foul, wherein no whiteness[3] is! Indeed, than very darkness' self thou'rt blacker in mine eyes.

As for the other, he is a reprobate and a lewd fellow

[1] Alluding to the Muslim custom of closing the apertures of the body with cotton wool, before burial.

[2] The Muslims believe that to each man will be given, on the Day of Judgment, a book containing a record of all the actions of his life. The book of the righteous will be white, and they will receive it in their right hands; but the wicked man's book will be black and he will receive it in his left hand.

[3] A play on the double meaning ("whiteness" and "lustre") of the word *beyaḍ*.

and a blackener of the face of hoariness; he acts the foulest of lies; and the tongue of his case reciteth the following verses:

Quoth she to me, "I see thou dy'st thy hoariness;" and I, "I do but hide it from thy sight, O thou mine ear and eye!"
She laughed out mockingly and said, "A wonder 'tis indeed! Thou so aboundest in deceit that even thy hair's a lie."

And how excellent is the saying of the poet:

O thou with black that dyest thy hoariness, that so Lost youth with thee may tarry or come to thee once mo',
Of old my worldly portion was dyed in grain with black; 'Twill never fade, believe me, nor other-coloured grow.'

When the old man with the dyed beard heard this, he was exceeding wroth and said to the broker, 'O most ill-omened of brokers, what aileth thee to bring this crack-brained wench into our market, to gibe at all who are therein, one after other, and flout them with mocking verses and idle jests?' And he came down from his shop and smote the broker on the face. So he took her and carried her away, in a rage, saying to her, 'By Allah, never in my life saw I a more impudent wench than thyself! Thou hast spoilt my trade and thine own this day and all the merchants will bear me a grudge on thine account.'

Then they saw in the way a merchant called Shihabeddin, who bid ten dinars more for her, and the broker asked her leave to sell her to him. Quoth she, 'Let me see him and question him of a certain thing, which if he have in his house, I will be sold to him; and if not, not.' So the broker left her standing there and going up to Shihabeddin, said to him, 'O my lord, know that yonder damsel tells me she hath a mind to ask thee of somewhat, which if thou have in thy house, she will be sold to thee. Now thou hast heard what she said to thy fellows the

Night dccclxxii. [other] merchants, and by Allah, I fear to bring her to thee, lest she do with thee like as she did with thy neighbours and so I fall into disgrace with thee: but, if thou bid me bring her to thee, I will do so.' Quoth the merchant, 'Bring her to me.' 'I hear and obey,' answered the broker and fetched the damsel, who looked at him and said, 'O my lord Shihabeddin, hast thou in thy house cushions stuffed with minever parings?' 'Yes, O princess of fair ones,' replied Shihabeddin, 'I have half a score such cushions at home; but I conjure thee by Allah, tell me, what wilt thou do with them?' Quoth she, 'I will wait till thou be asleep, when I will lay them on thy mouth and nose [and press on them] till thou die.'

Then she turned to the broker and said to him, 'O filthiest of brokers, meseemeth thou art mad, for that, this hour past, thou showest me, first to a pair of graybeards, in each of whom are two faults, and then to my lord Shihabeddin here, in whom are three defects; first, he is short of stature; secondly, he hath a big nose, and thirdly, he hath a long beard. Of him quoth one of the poets:

Ne'er saw we in our lives nor heard of such a wight, Of all that live and be beneath the sun his light:
A beard a cubit long and nose a span he hath, Whilst he himself is but a finger's breadth in height.

And quoth another poet:

The mosque's minaret from his visage doth spring, As the ring-finger juts from the round of the ring.
If all it could house were to enter his nose, The world were soon void of each creature and thing.'

When Shihabeddin heard this, he came down from his shop and seized the broker by the collar, saying, 'O scurviest of brokers, what ails thee to bring us a damsel to flout and make mock of us, one after other, with idle talk and verses?' So the broker took her and carried

her away from before him, saying, 'By Allah, all my life long, since I have plied this craft, I never set eyes on the like of thee for unmannerliness nor aught more curst to me than thy star, for thou hast cut off my livelihood this day and I have gained nought by thee save cuffs on the neck and taking by the collar!' Then he brought her to the shop of another merchant, owner of slaves and servants, and stationing her before him, said to her, 'Wilt thou be sold to this my lord Alaeddin?' She looked at him and seeing him to be humpbacked, said, 'This fellow is a hunchback, and quoth the poet of him:

Shoulders drawn in and spine thrust out, 'twould seem as if to find A star that Satan promised him, indeed, he had a mind;
Or as the first stroke of a whip he'd tasted of and stood Still for amaze, whilst of the stroke to come he felt the wind.

And saith another:

Whene'er a hunchback mounts a mule, straightway A laughing-stock to all mankind are they.
Is he not laughable? So marvel not If she take fright with him and run away.

And another:

A hunchback often foulness adds to his deformity, And all men's eyes upon the wight look with antipathy;
As 'twere a dry distorted branch, whose citrons, perched upon Its back, have bowed it to the ground, for length of days, is he.'

With this the broker hurried up to her and carrying her to another merchant, said to her, 'Wilt thou be sold to this man?' She looked at him and said, 'This man is blue-eyed; how wilt thou sell me to him? Quoth one of the poets of him:

Ophthalmia's disorders him ply; They have broken his strength down well nigh.
O people, I rede you arise And look at the mote in his eye.'

Then the broker carried her to another and she looked at him and seeing that he had a long beard, said to the broker, 'Out on thee! This is a ram, whose tail has sprouted from his gullet. Wilt thou sell me to him, O unluckiest of brokers? Hast thou not heard that all long-bearded men are little of wit? Indeed, after the measure of the length of the beard is the lack of understanding; and this is a well-known thing among men of sense. As saith one of the poets:

No man, whose beard is long, although he gain some whit In gravity of mien and dignity by it,
There lives, but every inch that's added to his beard In length the like thereof is taken from his wit.

And quoth another:

I have a friend, who hath a beard that God Caused flourish without profit, till, behold,
'Tis, as it were, to look upon, a night Of middle winter, long and dark and cold.'

With this the broker took her and turned away with her, and she said to him, 'Whither goest thou with me?' 'Back to thy master the Persian,' answered he; 'it suffices me what hath befallen me because of thee this day; for thou hast spoilt both my trade and his by thine unmannerliness.' Then she looked about the market right and left and front and rear, till, as fate would have it, her eyes fell on Ali Noureddin. So she looked at him and saw him to be a comely youth, fourteen years old, like the moon on the night of its full, surpassing in beauty and loveliness and elegance and amorous grace, smooth-faced and slender-shaped, with flower-white forehead and rosy cheeks, neck like alabaster and teeth like jewels and spittle sweeter than sugar, even as saith of him one of his describers:

Full moons and fawns with him conclusions came to try In beauty and in grace; but 'Soft!' to them quoth I.
'Forbear, gazelles; indeed, ye are no match for him; And spare your pains, O moons, 'tis vain with him to vie.

And how well saith another:

A slender one, from his brows and the night of his jetty hair, Mankind in alternate gloom and splendour of light do fare.
Blame not the mole on his cheek; is an anemone's cup Perfect, except in its midst an eyelet of black it bear?

When she saw him he interposed between her and her wit; the love of him gat stark hold upon her soul and her heart was taken with passion for him; so she turned to the broker and said to him, 'Will not yonder young merchant in the striped gown bid for me?' 'O lady of fair ones,' replied the broker, 'yonder young man is a stranger from Cairo, where his father is chief of the merchants and hath the pass over all the merchants and notables of the place. He is but lately come to our city and lodgeth with one of his father's friends; but he hath made no bid for thee, more nor less.' **Night dccclxxiii.**

When she heard this, she drew from her finger a ruby ring of price and said to the broker, 'Carry me to yonder youth, and if he buy me, this ring shall be thine, in requital of thy toil with me this day.' The broker rejoiced at this and brought her up to Noureddin, and she considered him straitly and found him like the full moon, accomplished in grace and elegance and symmetry, even as saith of him one of his describers:

The waters of grace in his visage run clear And his glances cast arrows at all who draw near:
Sweet his favours, but lovers still choke, if he give Them to drink of the gall of his rigours austere.
His brow is perfection, perfection his shape, And my love is perfection, so true and sincere.

The folds of his raiment the new moon[1] enclose; From his collars she rises, as if from a sphere.
His eyes and his moles and my tears are as nights Upon nights upon nights, full of blackness and fear;
And his eyebrows and face and my body[2] new moon On new moon on new moon to the aspect appear.
His eyes fill his lovers a goblet of wine, Which, though bitter, is sweet to my sorrowful cheer.
With a smile of his mouth, on the day of delight, My thirst he allayed with sweet water and clear.
My slaughter's with him; ay, the shedding my blood Is thrice lawful to him whom I tender so dear.

Then said she to Noureddin, 'God on thee, O my lord, am I not handsome?' And he answered, 'O princess of fair ones, is there in the world a goodlier than thou?' 'Then why,' rejoined she, 'seest thou the other merchants bid for me and art silent nor sayest a word neither addest one dinar to my price? It would seem I please thee not, O my lord!' Quoth he, 'O my lady, were I in mine own land, I had bought thee with all that my hand possesseth of good.' 'O my lord,' replied she, 'I would not have thee buy me against thy will; yet, didst thou but add somewhat to my price, it would comfort my heart, though thou buy me not, so the merchants may say, "Were not this girl handsome, yonder merchant of Cairo had not bidden for her, for the people of Cairo are connoisseurs in slave-girls."'

Her words abashed Noureddin and he blushed and said to the broker, 'How stand the biddings for her?' 'Her price hath reached nine hundred and sixty dinars,' answered he, 'besides brokerage. As for the Sultan's dues, they fall on the seller.' Quoth Noureddin, 'Let me have her for a thousand dinars, price and brokerage.' And the damsel hastened to leave the broker, saying,

[1] *i.e.* his face. [2] By reason of its leanness.

'I sell myself to this handsome young man for a thousand dinars.' Quoth one, 'We sell to him;' and another, 'He deserves her;' and a third, 'Accursed, son of accursed, is he who bids and does not buy!' and a fourth, 'By Allah, they befit one another!' Then, before Noureddin could think, the broker fetched cadis and witnesses, who drew up a contract of sale and purchase, which the broker handed to Noureddin, saying, 'Take thy slave-girl and may God make her a blessing to thee, for she beseemeth none but thee and none but thou beseemeth her.' And he recited the following verses:

Unto him fair fortune all unbidden hies, Drags her skirts[1] to-him-ward on obsequious wise.
None but she befitteth him and none but he Of the maid is worthy, underneath the skies.

Noureddin was abashed before the merchants; so he paid down the thousand dinars, that he had left with his friend the druggist, and taking the girl, carried her to the house in which the latter had lodged him. When she entered and saw nothing but patched carpets and worn-out rugs, she said to him, 'O my lord, have I no value in thine eyes and am I not worthy that thou shouldst carry me to thine own house wherein are thy goods, that thou bringest me into thy servant's lodging? Why dost thou not carry me to thy father's dwelling?' 'By Allah, O princess of fair ones,' answered he, 'this is my house wherein I dwell; but it belongs to an old man, a druggist of this city, who hath set it apart for me and lodged me therein. I told thee that I was a stranger and that I am of the people of Cairo.' 'O my lord,' rejoined she, 'the least of houses will serve till thy return to thy native place; but, God on thee, O my lord, go now and fetch

[1] *i.e.* in the dejected humble manner of a slave. "To drag the skirts" is an Arab phrase practically equivalent to our "to hang the head."

us somewhat of roast meat and wine and fruit and dessert.' 'By Allah, O princess of fair ones,' answered he, 'I had no money with me but the thousand dinars I paid down to thy price! The few dirhems I had I spent yesterday.' Quoth she, 'Hast thou no friend in the town, of whom thou mayst borrow fifty dirhems and bring them to me, that I may tell thee what thou shalt do therewith?' And he said, 'I have no friend but the druggist.'

Then he betook himself forthright to the druggist and said to him, 'Peace be on thee, O uncle!' He returned his salutation and said to him, 'O my son, what hast thou bought for a thousand dinars this day?' 'I have bought a slave-girl,' answered Noureddin. 'O my son,' rejoined the old man, 'art thou mad that thou givest a thousand dinars for one slave-girl? What kind of slave-girl is she?' 'She is a damsel of the children of the Franks,' replied Noureddin and the druggist said, 'O my son, the best of the girls of the Franks are to be had in this town for a hundred dinars, and by Allah, they have put a cheat on thee in the matter of this damsel! However, if thou hast a mind to her, lie with her this night and do thy will of her and to-morrow morning go down with her to the market and sell her, though thou lose two hundred dinars by her, and put it that thou hast been robbed of them or lost them by shipwreck.' 'Thou sayst well, O uncle,' replied Noureddin; 'but thou knowest that I had but the thousand dinars wherewith I bought the damsel, and now I have not a single dirhem left to spend; so I desire of thy favour and goodness that thou lend me fifty dirhems, to provide me withal, till to-morrow, when I will sell her and repay thee out of her price.' 'Willingly, O my son,' said the old man and counted out to him the fifty dirhems.

Then he said to him, 'O my son, thou art young and the damsel is fair, and belike thy heart will be taken with her and it will be grievous to thee to part from her. Now

Night dccclxxiv.

thou hast nothing to live on and the fifty dirhems will [soon] be spent and thou wilt come to me and I shall lend thee once and twice and thrice and so on up to ten times; but, if thou come to me after this, I will not return thee the legal salutation[1] and our friendship with thy father will come to nought.' Noureddin took the fifty dirhems and returned with them to the damsel, who said to him, 'O my lord, go straight to the market and fetch me twenty dirhems' worth of silk of five colours and with the other thirty buy meat and bread and wine and fruit and flowers.' So he went to the market and buying her all she sought, returned to her therewith, whereupon she rose and tucking up her sleeves, cooked food after the most skilful fashion, and set it before him. He ate and she ate with him, till they had enough, after which she set on the wine, and they drank, and she ceased not to ply him with drink and entertain him with talk, till he became drunken and fell asleep: whereupon she arose and taking out of her budget a sachet of Taïfi leather,[2] opened it and brought out a pair of knitting-pins, with which she fell to work and stinted not, till she had made a beautiful girdle. She cleaned it and ironed it and folding it in a piece of rag, laid it under the pillow.

Then she put off her clothes and lying down beside Noureddin, kneaded him till he awoke and found by his side a girl like virgin silver, softer than silk and more delicate than a fat sheep's tail, more conspicuous than a standard[3] and goodlier than the red camels,[4] low of stature, with swelling breasts, eyes like gazelles' eyes and brows like bended bows and cheeks like blood-red anemones, slender belly, full of dimples, and a navel

[1] *i.e.* the greeting of "Peace be on thee!" due from one Muslim to another.

[2] *i.e.* scented leather of Et Taïf. See suprà, note, p. 72.

[3] Syn. waymark. [4] *i.e.* the best kind of camels.

holding an ounce of benzoin ointment, thighs like bolsters stuffed with ostrich down, and between them what the tongue fails to describe and at mention whereof the tears pour forth. Indeed it seemed as it were she to whom the poet alludes in the following verses:

Her hair is night, her forehead day, her cheeks a blossomed rose And wine the honeyed dews wherewith her mouth for ever flows.
Heaven in her favours is and hell in her disdain; her teeth Are very pearls and in her face the moon at full doth glow.

And how excellent is another's saying:

She shineth forth, a moon, and bends, a willow-wand, And breathes out ambergris and gazes, a gazelle.
Meseems as if grief loved my heart and when from her Estrangement I abide, possession to it fell.
She hath a face outshines the very Pleiades And brows whose lustre doth the crescent moon excel.

And quoth a third:

Unveiled, new moons they shine, and all displayed, like moons at full, They burn: like boughs they sway, and eke like antelopes they turn:
And in their midst's a black-eyed maid, for whose sweet beauty's sake, To be the earth whereon she treads the Pleiades would yearn.

So he turned to her and pressing her to his bosom, sucked first her under lip and then her upper lip and slid his tongue into her mouth. Then he rose to her and found her an unpierced pearl and a filly that none but he had mounted. So he did away her maidenhead and had of her the amorous delight and there was contracted between them love that might never know breach nor severance. He rained down kisses upon her cheeks, like the falling of pebbles into water, and beset her with stroke upon stroke, like the thrusting of spears in the mellay; for that Noureddin still yearned after clipping of necks and sucking of lips and letting down of tresses and pressing of waists and biting of cheeks and pinching of breasts,

with Cairene motitations and Yemani wrigglings and Abyssinian sobbings and Hindi torsions and Nubian lasciviousness and Rifi[1] leg-liftings and Damiettan gruntings and Upper Egyptian heat and Alexandrian languor, and this damsel united in herself all these attributes, together with excess of beauty and amorous grace; and indeed she was even as saith of her the poet:

By Allah, I will never all my life long forget her, my dear, And those only will I tender who shall bring her to me to draw near!
Now glory to her Maker and Creator be given evermore! As the full moon of the heavens in her aspect and her gait she doth appear.
Though my sin, indeed, be sore and my offending in loving her be great, I know repentance not, whilst of her favours a hope to me be clear.
She, indeed, hath made me weariful and wakeful, full of sorrow, sick for love: Yea, my heart is all confounded at her beauty, dazed for trouble and for fear;
And I go a line of verse for e'er repeating that none knoweth 'mongst the folk Save the man who rhymes and verses hath recited and studied many a year.
'None knoweth of love-longing save he only who hath its pains endured And none but he can tell the taste of passion, who's proved its woe and cheer.'

So Noureddin lay with the damsel in solace and delight, clad in the strait-linked garments of embracement, secure against the accidents of night and day, and they passed the night after the goodliest fashion, fearing not, in love-delight, abundance of talk and prate. As says of them the right excellent poet: **Night dccclxxv.**

Cleave fast to her thou lov'st and let the envious rail amain; For calumny and envy ne'er to favour love were fain.
Lo, the Compassionate hath made no fairer thing to see Than when one couch in its embrace enfoldeth lovers twain,
Each to the other's bosom clasped, clad in their own delight, Whilst hand with hand and arm with arm about their necks enchain.

[1] The Rif is the north-west coast of Morocco, formerly celebrated as the habitat of the famous Rif pirates. According to D'Herbelot, Lower Egypt also bears the name of Er Rif.

Lo, when two hearts are straitly knit in passion and desire, But on cold iron smite the folk that chide at them in vain.
Thou that for loving censurest the votaries of love, Canst thou assain a mind diseased or heal a cankered brain?
If in thy time thou find but one to love thee and be true, I rede thee cast the world away and with that one remain.

When the morning appeared and gave forth its light and shone, Noureddin awoke from sleep and found that she had brought water:[1] so they washed, he and she, and he acquitted that which behoved him of prayer to his Lord, after which she brought him meat and drink, and he ate and drank. Then she put her hand under her pillow and pulling out the girdle, gave it to Noureddin, who said, 'Whence cometh this girdle?' 'O my lord,' answered she, 'it is the silk thou boughtest yesterday for twenty dirhems. Rise now and go to the Persian bazaar and give it to the broker, to cry for sale, and sell it not for less than twenty dinars, money down.' 'O princess of fair ones,' said Noureddin, 'how can a thing, that cost twenty dirhems and will sell for as many dinars, be made in a single night?' 'O my lord,' replied she, 'thou knowest not its value; but go to the market and give it to the broker, and when he cries it, its worth will appear to thee.'

So he carried the girdle to the market and gave it to the broker, bidding him cry it, whilst he himself sat down on a bench before a shop. After awhile, the broker returned and said to him, 'O my lord, rise and take the price of thy girdle, for it hath fetched twenty dinars.' When Noureddin heard this, he marvelled exceedingly and shook with delight. Then he rose, between belief and disbelief, to take the money and when he had received it, he spent it all on silk of various colours and returning home, gave the silk to the damsel, saying, 'Make this all

[1] For the complete ablution obligatory after copulation.

into girdles and teach me likewise how to make them, that I may work with thee; for never in my life saw I a goodlier craft than this nor a more abounding in profit. By Allah, it is a thousand times better than the trade of a merchant!' She laughed and said, 'Go to thy friend the druggist and borrow other thirty dirhems of him, and to-morrow pay him the whole eighty from the price of the girdle.'

So he repaired to the druggist and said to him, 'O uncle, lend me other thirty dirhems, and to-morrow, God willing, I will repay thee the whole fourscore.' The old man counted him out thirty dirhems, with which he went to the market and buying meat and bread and dessert and fruit and flowers as before, carried them home to the damsel, whose name was Meryem, the girdle-maker. She rose forthright and making ready rich meats, set them before Noureddin; after which she brought wine, and they drank and plied each other with liquor. When the wine began to sport with their senses, his beauty and grace pleased her and the elegance of his manners, and she recited the following verses:

Unto a slender one, who with a goblet came With musk from out his breath perfumed, to give it zest,
Quoth I, 'Was't not exprest from out thy cheeks?' But 'Nay,' He answered; 'when was wine from roses yet exprest?'

And she ceased not to carouse with him and ply him with wine and require of him that he should fill to her and give her to drink of that which sweetens the spirits, and whenever he laid his hand on her, she drew back from him, out of coquetry. The wine added to her beauty and grace, and Noureddin recited these verses:

A slender one, desiring wine, unto her lover said, In an assembly, whenas he did sickness for her dread,
'An if thou give me not to drink, I'll banish thee my bed This night:' wherefore he feared and filled to her the vine-juice red.

They gave not over drinking till drunkenness got the mastery of Noureddin and he slept; whereupon she rose and fell to work upon a girdle, according to her wont. When she had wrought it to end, she wrapped it in paper and putting off her clothes, lay down by his side, and they passed the night in dalliance and delight.

Night dccclxxvi.

On the morrow, she gave him the girdle and bade him carry it to the market and sell it for twenty dinars, like as he had sold its fellow the day before. So he went to the market and sold the girdle for twenty dinars, after which he repaired to the druggist and paid him back the fourscore dirhems, thanking him for his bounties and calling down blessings upon him. 'O my son,' said he, 'hast thou sold the damsel?' 'Wouldst thou have me sell the soul out of my body?' answered Noureddin and told him all that had passed, whereat the druggist was mightily pleased and said to him, 'By Allah, O my son, thou rejoicest me! So God please, mayst thou still abide in prosperity! Indeed I wish thee well by reason of my affection for thy father and the continuance of our friendship.' Then he took leave of him and going to the market, bought meat and fruit and wine and all that he needed, as of wont, and returned therewith to Meryem.

They abode thus a whole year in eating and drinking and sport and merriment and love and good cheer, and every night she made a girdle and he sold it on the morrow for twenty dinars, wherewith he bought what they needed and gave the rest to her, to keep against a time of need. After this, she said to him one day, 'O my lord, when thou sellest the girdle to-morrow, buy me silk of six colours with its price, for I have a mind to make thee a kerchief, to wear on thy shoulders, such as never son of merchant, no, nor king's son, ever rejoiced in its fellow.' So next day he brought her what she sought and she wrought at the kerchief a whole week;

for, every night, when she had made an end of the girdle, she would work awhile at the kerchief. When it was finished, she gave it to Noureddin, who put it on his shoulders and went out to walk in the market, whilst all the merchants and people and notables of the town crowded about him, to gaze on his beauty and that of the kerchief.

One night, after this, he awoke from sleep and found Meryem weeping passing sore and reciting the following verses:

The severance of friends draws near and nearer aye: Alas for severance! Alas, the parting day!
My heart is rent in twain, and O my grief for those The nights of our delight that now are past away!
Needs must the envier look on us with evil eye And come to his desire of that he doth essay;
For nought can irk us more than envy and the eyes Of backbiters and spies, nor work us more dismay.

'O my lady Meryem,' said he, 'what ails thee to weep?' 'I weep for the anguish of parting,' answered she; 'for my heart forebodes me thereof.' Quoth he, 'O lady of fair ones, and who shall part us, seeing that I love and tender thee above all creatures?' And she replied, 'And I love thee twice as well as thou me; but [blind] confidence in fortune still causes folk fall into affliction, and right well saith the poet:

Thou thoughtest well of Fate, whilst yet the days for thee were fair, And fearedst not the unknown ills that destiny might bring.
The nights were calm and safe for thee; thou wast deceived by them; For in the peace of night betides full many a troublous thing.
Lo, in the skies are many stars, no one can tell their tale; But to the sun and moon alone eclipse brings darkening.
The earth bears many a pleasant herb and many a plant and tree; But none is stoned save only that to which the fair fruits cling.
Seest not the sea and how the waifs float up upon the foam? But in its deepest depths of blue the pearls have sojourning.

O my lord Noureddin,' added she, 'if thou desire to avert separation, be on thy guard against a swart-visaged, bushy-bearded old Frank, blind of the right eye and lame of the left leg; for he it is who will be the cause of our separation. I saw him enter the city [to-day] and methinks he is come hither in quest of me.' 'O lady of fair ones,' replied Noureddin, 'if my eyes light on him, I will slay him and make an example of him.' 'O my lord,' rejoined she, 'slay him not; but talk not nor trade with him, neither buy nor sell with him nor sit nor walk with him nor speak one word to him, no, not even to make the prescribed answer,[1] and I pray God to keep us from his craft and mischief!'

Next morning, Noureddin carried the girdle to the market, where he sat down on a bench before a shop and talked with the young merchants, till drowsiness overcame him and he lay down on the bench and fell asleep. Presently, up came the Frank whom the damsel had described to him, in company of seven others, and seeing Noureddin lying asleep on the bench, with his head wrapped in the kerchief which Meryem had made him and the end thereof in his hand, sat down by him and took the end of the kerchief in his hand and examined it. This disturbed Noureddin and he awoke and seeing the very man sitting by him of whom Meryem had warned him, cried out at him with a great cry, that startled him. Quoth the Frank, 'What ails thee to cry out thus at us? Have we taken aught from thee?' 'By Allah, O accursed one,' replied Noureddin, 'hadst thou taken aught from me, I would hale thee before the master of police!'

Then said the Frank, 'O Muslim, I conjure thee by thy faith and by that in which thou believest, tell me whence

[1] *i.e.* to the salutation obligatory between Muslims. "And on thee be peace and the mercy of God and His blessings!"

thou hadst that kerchief.' And Noureddin answered, 'It is the handiwork of my mother, who made it for me with her own hand.' 'Wilt thou sell it to me?' asked the Frank. 'By Allah, O accursed one,' replied Noureddin, 'I will not sell it to thee nor to any other, for she made none other than it.' 'Sell it to me,' repeated the Frank, 'and I will give thee to its price five hundred dinars ready money; and let her who made it make thee another and a handsomer.' But Noureddin said, 'I will not sell it at all, for there is not the like of it in this city.' 'O my lord,' insisted the Frank, 'wilt thou sell it for six hundred dinars of fine gold?' And he went on to add to his offer hundred by hundred, till he bid nine hundred dinars; but Noureddin said, 'God will provide me otherwise than by my selling it. I will never sell it, no, not for two thousand dinars nor more than that.'

Then the Frank went on to tempt him with money, till he bid him a thousand dinars, and the merchants present said, 'We sell thee the kerchief at that price: pay down the money.' Quoth Noureddin, 'By Allah, I will not sell it!' But one of the merchants said to him, 'O my son, the worth of this kerchief is a hundred dinars at most and that to an eager purchaser, and if this Frank pay thee down a thousand for it, thy profit will be nine hundred dinars, and what profit canst thou desire greater than that? Wherefore it is my counsel that thou sell him the kerchief at that price and gain nine hundred dinars by this accursed Frank, the enemy of God and of the faith, and bid her who wrought it make thee other or handsomer than it.'

Noureddin was abashed at the merchants and sold the kerchief to the Frank, who, in their presence, paid him down the thousand dinars, with which he would have returned to Meryem, to tell her what had passed; but the stranger said, 'Harkye, O company of merchants, stop

my lord Noureddin, for you and he are my guests this night. I have a pitcher of old Greek wine and a fat lamb and fruit and flowers and confections; wherefore needs must ye all cheer me with your company to-night and not one of you tarry behind.' So the merchants said to Noureddin, 'O my lord Noureddin, we desire that thou be with us on the like of this night, so we may talk together, we and thou, and we pray thee, of thy favour, to bear us company, so we may be, we and thou, the guests of this Frank, for he is a hospitable man.' And they conjured him by the oath of divorce and hindered him by force from going home.

Then they rose forthright and shutting up their shops, took Noureddin and went with the Frank, who brought them to a goodly and spacious saloon, wherein were two estrades. Here he made them sit and laid before them [a tray covered with] a scarlet cloth of rare and goodly workmanship, wroughten in gold with figures of breaker and broken, lover and beloved, asker and asked, whereon he set precious vessels of porcelain and crystal, full of the costliest fruits and flowers and confections, and brought them a pitcher of old Greek wine. Then he commanded to slaughter a fat lamb and kindling fire, proceeded to roast of its flesh and feed the merchants therewith and give them to drink of the wine, winking them the while to ply Noureddin with liquor. So they plied him with wine till he became drunken and took leave of his wits, which when the Frank saw, he said to him, 'O my lord Noureddin, thou gladdenest us with thy company to-night: welcome, a thousand times welcome to thee!'

Then he drew near unto him and dissembled with him awhile in talk, till he [found his opportunity and] said to him, 'O my lord, wilt thou sell me thy slave-girl, whom thou boughtest a year ago for a thousand dinars, in presence of these merchants? I will give thee five thousand

dinars for her and thou wilt thus make four thousand dinars profit.' Noureddin refused, but the Frank ceased not to ply him with meat and drink and tempt him with money, still adding to his offers, till he bid him ten thousand dinars for her; whereupon Noureddin, in his drunkenness, said, in the presence of the merchants, 'I sell her to thee for ten thousand dinars: hand over the money.' At this the Frank rejoiced mightily and took the merchants to witness of the sale.

They passed the night in eating and drinking and making merry, till the morning, when the Frank cried out to his servants, saying, 'Bring me the money.' So they brought it to him and he counted out ten thousand dinars to Noureddin, saying, 'O my lord, take the price of thy slave-girl, whom thou soldest to me last night, in the presence of these Muslim merchants.' 'Thou liest, O accursed one,' replied Noureddin. 'I sold thee nothing and have no slave-girls.' Quoth the Frank, 'Verily thou didst sell her to me and these merchants were witnesses to the bargain.' 'Yes,' said they all, 'thou soldest him thy slave-girl before us for ten thousand dinars, O Noureddin, and we will all bear witness against thee of the sale. Come, take the money and deliver him the girl, and God will give thee a better than she in her stead. Doth it mislike thee, O Noureddin, that thou boughtest the girl for a thousand dinars and hast enjoyed her beauty and grace and taken thy fill of her company and converse night and day for a year and a half, wherein thou hast gained half a score thousand dinars by the sale of the girdle which she made thee every day and thou soldest for twenty dinars, and after all this thou hast sold her again at a profit of nine thousand dinars over and above her original price? And withal thou deniest the sale and belittlest the profit! What gain is greater than this gain and what profit wouldst thou have greater than

this? If thou love her, thou hast had thy fill of her all this time: so take the money and buy another handsomer than she; or we will marry thee to one of our daughters, lovelier than she, at a dowry of less than half this price, and the rest of the money will remain in thy hand as capital.' And they ceased not to ply him with persuasion and argument till he took the ten thousand dinars, the price of the damsel, and the Frank straightway fetched Cadis and witnesses, who drew up the contract of sale.

Meanwhile, Meryem sat awaiting Noureddin from morning till sundown and from sundown till midnight; and when he returned not, she was troubled and wept sore. The druggist heard her weeping and sent his wife to her, who went in to her and finding her in tears, said to her, 'O my lady, what ails thee to weep?' 'O my mother,' answered she, 'I have sat awaiting my lord Noureddin all day; but he cometh not, and I fear lest some one have put a cheat on him, to make him sell me, and he have fallen into the snare and sold me.' 'O my lady Meryem,' rejoined the druggist's wife, 'were they to give thy lord this room full of gold to thy price, yet would he not sell thee, for what I know of his love to thee. Belike there be folk come from his parents at Cairo and he hath made them an entertainment in their lodging, being ashamed to bring them hither, for that the place is overstrait for them or maybe their condition is less than that he should bring them to his own house; or belike he preferred to conceal thine affair from them, so passed the night with them; and if it be the will of God the Most High, to-morrow he will come to thee, safe and well. So burden not thy soul with care nor anxiety, O my lady, for of a certainty this is the cause of his absence from thee and I will abide with thee this night and comfort thee, till thy lord return.'

Night dccclxxviii.

So she abode with her and cheered her with talk till the morning, when Meryem saw Noureddin enter the street, followed by the Frank and a company of merchants, whereupon she trembled in every nerve and her colour changed and she fell a-shaking, as the ship shakes in mid-ocean for the violence of the wind. When the druggist's wife saw this, she said to her, 'O my lady Meryem, what ails thee that I see thy case changed and thy face grown pale and disfeatured?' 'By Allah, O my mother,' replied she, 'my heart forebodeth me of parting and severance of union!' And she bemoaned herself and sighed heavily, reciting the following verses:

Incline not to parting, I pray; For bitter its savour is aye.
E'en the sun at his setting turns pale, To think he must part from the day;
And so, at his rising, for joy Of reunion, he's radiant and gay.

Then she wept passing sore, making sure of separation, and said to the druggist's wife, 'O my mother, said I not to thee that my lord Noureddin had been tricked into selling me? I doubt not but he hath sold me this night to yonder Frank, albeit I bade him beware of him; but precaution availeth not against destiny. So the truth of my words is made manifest to thee.' Whilst they were talking, in came Noureddin, and she looked at him and saw that his colour was changed and that he trembled and there appeared on his face signs of grief and repentance: so she said to him, 'O my lord Noureddin, meseemeth thou hast sold me.' Whereupon he wept sore and groaned and lamented and recited the following verses:

'Twas Fate, and taking thought avails not anything; If thou err, it errs not in its foreordering.
When God upon a man endowed with hearing, sight And reasoning, His will in aught to pass would bring,

He stops his ears and blinds his eyes and draws his wit From him, as one draws out the hairs to paste that cling,
Till, His decrees fulfilled, He gives him back his wit, That therewithal he may receive admonishing.
Say not of aught that haps, 'How happened it?' For fate And fortune fore-ordained do order everything.

Then he began to excuse himself to her, saying, 'O my lady Meryem, verily the pen runneth with what God hath decreed. The folk put a cheat on me, to make me sell thee, and I fell into the snare and sold thee. Indeed, I have sorely failed of my duty to thee; but peradventure He who decreed our parting will vouchsafe us reunion.' Quoth she, 'I warned thee against this, for this it was I feared.' Then she strained him to her bosom and kissed him between the eyes, reciting the following verses:

Nay, by your love, I'll ne'er forget the troth betwixt us plight, Though my life perish for desire and yearning for your sight.
E'en as the ringdove doth lament upon the sandhills' trees, So will I weep for you and wail all tides of day and night.
My life is troubled after you, belovéd: since from me You're gone, no meeting-place have I nor sojourn of delight.

At this juncture, the Frank came in to them and went up to Meryem, to kiss her hands; but she dealt him a buffet on the cheek, saying, 'Avaunt, O accursed one! Thou hast followed after me without cease, till thou hast tricked my lord into selling me! But please God, all shall yet be well.' The Frank laughed at her speech and wondered at her deed and excused himself to her, saying, 'O my lady Meryem, what is my offence? Thy lord Noureddin here sold thee of his full consent and of his free will. Had he loved thee, by the virtue of the Messiah, he had not transgressed against thee! And had he not accomplished his desire of thee, he had not sold thee. Quoth one of the poets:

Whoso of me is weary, my presence let him flee: If e'er again I name him, to call me fool thou'rt free.
The world in all its wideness on me is not so strait That thou shouldst see me languish for who rejecteth me.'

Now this damsel was the daughter of the King of France, the which is a wide and spacious city,[1] abounding in arts and manufactures and rarities and trees and flowers and other plants, and resembleth the city of Constantinople: and for her going forth of her father's city there was an extraordinary cause and thereby hangs a rare story, that we will set out in due order, to divert and delight the reader. She was reared with her father and mother in honour and indulgence and learnt rhetoric and penmanship and arithmetic and martial exercises and all manner crafts both of men and women, such as broidery and sewing and weaving and girdle-making and silk-cord making and enamelling gold on silver and silver on gold, till she became the pearl of her time and the unique [jewel] of her age and her day. Moreover, God (to whom belong might and majesty) had endowed her with such beauty and grace and elegance and perfection that she excelled therein all the folk of her time, and the kings of the isles sought her in marriage of her father, but he refused to give her to wife to any of her suitors, for that he loved her with an exceeding love and could not brook to be parted from her an hour. Moreover, he had no other daughter than herself, albeit he had many sons, but she was dearer to him than they.

Night dccclxxix.

It chanced one year that she fell sick of an exceeding sickness and came nigh upon death, wherefore she made a vow that, if she recovered from her sickness, she would make the pilgrimage to a certain monastery, situate in such an island, which was high in repute among the Franks, who used to make vows to it and look for a

[1] Marseilles probably meant.

blessing therefrom. When she was whole of her sickness, she wished to accomplish her vow and her father despatched her to the convent in a little ship, with sundry knights and daughters of the chief men of the city to wait upon her. As they drew near the island, there came out upon them a ship of the ships of the Muslims, champions of the faith, warring in the way of God, who boarded the vessel and making prize of all who were therein, sold their booty in the city of Cairawan. Meryem herself fell into the hands of a Persian merchant, who was impotent and for whom no woman had ever discovered her nakedness; and he set her to serve him.

Presently, he fell ill and sickened well-nigh unto death, and the sickness abode with him two months, during which time she tended him after the goodliest fashion, till God made him whole of his malady, when he recalled her loving-kindness to him and the zeal with which she had tended him and being minded to requite her the good offices she had done him, bade her ask a boon of him. 'O my lord,' said she, 'I ask of thee that thou sell me not but to the man of my choice.' 'So be it,' answered he, 'I grant thee this. By Allah, O Meryem, I will not sell thee but to him of whom thou shalt approve, and I put thy sale in thine own hand!' And she rejoiced mightily in this. Now the Persian had expounded Islam to her and she became a Muslim and learnt of him the tenets and observances of the faith. Moreover, he made her get the Koran by heart and taught her somewhat of the theological sciences and the traditions of the Prophet; after which, he brought her to Alexandria and sold her to Noureddin, as hath been before set out.

Meanwhile, when her father, the King of France, heard what had befallen his daughter and her company, he was sore concerned and despatched after her ships full of knights and champions, horsemen and footmen: but they

all returned to him, crying out and saying, 'Alas!' and 'Ruin!' and 'Woe worth the day!' after having searched the islands of the Muslims and come on no tidings of her. The king grieved for her with an exceeding grief and sent after her that one-eyed lameter, for that he was his chief vizier, a stubborn tyrant and a froward devil,[1] full of craft and guile, bidding him make search for her in all the lands of the Muslims and buy her, though with a shipload of gold. So the accursed wretch sought her in all the lands of the seas and all the cities of the Muslims, but found no sign of her till he came to Alexandria, when he discovered that she was with Noureddin Ali of Cairo, being directed to the trace of her by the kerchief aforesaid, [in which he recognized her handiwork,] for that none could have wrought it on such goodly wise but she. Then he bribed the merchants to help him in getting her from Noureddin and beguiled the latter into selling her, as hath been already related.

When he had her in his possession, she ceased not to weep and lament: so he said to her, 'O my lady Meryem, put away from thee this mourning and weeping and return with me to thy father's city, the seat of thy royalty and the place of thy power and thy home, so thou mayst be among thy servants and attendants and be quit of this abasement and strangerhood. Enough hath betided me of travel and weariness and expense on thine account, for thy father bade me buy thee back, though with a shipload of gold; and now I have spent nigh a year and a half in travel and toil and lavishment of wealth.' And he fell to kissing her feet and hands and humbling himself to her; but she only redoubled in wrath against him, for all he

[1] As has been before observed, these and the like epithets are used by the Arabs in a complimentary sense, to denote a man who is a terror and calamity to his enemies, by reason of his prowess and skill in war and counsel.

could do to appease her, and said to him, 'O accursed one, may God the Most High not bring thee to thy desire!'

Then his servants brought her a mule with gold-embroidered housings and mounting her thereon, raised over her head a silken canopy, with staves of gold and silver, and the Franks walked about her, till they brought her forth the city by the sea-gate, where they took boat with her and rowing out to a great ship [that lay in the harbour], embarked her therein. Then the vizier cried out to the sailors, saying, 'Up with the mast!' So they set up the mast and spreading the sails and the pendants, manned the sweeps and put out to sea. Meryem continued to gaze upon Alexandria, till it disappeared from her eyes, when she fell a-weeping and lamenting passing sore and recited the following verses:

Night DCCCLXXX.

O dwelling of the loved, shall there returning ever be To thee? But what know I of that which Allah shall decree?
The ships of separation fare with us in haste away: Mine eyes are blotted out with tears that flow unceasingly,
For severance from a friend, who was the end of my desire, With whom my sicknesses were healed and pains effaced from me.
Be thou my substitute with him, O God; for that which is Committed to Thy charge one day shall not be lost with Thee.

The knights came up to her and would have comforted her, but she heeded them not, being distracted with passion and love-longing. And she wept and moaned and complained and recited the following verses:

The tongue of passion in my heart bespeaketh thee of me And giveth thee to know that I enamoured am of thee.
I have a liver all consumed with passion's coals of fire, A heart, sore wounded by thy loss, that throbs incessantly.
How shall I hide the love that burns my life away? My lids Are ulcered and my tears adown my cheeks for ever flee.

In this plight she abode during all the voyage; no peace was left her nor would patience come at her call.

Meanwhile, when the ship had sailed with Meryem, the world was straitened upon Noureddin and he had neither peace nor patience. He returned to the lodging where they had dwelt, he and she, and it appeared black and gloomy in his sight. Then he saw the pins and silk with which she had been wont to make the girdles and her clothes that had been upon her body: so he pressed them to his breast, whilst the tears streamed from his eyes and he recited the following verses:

Will union after severance return to me some day, After my long-continued tale of sorrow and dismay?
Shall I with my love's company be ever blest again? Now God forfend that what is past should ne'er return! I say.
I wonder will He yet reknit our separated loves And will my dear ones keep the troth we plighted, I and they?
And will she yet preserve my love, whom of my ignorance I lost, and guard our plighted troth and friendship from decay?
Since they departed, as one dead am I: will my belov'd Consent that he who loves them dear should fall to death a prey?
Alas, my sorrow! But lament the mourner profits not. For stress of yearning and regret I'm melted all away.
Lost are the days of my delight: will Fortune e'er vouchsafe To me, I wonder, my desire and so my pains allay?
O heart, redouble in desire and O mine eyes, o'erflow With tears, till not a tear to weep within mine eyelids stay.
Alas for loved ones far away and patience lost to me! My helpers fail me and my woes full sorely on me weigh.
To God the Lord of all, that He vouchsafe me the return Of my belov'd and our delight, as of old time, I pray.

Then he wept passing sore and looking about the place, recited these verses also:

I see their traces and pine for longing pain; My tears rain down on the empty dwelling-place;
And I pray to God, who willed that we should part, One day to grant us reunion, of His grace.

Then he rose and locking the door of the house, went

out, running, to the shore of the sea, where he fixed his eyes on the place of the ship that had carried her off, whilst sighs burst from his breast and he recited the following verses:

Peace be upon thee! Nought to me can compensate for thee: I'm in two cases, near in thought, yet distant verily.
I long for thee each time and tide, even as a man athirst Longs for the distant watering-place, that still from him doth flee.
With thee my hearing and my sight, my heart and spirit are: Thy memory than honey's self is sweeter far to me.
O my despair, whenas your train departed and your ship Fared from the vision of mine eyes with thee across the sea.

And he wept and wailed and bemoaned himself, crying out and saying, 'O Meryem! O Meryem! Was it but in sleep I saw thee or in the illusions of dreams?' And by reason of that which waxed on him of regrets, he recited these verses:

Shall mine eyes ever look on thee, after this parting's pain, And shall I ever hear thy call by house and camp again?
And shall the house our presence cheered once more unite us two? Shall it my heart's desire and thine be given us to attain?
Take my bones with thee by the way and where thou lightest down, Bury them near thee, so they may with thee for aye remain.
Had I a pair of hearts, with one I'd make a shift to live And leave the other to consume for love of thee in vain;
And if, 'What wouldst thou have of God?' 'twere asked of me, I'd say, 'Th' Almighty's favours first, then hers, my prayer to seek were fain.'

As he was in this case, weeping and crying out, 'O Meryem!' an old man landed from a vessel and coming up to him, saw him weeping and heard him recite these verses:

O Meryem of loveliness,[1] return to me again; My eyeballs are as clouds that pour with never-ceasing rain.
Do thou but ask, concerning me, of those at me that rail; They'll tell thee that my lids lie drowned within their fountains twain.

[1] *Meryem el Husn.* This would appear to have been the girl's full name, though elsewhere in the story she is called "Meryem" only.

'O my son,' said the old man, 'meseems thou weepest for the damsel who sailed yesterday with the Frank?' When Noureddin heard his words, he fell down in a swoon and lay awhile without life; then, coming to himself, he wept passing sore and recited the following verses:

Is union after severance with her past hoping for And will the perfectness of cheer return to me no more?
Anguish and love have taken up their lodging in my heart: The prate and gabble of the spies and railers irks me sore.
I pass the day long in amaze, confounded, and anights To visit me in dreams of sleep her image I implore.
Never, by God, a moment's space am I for love consoled! How should it be so, when my heart the envious doth abhor?
A loveling, soft and delicate of sides and slim of waist, She hath a beaming eye, whose shafts are lodged in my heart's core.
Her shape is as the willow-wand i' the gardens and her grace For goodliness outshames the sun and shines his splendour o'er.
Feared I not God (extolléd be His majesty!) I'd say, 'Extolléd be *Her* majesty, the fair whom I adore!

The old man looked at him and noting his beauty and grace and symmetry and the eloquence of his tongue and the seductiveness of his charms, took compassion on him and his heart mourned for his case. Now he was the captain of a ship, bound to the damsel's city, and in this ship were a hundred Muslim merchants: so he said to Noureddin, 'Have patience and all shall yet be well; God willing, I will bring thee to her.' 'When shall we set out?' asked Noureddin, and the other said, 'Come but three days more and we will depart in peace and prosperity.' Noureddin was mightily rejoiced at the captain's words

Night dccclxxxi.

The usual form of the name (see Vol. III. p. 309) is *Husn Meryem*, i.e. the beauty of Mary. It would seem to have been manufactured by the Arab story-tellers after the pattern of their own names (*e.g.* Noureddin, light of the faith, Tajeddin, crown of the faith, etc.), for the use of their imaginary Christian female characters.

and thanked him for his bounty and kindness. Then he recalled the days of love-delight and union with his slave-girl without peer, and he wept sore and recited the following verses:

Will the Compassionate, indeed, unite us, me and thee, And shall I win to my desire by favouring Fate's decree?
And shall time's shifts vouchsafe me yet a visit from my fair And shall mine eyelids seize upon thine image greedily?
Were thine enjoyment to be bought, I'd buy it with my life. But thy possession is, alack! too dear for me, I see.

Then he went to the market and bought what he needed of victual and other necessaries for the voyage and returned to the captain, who said to him, 'O my son, what is that thou hast with thee?' 'My provisions and that whereof I have need for the voyage,' answered Noureddin. 'O my son,' said the old man, laughing, 'art thou going a-pleasuring to Pompey's Pillar? Verily, between thee and that thou seekest is two months' journey, if the wind be favourable and the weather fair.' Then he took of him somewhat of money and going to the market, bought him all that he needed for the voyage and filled him a cask with fresh water. Noureddin abode in the ship three days, till the merchants had made an end of their preparations and embarked, when they set sail and putting out to sea, fared on one-and-fifty days. After this, there came out upon them corsairs, who sacked the ship and taking Noureddin and the rest prisoners, carried them to the city of France and showed them to the king, who bade cast them into prison.

At this moment the galleon arrived with the Princess Meryem and the one-eyed vizier, and when it reached the harbour, the latter landed and going up to the king, gave him the glad news of his daughter's safe return: whereupon they beat the drums for good tidings and decorated the city after the goodliest fashion. Then the

king took horse, with all his guards and nobles, and rode down to the sea to meet her. Presently, she landed and the king embraced her and mounting her on a horse, carried her to the palace, where her mother received her with open arms and asked her how she did and whether she was yet a maid. 'O my mother,' replied Meryem, 'how should a girl, who has been sold from merchant to merchant in the land of the Muslims, [a slave] commanded, abide a maid? The merchant who bought me threatened me with beating and forced me and did away my maidenhead, after which he sold me to another and he again to a third.'

When the queen heard this, the light in her eyes became darkness and she repeated her words to the king, who was sore chagrined thereat and his affair was grievous to him. So he expounded her case to his grandees and patriarchs,[1] who said to him, 'O king, she hath been defiled by the Muslims, and nothing will purify her save the striking off of a hundred of their heads.' Whereupon the king sent for the prisoners and commanded to strike off their heads. So they beheaded them, one after another, beginning with the captain, till there was none left but Noureddin. They tore off a strip of his skirt and binding his eyes therewith, set him on the carpet of blood and were about to cut off his head, when an old woman came up to the king and said, 'O my lord, thou didst vow to bestow upon the church five Muslim captives, to help us in the service thereof, so God would restore thee thy daughter the Princess Meryem; and now she

[1] *Bitarikeh* (plural of *bitric*, Gr. πατρικιος, Lat. *patricius*; there is no *p* in the Arabic alphabet and in borrowing from foreign languages a word containing that letter, the Arabs substitute either *b* or *f* for it) is the Arab name for the priests of the Christians and was evidently adopted from their experience of the Templars and other semi-ecclesiastical military orders, as the same word signifies "Knights."

is restored to thee, so do thou fulfil thy vow.' 'O my mother,' replied the king, 'by the virtue of the Messiah and the True Faith, there remaineth to me but this one captive, whom they are about to put to death: so take him to help thee in the service of the church, till there come to me [other] prisoners of the Muslims, when I will send thee other four. Hadst thou come earlier, before they cut off the heads of these, I had given thee as many as thou wouldst.'

The old woman thanked him and wished him continuance of life and glory and prosperity. Then she went up to Noureddin and seeing him to be a comely and elegant youth, with a delicate skin and a face like the moon at her full, carried him to the church, where she said to him, 'O my son, put off these clothes that are upon thee, for they are fit only for the king's service.' So saying, she brought him a gown and cowl of black wool and a broad girdle, in which she clad him, and bade him do the service of the church. Accordingly, he tended the church seven days, at the end of which time the old woman came up to him and said, 'O Muslim, don thy silken clothes and take these ten dirhems and go out forthright and divert thyself abroad this day, and tarry not here a moment, lest thou lose thy life.' Quoth he, 'What is to do, O my mother?' And she answered, 'Know, O my son, that the king's daughter, the Princess Meryem, hath a mind to visit the church to-day, to seek a blessing thereof and to make oblation thereto, by way of thank-offering for her deliverance from the land of the Muslims and in fulfilment of the vows she made to the Messiah, so he would deliver her. With her are four hundred damsels, not one of whom but is perfect in beauty and grace, and they will be here forthwith, and if their eyes fall on thee, they will hew thee in pieces with swords.'

So Noureddin took the ten dirhems and donning his own clothes, went out to the market and walked about the city, till he knew its highways and gates; after which he returned to the church and saw the Princess Meryem come up, attended by four hundred damsels, high-bosomed maids like moons, amongst whom was the daughter of the one-eyed vizier and those of the amirs and grandees of the realm; and she walked in their midst as she were the moon among the stars. When he saw her, he could not contain himself, but cried out from the bottom of his heart, saying, 'O Meryem! O Meryem!' Which when the damsels heard, they ran at him with shining swords, like flashes of lightning and would have killed him forthright. But the princess turned and looking on him, knew him but too well and said to her maidens, 'Leave this youth; doubtless he is mad, for the signs of madness appear on his face.'

When Noureddin heard this, he uncovered his head and made signs with his hands and twisted his legs, rolling his eyes and foaming at the mouth. 'Did I not tell you he was mad?' said the princess. 'Bring him to me and stand off from him, that I may hear what he saith; for I know the speech of the Arabs and will look into his case and see if his madness be curable or not.' So they laid hold of him and brought him to her; after which they withdrew to a distance and she said to him, 'Hast thou come hither on my account and ventured thy life and feignest thyself mad?' 'O my lady,' answered he, 'hast thou not heard the saying of the poet:

Quoth they, "Thou'rt surely raving mad for her thou lov'st;" and I, "There is no pleasantness in life but for the mad," reply.
"Compare my madness with herself for whom I rave; if she Accord therewith, then blame me not for that which I aby."'

'By Allah, O Noureddin,' rejoined she, 'thou hast sinned against thyself, for I warned thee of this before

it fell out; yet wouldst thou not hearken to me, but followedst thine own inclinations; albeit that whereof I gave thee to know I learnt not by means of divination nor augury nor dreams, but by eye-witness and very sight; for I saw the one-eyed vizier and knew that he was not come to Alexandria but in quest of me.' 'O my lady Meryem,' replied he, 'we seek refuge with God from the error of the intelligent!'[1] Then his affliction redoubled on him and he recited these verses:

Pardon his fault whose slipping feet caused him in error fall, And let the master's clemency embrace his erring thrall.
All that an evildoer can is to repent his fault, Although too late repentance come to profit him at all.
Lo, by confession I have done what courtesy requires: Where then is that for which good grace and generous mercy call?

And they ceased not from lovers' chiding, which to set out would be tedious, relating to each other that which had befallen them and reciting verses and making moan, one to the other, of the violence of passion and the pangs of longing and desire, whilst the tears ran down their cheeks like rivers, till there was left them no strength to say a word. Now the princess was clad in a green dress, inwoven with red gold and broidered with pearls and jewels, which added to her beauty and grace; and right well saith the poet of her:

Like the full moon she shineth in garments all of green, With loosened vest and collars and flowing hair beseen.
'What is thy name?' I asked her, and she replied, 'I'm she Who roasts the hearts of lovers on coals of love and teen.
I am the pure white silver, ay, and the gold wherewith The bondmen from strait prison and dour releaséd been.'
Quoth I, 'I'm all with rigours consumed;' but 'On a rock,' Said she, 'such as my heart is, thy plaints are wasted clean.'
'Even if thy heart,' I answered, 'be rock in very deed, Yet hath God caused fair water well from the rock, I ween.'

[1] A saying of Mohammed.

They abode thus till the day departed and night darkened on them, when Meryem went up to her women and said to them, 'Have ye locked the door?' And they answered, 'We have locked it.' So she took them and went with them to a place called the Chapel of the Lady Mary the Virgin, Mother of Light, because the Christians pretend that her heart and soul are there. The girls betook themselves to prayer and worship and made the round of all the church; and when they had made an end of their visitation, the princess said to them, 'I desire to pass the night alone in the Virgin's chapel and seek a blessing thereof, for that yearning thereafter hath betided me, by reason of my long absence in the land of the Muslims: and as for you, when ye have made an end of your visitation, do ye sleep where ye will.' 'Be it as thou wilt,' replied they, and leaving her alone in the chapel, dispersed about the church and slept.

The lady Meryem waited till they were out of sight and hearing, then went in search of Noureddin, whom she found sitting on coals of fire in a corner, awaiting her. He rose and kissed her hands and she sat down and made him sit by her side. Then she pulled off all that was upon her of clothes and ornaments and fine linen and taking Noureddin in her arms, strained him to her bosom. And they ceased not from kissing and clipping and clicketing to the tune of 'In and out,' saying the while, 'How short are the nights of union and how long the nights of separation!' and reciting the following cinquains:

O night of delight and first fruits of fair fate, Forefront of white nights, with glad fortune elate,
Thou brought'st me the morn[1] in the afternoon late. Thee as kohl in the eyes of the dawn shall we rate
Or as slumber on eyes of ophthalmiac shed?

[1] *i.e.* the fair face of the beloved.

The night of estrangement, how longsome was it! Its first and its last, one with other, were knit,
As a ring, sans beginning or ending to wit, And the Day of Uprising broke, ere it would flit;
For estrangement, thereafter,[1] the lover is dead.

As they were in this great delight and engrossing joy, they heard one of the servants of the Saint[2] smite the gong[3] upon the roof, to call the folk to the rites of their worship, and he was even as saith the poet:

I saw him smite upon the gong and unto him did say, 'Who taught the antelope[4] to smite upon the gong, I pray?'
And to my soul, 'Which irks thee most, the smiting of the gongs Or signal for departure given?[5] Decide betwixt the tway.'

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Then she rose forthwith and donned her clothes and ornaments: but this was grievous to Noureddin, and his gladness was troubled; the tears streamed from his eyes and he recited the following verses:

The rose of a soft cheek, all through the live-long night, I stinted not to kiss and bite with many a bite,
Till, in our middle tide of pleasure, when our spy Lay down to rest, with eyes in slumber closed outright,
They smote the gongs, as they who smote upon them were Muezzins that to prayer the faithful do invite.
She rose from me in haste and donned her clothes, for fear Our watcher's darted star[6] should on our heads alight,

[1] *i.e.* after the rising up of the dead. [2] *i.e.* the Virgin.

[3] *Nacous*, a rude kind of wooden gong used by Eastern Christians to summon the congregation to divine service, the use of bells being forbidden in Muslim countries.

[4] *i.e.* a graceful, slender youth.

[5] A play upon words, the phrase *Dsereb en nawakisi*, "the smiting of the gongs," by cutting the last word in two, becoming *Dsereb en nawa: kisi*, "the giving of the signal for departure: decide thou."

[6] Likening the spy to the angel guardians of heaven, whose missiles, launched at the Jinn who seek to pry into the secret counsels of heaven, the Muslims suppose the shooting-stars to be.

And said, 'O thou my wish and term of all desire, Behold, the morn is come with visage wan and white.'
I swear, if but a day were given to me of power And I became a king of puissance and of might,
I'd break the corners down o' the churches, all of them, And every priest on earth with slaughter I'd requite.

Then she pressed him to her bosom and kissed his cheek and said to him, 'O Noureddin, how long hast thou been in the town?' 'Seven days,' answered he. 'Hast thou walked about in it,' asked she, 'and dost thou know its ways and issues and its sea-gates and land-gates?' And he said, 'Yes.' Quoth she, 'Knowest thou the way to the offertory-chest of the church?' 'Yes,' replied he; and she said, 'Since thou knowest all this, as soon as the first watch of the coming night is over, go to the offertory-chest and take thence what thou wilt. Then open the door, that gives upon the passage leading to the sea, and go down to the harbour, where thou wilt find a little ship and ten men therein, and when the captain sees thee, he will put out his hand to thee. Give him thy hand and he will take thee up into the ship, and do thou wait there till I come to thee. But have a care lest sleep overtake thee this night, or thou wilt repent whenas repentance shall avail thee nothing.'

Then she took leave of him and going forth from him, aroused her women and the rest of the damsels, with whom she betook herself to the church door and knocked; whereupon the old woman opened to her and she went forth and found the knights and serving-men standing without. They brought her a dapple mule and she mounted: whereupon they raised over her head a canopy with curtains of silk, and the knights took hold of the mule's halter. Then the guards encompassed her about with drawn swords in their hands and fared on with her, followed by her maidens, till they brought her to the palace of the king her father.

Meanwhile, Noureddin abode concealed behind the curtain, under cover of which Meryem and he had passed the night, till it was high day, when the [great] door was opened and the church became full of people. Then he mingled with the folk and accosted the old woman, who said to him, 'Where didst thou lie last night?' 'In the town,' answered he, 'as thou badest me.' 'O my son,' answered she, 'thou didst well; for, hadst thou passed the night in the church, she had slain thee on the foulest wise.' And he said, 'Praised be God who hath delivered me from the peril of this night!' Then he busied himself with the service of the church, till the day departed and the night came with the darkness, when he opened the offertory-chest and took thence of jewels what was light of weight and great of worth.

Then he waited till the first watch of the night was past, when he made his way to the postern and opening it, went forth, calling on God for protection, and fared on, till he came to the sea. Here he found the vessel moored to the shore, near the gate, with her captain, a tall old man of comely aspect, with a long beard, standing in the waist, surrounded by his ten men. Noureddin gave him his hand, as Meryem had bidden him, and the captain took it and pulling him on board, cried out to his crew, saying, 'Cast off the moorings and put out to sea with us, ere the day break.' 'O my lord the captain,' said one of the sailors, 'how shall we put out now, when the king hath notified us that to-morrow he will embark in this ship and go round about this sea, being fearful for his daughter Meryem from the Muslim thieves?' But the captain cried out at them, saying, 'Woe to you, O accursed ones! Dare ye gainsay me and bandy words with me?' So saying, he drew his sword and dealt the sailor who had spoken a thrust in the throat, that the steel came out gleaming from his nape, and quoth another of the sailors,

'What crime hath our comrade committed, that thou shouldst cut off his head?' The captain replied by putting his hand to his sword and striking off the speaker's head, nor did he leave smiting the rest of the sailors, till he had slain them all and cast their bodies ashore.

Then he turned to Noureddin and cried out at him with a terrible great cry, that made him tremble, saying, 'Go down and pull up the mooring-stake.' Noureddin feared lest he should strike him also with the sword; so he leapt ashore and pulling up the stake, sprang aboard again, swiftlier than the dazzling lightning. The captain ceased not to bid him do this and do that and tack and wear and look at the stars, and Noureddin did all that he bade him, with heart a-tremble for fear; whilst he himself spread the sails and the ship stretched out with them with a fair wind into the surging sea, swollen with clashing billows. Noureddin held on to the tackle, drowned in the sea of solicitude and knowing not what was hidden for him in the future; and whenever he looked at the captain, his heart quaked and he knew not whither he went with him. Night dccclxxxiv.

He abode thus, distraught with concern and inquietude, till it was broad day, when he looked at the captain and saw him take hold of his beard and pull at it, whereupon it came off in his hand and Noureddin, examining it, saw that it was but a false beard stuck on. So he considered the captain straitly, and behold, it was the Princess Meryem, his mistress and the beloved of his heart, who had waylaid the captain and killed him and skinned off his beard, which she had clapped on to her own face. At this Noureddin was transported for joy and his breast dilated and he marvelled at her valour and prowess and the stoutness of her heart and said to her, 'Welcome, O thou my hope and my desire and the end of all my wishes!' Then desire and gladness agitated him

and he made sure of attaining his hope and his wish; wherefore he broke out into carol and sang the following verses:

Say to those who know nought of my transport and heat For a loved one, whose favours they never may meet,
'Ask my folk of my passion: my verses are sweet And dainty the ditties of love I repeat
On a people whose thought in my heart hath its seat.'
Their mention with me chaseth sickness away From my bosom and heals me of pain and dismay;
My love and my longing increase on me aye And my heart is distracted with ecstasy; yea,
I'm a byword become 'mongst the folk in the street.
I will not accept aught of blame on their part Nor seek solace in other than them for love's smart.
Love hath pierced me, for grief and regret, with a dart And hath kindled a brazier therefrom in my heart;
Yea, still in my liver there rageth its heat.
My sickness the folk for a wonderment cite And my wakefulness all through the darkness of night.
What ailed them my weakness with rigours to smite? In passion the shedding my blood they deem right;
Yet justly they me with injustice entreat.
I wonder who charged you to drive to despair A youth who still loves and will love you fore'er?
By my life and by Him your Creator I swear, If a saying of you should the backbiters bear,
By Allah, they lie in the tale they repeat!
May God not dispel from me sickness and pain Nor my heart of its thirst and its longing assain,
Of your love for satiety when I complain! Indeed, to none other than you am I fain.
Wring my heart or show favour, as seems to you meet.
My heart to your mem'ry shall ever be true, Though your rigours should rack it and cause it to rue;
Rejection abides and acceptance with you: So whatever you will with your bondman, that do;
He'll grudge not his life to lay down at your feet.

The princess marvelled at his song and thanked him therefor, saying, 'Him whose case is thus it behoveth to walk the ways of men and eschew the fashion of losels and poltroons.' Now she was stout of heart and versed in the sailing of ships over the salt sea, and she knew all the winds and their changes and all the courses of the sea. 'O my lady,' said Noureddin, 'hadst thou prolonged this case on me,[1] I had surely died for excess of fear and chagrin, more by token of the fire of passion and love-longing and the cruel anguish of separation.' She laughed at his speech and presently rising, brought out somewhat of meat and drink; and they ate and drank and made merry. Then she brought out rubies and other gems and precious stones and trinkets of gold and silver and all manner things of price, light of carriage and great of worth, that she had taken from the palace of her father and his treasuries, and showed them to Noureddin, who rejoiced therein with an exceeding joy.

Meanwhile the wind blew fair for them and they sailed on, without hindrance, till they drew near the city of Alexandria and sighted its landmarks, old and new, and Pompey's Pillar. When they reached the port, Noureddin landed and making the ship fast to one of the Fulling-Stones, took somewhat of the treasures that Meryem had brought with her, and said to her, 'O my lady, abide in the ship, against I [return and] carry thee up into the city on such wise as I should wish.' Quoth she, 'It behoves that this be done quickly, for tardiness in affairs engenders repentance.' 'There is no tardiness in me,' answered he and leaving her in the ship, went up into the city to the druggist's house, to borrow of his wife for Meryem veil and muffler and mantle and walking boots, after the usage of the women of Alexandria, knowing not that there was

[1] *i.e.* hadst thou maintained this deception longer.

appointed to betide him of the vicissitudes of time, the father of wonders, that which was not in his reckoning.

Meanwhile, when the King of France arose in the morning, he missed his daughter and questioned her eunuchs and women of her. 'O our lord,' answered they, 'she went out last night, to go to the church, and after that we know nothing of her.' But, as the king talked with them, there arose a great clamour of cries without the palace, that the place rang thereto, and he said, 'What is to do?' 'O king,' answered the folk, 'we have found ten men slain on the sea-shore, and thy ship is missing. Moreover, we found the postern of the church, that gives upon the alley leading to the sea, open and the Muslim prisoner, who serves in the church, missing.' Quoth the king, 'If my ship be missing, without doubt my daughter is in it.' So he summoned the captain of the port and cried out at him, saying, 'By the virtue of the Messiah and the True Faith, except thou overtake my ship forthright with troops and bring it back to me, with those who are therein, I will put thee to death after the foulest fashion and make an example of thee!'

Night dccclxxxb.

The captain went out from before him, trembling, and betook himself to the old woman of the church, to whom said he, 'Heardest thou aught from the captive, that was with thee, concerning his native land and what countryman he was?' And she answered, 'He used to say, "I come from the town of Alexandria."' When the captain heard this, he returned forthright to the port and cried out to the sailors to make sail. So they did his bidding and straightway putting out to sea, sailed night and day till they came in sight of the city of Alexandria, what time Noureddin landed, leaving the princess in the ship. They soon espied the king's bark and knew it; so they moored their own vessel at a distance therefrom and putting off in a little ship they had with them, which drew but three feet

of water and in which were a hundred fighting-men, amongst them the one-eyed vizier, (for that he was a stubborn tyrant and a froward devil and a wily thief, none could avail against his craft, as he were Abou Mohammed el Bettal,[1]) rowed up to the bark and boarding her, all at once, found none therein save the Princess Meryem. So they took her and the ship, and returning to their own vessel, after they had landed and waited a long while,[2] set sail forthright for the land of the Franks, having accomplished their errand, without drawing sword.

The wind blew fair for them and they sailed on, without hindrance, till they reached the city of France and landing with the princess, carried her to her father, who received her, seated on the throne of his kingship. As soon as he saw her, he said to her, 'Out on thee, O traitress! What ailed thee to leave the faith of thy forefathers and the safeguard of the Messiah, on whom is our reliance, and follow after the faith of the vagabonds,[3] to wit, the faith of Islam, the which arose with the sword against the Cross and the Images?' 'I am not at fault,' replied Meryem. 'I went out by night to the church, to visit the Lady Mary and seek a blessing of her, when there fell upon me, at unawares, a band of Muslim robbers, who gagged me and bound me fast and carrying me on board the bark, set sail with me for their own country. However, I beguiled them and talked with them of their religion, till they loosed my bonds; and before I knew what was toward, thy men overtook me and delivered me. And by the virtue of the Messiah and the True Faith and the Cross and Him who was crucified thereon, I rejoiced with an exceeding joy in my release from them and my

[1] Apparently some famous brigand of the time.
[2] In the hope of catching Noureddin.
[3] *i.e.* the wandering Arabs. The Mohammedan religion was so styled by its opponents.

bosom expanded and I was glad for my deliverance from the bondage of the Muslims!' 'Thou liest, O shameless baggage!' rejoined the king. 'By the virtue of that which is revealed of prohibition and allowance in the manifest Evangel,[1] I will assuredly slay thee after the foulest fashion and make of thee the vilest of examples! Did it not suffice thee to do as thou didst the first time and put off thy lies upon us, but thou must return upon us with thy falsehoods?'

Then he commanded to slay her and crucify her over the gate of the palace: but the one-eyed vizier, who had long been enamoured of the princess, came in to him and said, 'Slay her not, but give her to me to wife, and I will watch over her with the utmost vigilance, nor will I go in to her, till I have built her a palace of solid stone, exceeding high of fashion, so no thieves may avail to climb up to its roof; and when I have made an end of building it, I will sacrifice thirty Muslims before the gate thereof, as an expiatory offering to the Messiah for her and for myself.' The king granted his request and bade the priests and monks and patriarchs marry the princess to him; so they did his bidding, whereupon he gave commandment to set about building a strong and lofty palace, befitting her, and the workmen fell to work upon it.

To return to Noureddin. When he came back with the veils and what not else he had borrowed of the druggist's wife, he 'found the air empty and the place of visitation distant;' whereupon his heart sank within him and he wept floods of tears and recited the following verses:

Night dccclxxxvi.

The phantom of Saada came to me by night, near the break of day,
And roused me, whenas my comrades all in the desert sleeping lay;
But, when I awoke to the dream of the night, that came to visit me, I
found the air void and the wonted place of our rendezvous far away.

[1] *i.e.* in that portion thereof whose meaning is unequivocally apparent and which is unabrogated by any other portion.

Then he walked on along the beach and turned right and left, till he saw people gathered together on the beach and heard them say, 'O Muslims, there abideth no sanctity in the city of Alexandria, since the Franks enter it and snatch away those who are therein and return to their own land at their leisure, unpursued of any of the Muslims or men-of-war!' Quoth Noureddin to them, 'What is to do?' And they answered, 'O my son, one of the ships of the Franks, full of armed men, came down but now upon the harbour and carried off a ship that was moored here, with her who was therein, and made for their own land unhindered.' Noureddin fell down in a swoon, on hearing these words; and when he came to himself, they questioned him of his case and he told them all that had befallen him; whereupon they all fell to blaming him and railing at him, saying, 'Why couldst thou not bring her up into the town without veil and muffler?' And each gave him some grievous word, berating him with sharp speech, and shot at him each his shaft of reproach, albeit some said, 'Let him be; that which hath befallen him sufficeth him,' till he again fell down in a swoon.

At this moment, up came the old druggist, who, seeing the folk gathered together, drew near to learn what was the matter and found Noureddin lying aswoon in their midst. So he sat down at his head and arousing him, said to him, 'O my son, what is this case in which I see thee?' 'O uncle,' replied Noureddin, 'I had brought back my slave-girl, whom I lost, from her father's city, after suffering all manner of perils and hardships; and when I came hither with her, I made the vessel fast to the shore and leaving her therein, repaired to thy dwelling and took of thy wife what was needful for her, that I might bring her up into the city; but the Franks came and taking the ship and the damsel

therein, made off, unhindered, and returned to their own land.'

When the druggist heard this, the light in his eyes became darkness and he grieved sore for Noureddin and said to him, 'O my son, why didst thou not bring her out of the ship into the city without a veil? But talk availeth not at this season; so rise, O my son, and come up with me to the city; it may be God will vouchsafe thee a girl fairer than she, who shall console thee for her. Praised be God who hath not made thee lose aught by her! Nay, thou hast gained by her. And bethink thee, O my son, that union and separation are in the hands of the Most High King.' 'By Allah, O uncle,' replied Noureddin, 'I can never be consoled for her loss nor will I ever leave seeking her, though I drink the cup of death on her account!' 'O my son,' rejoined the druggist, 'and what dost thou purpose to do?' Quoth Noureddin, 'I purpose to return to the land of the Franks and enter the city of France and venture myself there, come what may.' 'O my son,' said the druggist, 'quoth the current byword, "Not always comes the pitcher off unbroken;" and if they did thee no hurt before, belike they will slay thee this time, more by token that they know thee now but too well.' 'O my uncle,' replied Noureddin, 'let me set out and be slain presently for the love of her, and not die slowly of despair for her loss.'

Now, as fate would have it, there was then a ship in the port ready to sail, for its passengers had made an end of their affairs and the sailors had pulled up the mooring-stakes, when Noureddin embarked in her. So they put out to sea and sailed many days, with fair wind and weather, till they fell in with certain of the Frank cruisers, that were scouring those waters and seizing upon all ships they saw, in their fear for the king's daughter from the Muslim corsairs: and as often as they made prize of a

Muslim ship, they carried all her people to the King of France, who put them to death in accomplishment of the vow he had made on account of his daughter Meryem. So they boarded the ship in which was Noureddin and taking him and the rest of the company prisoners, to the number of a hundred Muslims, carried them to the King, who bade cut their throats. So they slaughtered them all, one after another, till there was none left but Noureddin, whom the headsman had left till the last, in pity of his tender age and slender shape.

When the king saw him, he knew him right well and said to him, 'Art thou not Noureddin, that was with us before?' 'I was never with thee,' answered he; 'and my name is not Noureddin, but Ibrahim.' 'Thou liest,' rejoined the king; 'thou art Noureddin, he whom I gave to the old woman, the prioress, to help her in the service of the church.' But Noureddin said, 'O my lord, my name is Ibrahim.' Quoth the king, 'Wait a while,' and bade his knights fetch the old woman forthright, saying, 'When she comes and sees thee, she will know if thou be Noureddin or not.' At this juncture, in came the one-eyed vizier and kissing the earth before the king, said to him, 'Know, O king, that the palace is finished; and thou knowest that I vowed to the Messiah that, when I had made an end of building it, I would slaughter thirty Muslims before its gate; wherefore I am come to get them of thee, that I may sacrifice them and so fulfil my vow to the Messiah. They shall be at my charge, by way of loan, and whenas there come prisoners to my hands, I will give thee other thirty in their stead.' 'By the virtue of the Messiah and the True Faith,' replied the king, 'I have but this one captive left!' And he pointed to Noureddin. 'Take him and slaughter him now, and the rest I will send thee, whenas there come to my hands [other] prisoners of the Muslims.'

So the vizier took Noureddin and carried him to his palace, thinking to slaughter him on the threshold of the gate; but the painters said to him, 'O my lord, we have two days' painting yet to do; so have patience with us and delay to slaughter this captive, till we have made an end of our work; belike by that time the rest of the thirty will come, so thou mayst despatch them all at one bout and accomplish thy vow in one day.' So the vizier bade imprison him and they carried him to the stables and left him there in chains, hungering and thirsting and making moan for himself; for indeed he saw death face to face.

Night dccc lxxxvii.

Now it chanced, by the ordinance of destiny and fore-ordered fate, that the king had two chargers, own brothers,[1] such as the kings of the Chosroës might sigh in vain to possess themselves of one of them; they were called Sabic[2] and Lahic[3] and one of them was pure white and the other black as the darksome night. And all the kings of the isles had said, 'Whoso stealeth us one of these horses, we will give him all he seeketh of red gold and pearls and jewels;' but none could avail unto this. Now one of them fell sick of a jaundice and there came a whiteness over his eyes;[4] whereupon the king sent for all the farriers in the city to treat him; but they all failed of his cure. Presently the vizier came in to the king and finding him troubled, because of the horse, thought to do away his concern and said to him, 'O king, give me the horse and I will cure him.' The king consented and caused carry the horse to the stable wherein was Noureddin; but, when he missed his brother, he cried out with an exceeding great cry and neighed, so that he affrighted all the folk. The vizier, seeing that he did thus but

[1] *i.e.* born of one father and mother.
[2] *i.e.* the fore-runner. [3] *i.e.* the overtaker.
[4] Apparently the affection of the eyes in horses, known as "the web and pin."

because of his separation from his brother, sent to tell the king, who said, 'If this, which is but a beast, cannot brook to be parted from his brother, how should it be with those that have reason?' And he bade his grooms take the other horse and put him with his brother in the vizier's stable, saying, 'Tell the vizier that the two horses are a present from me to him, for the sake of my daughter Meryem.'

Noureddin was lying in the stable, chained and shackled, when they brought the horses, and saw that one of them had a web in his eyes. Now he had some knowledge of horses and of the treatment of their diseases; so he said in himself, 'By Allah, this is my opportunity! I will go to the vizier and lie to him, saying, "I will cure thee this horse:" then will I do with him somewhat that will destroy his eyes, and he will kill me and I shall be at rest from this wretched life.' So he waited till the vizier entered the stable, to look upon the horse, and said to him, 'O my lord, what wilt thou give me, if I cure this horse, and make his eyes whole again?' 'As my head liveth,' replied the vizier, 'an thou cure him, I will spare thy life and give thee leave to ask a boon of me!' And Noureddin said, 'O my lord, command my hands to be unbound.' So the vizier bade unbind him and he rose and taking virgin glass,[1] brayed it and mixed it with unslaked lime and onion-juice. Then he applied the whole to the horse's eyes and bound them up, saying in himself, 'Now will his eyes be put out and they will kill

[1] What *virgin* glass may be I cannot undertake to say: a remote sense of the word (*zejaj*) translated "glass" is "clove-berries," and this, though rarely used, would seem the more probable reading, were it not that Noureddin's avowed object (sufficiently attested, indeed, by the nature of the other ingredients of the mixture) was to destroy the horse's eyes, a purpose which pounded glass would certainly seem well calculated to effect.

me and I shall be at rest from this wretched life.' And he passed the night with a heart free of care and trouble, humbling himself to God the Most High and saying, 'O Lord, in Thy knowledge is that which dispenseth with asking!'

When the day came and the sun shone out upon the hills and valleys, the vizier came to the stable and loosing the bandage from the horse's eyes, found them [altogether cured and] handsomer than ever, by the ordinance of the King who openeth [unto His servants the gates of sustenance and mercy]. So he said to Noureddin, 'O Muslim, never in the world saw I the like of thee for the excellence of thy skill. By the virtue of the Messiah and the True Faith, thou fillest me with wonder, for all the farriers of our land have failed to heal this horse's eyes!' Then he did off his shackles with his own hand and clad him in a costly dress and made him his master of the horse. Moreover, he appointed him stipends and allowances and lodged him in an apartment over the stables. So Noureddin abode awhile, eating and drinking and making merry and commanding and forbidding those who tended the horses; and whoso neglected them or failed to fodder those tied up in the stable wherein was his service, he would throw down and beat grievously and lay him by the legs in shackles of iron. Moreover, he used every day to go down to the two chargers and rub them down with his own hand, by reason of that which he knew of their value in the vizier's eyes and his love for them; wherefore the latter rejoiced in him with an exceeding joy and his breast dilated and he was glad, unknowing what was to be the issue of his affair.

Now in the new palace, that he had built for the Princess Meryem, was a lattice-window overlooking his old house and Noureddin's lodging. The vizier had a daughter, a virgin of extreme beauty, as she were a fleeing

gazelle[1] or a bending branch, and it chanced that she sat one day at the lattice aforesaid and heard Noureddin singing and solacing himself under his afflictions by reciting the following verses:

O censor of love, thou that wast fortunate aye, Bright with the sheen of thy joys as the blossomed spray,
If Fate with its plagues should bite on thee one day, Then of the taste of its bitter cup thou'lt say,
'Alas for Love and out on his whole array! My heart with his flaming fires is burnt away.'

But to-day thou art safe as yet from his cruel spite And his perfidy irks thee not and his fell unright;
Yet blame not, I prithee, the love-distracted wight Who cries, for the stress of the passion to which he's prey,
'Alas for Love and out on his whole array! My heart with his flaming fires is burnt away.'

Be not of those that look on love with disdain, But rather excuse and pity the lovers' pain,
Lest thou one day be bound in the self-same chain And drink of the self-same bitter draught as they.
Alas for Love and out on his whole array! My heart with his flaming fires is burnt away.

I too of old was empty of heart like thee And lay down to rest in peace and passion-free;
The taste of the sleepless nights was strange to me Until he called me to dwell beneath his sway.
Alas for Love and out on his whole array! My heart with his flaming fires is burnt away.

Yea, none can tell of Love and its sore duresse But he who is sick and weak for its longsomeness,
He who hath lost his reason for love-distress, Whose drink is the bitter dregs of his own dismay.
Alas for Love and out on his whole array! My heart with his flaming fires is burnt away.

[1] The gist of this favourite comparison lies in the hunted gazelle's graceful habit of turning its slender neck to look at its pursuers.

How many a lover watches the darksome night, His eyes forbidden the taste of sleep's delight!
How many, whose tears like rivers adown a height Course down their cheeks for passion both night and day!
Alas for Love and out on his whole array! My heart with his flaming fires is burnt away.

How many a mortal is maddened for love-despair, Wakeful, for void of sleep is the dusky air!
Languor and pain are the weeds that he doth wear And even his dreams from him are banished aye.
Alas for Love and out on his whole array! My heart with his flaming fires is burnt away.'

How often my patience fails and my bones do waste And my tears, like a fount of blood, stream down in haste!
For my life, that of old was pleasant and sweet of taste, A slender maiden hath bittered this many a day.
Alas for Love and out on his whole array! My heart with his flaming fires is burnt away.

Alack for the man among men who loves like me, Whose eyes through the hours of the darkness sleepless be,
Who drowns in his own despair, as it were a sea, And cries, for the stress of an anguish without allay,
'Alas for Love and out on his whole array! My heart with his flaming fires is burnt away.'

Whom hath not Love stricken and wounded indeed? Who was there aye from his easy springes freed?
Whose life is empty of him and who succeed In winning to his delights without affray?
Alas for Love and out on his whole array! My heart with his flaming fires is burnt away.

Be Thou his helper, O Lord, who's sick at heart; Protect him, Thou that the best protector art.
To him fair patience to bear his woes impart; In all his troubles be Thou his help and stay.
Alas for Love and out on his whole array! My heart with his flaming fires is burnt away.

Quoth the vizier's daughter to herself, 'By the virtue of the Messiah and the True Faith, but this Muslim is a handsome youth! Doubtless, he is a lover separated from his mistress. I wonder if his beloved is fair like unto him and if she pines for him as he for her! If she be comely as he is, it behoveth him to pour forth tears and make moan of passion; but, if she be other than fair, his life is wasted in vain regrets and he is denied the taste of delights.'

Night dccc lxxxviii.

Now the Princess Meryem had removed to the [new] palace the day before and the vizier's daughter knew that she was heavy at heart; so she bethought herself to go to her and talk with her and tell her of the young man and the verses she had heard him recite; but, before she could do this, the princess sent for her to cheer her with her converse. So she went to her and found her breast straitened and her tears coursing down her cheeks; and she was weeping sore and reciting the following verses:

My life is spent; but love lives yet, that nought may kill, And for my longing's stress my breast is straitened still.
My heart is all consumed for separation's ill, Yet hopes that after all the days of union will
Return and love-delight its ordered course fulfil.
Be sparing of your blame to one enslaved of heart, Whose body's worn with love and disappointment's smart,
Nor at his passion launch reproach's poisoned dart, For none more wretched is than lovers torn apart.
Yet is love's bitter sweet of savour, will or nill.

Quoth the vizier's daughter to her, 'What ails thee, O princess, to be sick at heart and melancholy?' Whereupon Meryem recalled the greatness of the delights that were past and recited the following verses:

I will th' estrangement of my love with fortitude abide, Whilst down my cheeks the pearls of tears in chains unending glide;
So haply God shall succour me with solace; for indeed He doth all solace neath the ribs of difficulty hide.

'O princess,' said the vizier's daughter, 'let not thy breast be straitened, but come with me straightway to the lattice; for there is with us in the stable a comely young man, slender of shape and sweet of speech, and meseemeth he is a lover separated [from his beloved].' 'And by what sign knowest thou that he is a separated lover?' asked Meryem. And she answered, 'O queen, I know it by his reciting odes and verses all tides of the day and watches of the night.' Quoth the princess in herself, 'If what the vizier's daughter says be true, these are the traits of the wretched, the afflicted Ali Noureddin. Can it indeed be he of whom she speaketh?' At this thought, love-longing and distraction redoubled on her and she rose at once and going with the maiden to the lattice, looked down upon the stables, where she saw her love and lord Noureddin and fixing her eyes on him, knew him but too well, albeit he was sick, of the greatness of his love for her and of the fire of passion and the anguish of separation and yearning and distraction. Emaciation was sore upon him and he was reciting and saying as follows:

My heart a bondslave is; mine eyes rain tears for e'er: With them, in pouring forth, no rain-cloud can compare.
My weeping's manifest, my passion and lament, My wakefulness and woe and mourning for my fair.
Alas, my raging heat, my transport and regret! Eight plagues beset my heart and have their lodging there,
And five and five to boot thereafter follow on: Tarry and list, whilst I their names to thee declare.
Memory, solicitude, sighing and languishment, Love-longing in excess and all-engrossing care,
Affliction, strangerhood and passion and lament And griefs that never cease to stir me to despair.
Patience and fortitude desert me for desire, Whose hosts, when patience fails, beset me everywhere.
Yea, passion's troubles wax for ever on my heart. O thou that ask'st what is the fire at heart I bear,

What ails my tears a flame to kindle in my blood? The fires within my heart still burn and never spare.
Drowned am I in the flood of my unceasing tears And in hell-fire I flame with love-longing fore'er.

When the Princess Meryem heard the eloquence of his verses and the excellence of his speech, she was assured that it was indeed her lord Noureddin; but she dissembled with the vizier's daughter and said to her, 'By the virtue of the Messiah and the True Faith, I thought not thou knewest of my sadness!' Then she withdrew from the window and returned to her own place, whilst the vizier's daughter went about her occasions. The princess waited awhile, then returned to the window and sat there, gazing upon her beloved Noureddin and feasting her eyes on his beauty and grace. And indeed, she saw that he was like unto the moon at its full; but he was ever sighing and pouring forth tears, for that he recalled what was past. Then he recited the following verses:

Union with my beloved for ever I await, But gain not; whilst life's bitter for ever is my mate.
My tears are like the ocean in their unending flow; But, when I meet my censors, I force them [1] still abate.
Out upon him who cursed us with parting by his spells![2] Could I but win to meet him, I'd tear his tongue out straight.
To blame the days availeth no whit, for that they've wrought: With bitterness unmingled they've blent my cup of fate.
To whom shall I address me but you, to whom repair, Since in your courts, a hostage, I left my heart of late?
Who'll quit me of a despot, a tyrant, in unright Who waxes, when I plain me for justice at his[3] gate?

[1] *i.e.* my tears.
[2] *lit.* Out on a prayer who imprecated our parting!
[3] It need hardly be noted that the *feminine* must here (as in the rest of the piece) be understood for the *masculine* pronoun. The Arabs consider it indelicate directly to speak of women in the language of passion, and therefore very commonly (though by no means invariably)

King o'er my soul I made him, his realm to keep; but me He ruined and his kingdom laid waste and desolate.
My life I have expended for love of him, alas! Would God I were requited for that my spent estate!
O fawn that in my bosom hast made thy nest, let that I've tasted of estrangement suffice thy wrath to sate.
Thou'rt he whose face uniteth all charms, on whose account I've parted with my patience and am disconsolate.
Within my heart I lodged him; woe on it fell, and I To that which I permitted submit without debate.
My tears flow on for ever, like to a swollen sea: Knew I the road to solace, I would ensue it straight.
I fear to die of sorrow, for he still 'scapes from me, Oft as I think to reach him, ah me unfortunate!

When Meryem heard her lover's verses, they kindled a fire in her entrails and she recited the following, whilst her eyes ran over with tears:

I longed for him I love; but when I saw him, for surprise I was amazed and had no power to move or tongue or eyes.
Volumes of chiding and reproach I had prepared; but when We met, no syllable thereof unto my lips would rise.

When Noureddin heard her voice, he knew it and wept sore, saying, 'By Allah, this is assuredly the voice of the Princess Meryem! I wonder if my thought be true and if it be indeed she herself or another!' And regrets redoubled upon him and he bemoaned himself and recited the following verses:

Night DCCCLXXXIX.

adopt the (to Western notions of delicacy) far more objectionable expedient of nominally addressing their amorous effusions to one of their own sex, whilst a female is well understood to be the object of love. To avoid mystification and confusion, I have, without remark, in most instances where this curious substitution of sex occurs in the verse-part of the present work, rendered the passage according to the *understood* sense, except in cases where (as in the text) it seems impossible to do so without altering the general construction.

When my blamer for love saw me meet with my dear In a place wide and open to eye and to ear
And I said not at meeting a word of reproach, Though reproach to the sad oft brings solace and cheer,
'What manner of silence is this that prevents Thee from making due answer?' he said with a sneer.
'Misbeliever,' quoth I, 'that ignorest the case Of the people of passion, a word in thine ear;
The sign of the lover whose love is sincere Is his silence when she whom he loveth draws near.'

When he had made an end of these verses, the princess fetched inkhorn and paper and wrote the following letter. 'In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful! The peace of God be upon thee and His mercy and blessings! Thy slave-girl Meryem salutes thee, who longeth sore for thee; and this is her message to thee. As soon as this letter falls into thy hands, do thou arise and apply thyself with all diligence to that she would have of thee, and beware with all wariness of transgressing her commandment and of sleeping. When the first watch of the night is past, (for that hour is of the most favourable of times,) saddle the two horses [that the vizier had of the king] and go forth with them to the Sultan's Gate, [where do thou await me]. If any ask thee whither thou goest, answer, "I am going to exercise them,"[1] and none will hinder thee; for the folk of this city trust to the locking of the gates.'

Then she folded the letter in a silken handkerchief and threw it out of the window to Noureddin, who took it and reading it, knew it for the handwriting of the Lady Meryem. So he kissed the letter and laid it between his eyes; then, calling to mind that which had betided him with her of the sweets of love-delight, he recited the following verses, whilst the tears streamed from his eyes:

[1] *i.e.* the horses.

A letter came to me from thee by favour of the night: At once it healed me and in me love-longing did excite.
It minds me of the life I lived with thee in days of yore. Glory to Him who did us twain with separation smite!

As soon as it was dark, he busied himself with making ready the horses and waited till the first watch of the night was past, when he saddled them with saddles of the goodliest, and leading them forth of the stable, locked the door after him and repaired with them to the city-gate, where he sat down to await the princess's coming.

Meanwhile, Meryem returned to her apartment, where she found the one-eyed vizier seated, leaning upon a cushion stuffed with ostrich-down; but he was ashamed to put out his hand to her or bespeak her. When she saw him, she appealed to God in her heart, saying, 'O my God, bring him not to his will of me neither decree Thou to me defilement after purity!' Then she went up to him and made a show of affection for him and sat down by his side and caressed him, saying, 'O my lord, what is this aversion thou discoverest to me? Is it pride or coquetry on thy part? But the current byword saith, "If the salutation be little in demand, the sitters salute the standers." So if, O my lord, thou come not to me neither accost me, I will go to thee and accost thee.' 'To thee belong favour and kindness, O queen of the earth in its length and breadth,' answered he, 'nor am I but one of thy slaves and the least of thy servants. Indeed, I was ashamed to intrude upon thine illustrious presence, O unique pearl, and my face is in the dust at thy feet.' 'Leave this talk,' rejoined she, 'and bring us to eat and drink.'

So he called to his eunuchs and women to bring food, and they set before them a tray containing birds of all kinds that walk and fly and couple in the nests, such as grouse and quails and pigeons and lambs and fat geese

and fricasseed fowls and other dishes of all sorts and colours. The princess put out her hand to the tray and began to eat and feed the vizier and kiss him on the mouth. They ate till they had enough and washed their hands, after which the servants removed the table of food and set on the table of wine. So the princess filled the cup and drank and gave the vizier to drink and served him with the utmost assiduity, so that he was transported for joy and his breast expanded and he was glad.

When she saw that the wine had gotten the mastery of his senses, she brought out of her bosom a pastille of Moorish henbane, which she had provided against this occasion, whereof if an elephant smelt the least whiff, he would sleep from year to year. She took him at unawares and crumbled the henbane into the cup, then, filling it up, handed it to the vizier, who could hardly credit his senses for joy. So he took it and kissing her hand, drank it off, but hardly had it reached his stomach when he fell prostrate on the earth. Then she rose and filling two great pairs of saddle-bags with what was light of carriage and great of price of jewels and jacinths and precious stones, together with somewhat of meat and drink, donned harness of war and armed herself for battle. Moreover, she took with her for Noureddin what should rejoice him of rich and royal apparel and splendid arms and armour, and shouldering the bags, (for indeed she was both strong and valiant), went forth of the palace to join her lover.

Night decree.

Meanwhile, the latter sat at the city-gate, with the horses' halters in his hand, till God (to whom belong might and majesty) sent a sleep upon him and he slept, glory be to Him who sleepeth not! Now, in those days, the Kings of the Islands had spent much treasure in bribing folk to steal the two horses or one of them; and there was a black slave, who had been reared in the islands and was skilled in horse-stealing; wherefore the

kings of the Franks bribed him with wealth galore to steal one of the chargers and promised him, if he could avail to steal the two, that they would give him a whole island and invest him with a splendid dress of honour. He had long gone about the city of France in disguise, but availed not to take the horses, whilst they were with the king; but, when he gave them to the vizier and the latter carried them to his own stable, the thief rejoiced with an exceeding joy and made sure of success, saying in himself, 'By the virtue of the Messiah and the True Faith, I will certainly steal them!'

Now he had gone out that very night, intending for the stable, to steal them, but, as he went along, he came upon Noureddin lying asleep, with the halters in his hands. So he went up to the horses and loosing the halters from their heads, was about to mount one of them and drive the other before him, when up came the Princess Meryem, carrying the two pairs of saddle-bags. She took the black for Noureddin and handed him one pair of bags, which he laid on one of the horses: after which she gave him the other pair and he laid it on the other horse, without word said. Then they mounted and rode out of the gate[1] in silence. 'O my lord Noureddin,' quoth she, 'what aileth thee to be silent?' Whereupon the black turned to her and said angrily, 'What sayst thou, O damsel?' When she heard his outlandish speech, she knew that he was not Noureddin: so she looked at him and saw that he was a black slave, snub-nosed and wide-mouthed, with nostrils like ewers; whereupon the light in her eyes became darkness and she said to him, 'Who art thou, O sheikh of the sons of Ham and what is thy name among men?' 'O daughter of the base,' replied

[1] We must suppose the princess to have taken the keys from the drugged vizier or otherwise procured them, as it is stated above that the people of the city trusted to the gates being locked.

he, 'my name is Mesoud, and I steal horses, when folk are asleep.' She made him no answer, but drawing her sabre forthright, smote him on the nape and the blade came out, gleaming, from the tendons of his throat, whereupon he fell to the ground, weltering in his blood, and God hurried his soul to the fire and ill is the abiding-place [to which he went].

Then she took the other horse by the bridle and retraced her steps in search of Noureddin, whom she found lying, asleep and snoring, in the place where she had appointed him to meet her, with the halters in his hand and knowing not his hands from his feet. So she dismounted and gave him a cuff, whereupon he awoke in affright and said to her, 'O my lady, praised be God for thy safe coming!' 'Rise,' answered she, 'and mount this steed and speak not.' So he rose and mounted one of the horses, whilst she bestrode the other, and they went forth the city and rode on awhile in silence. Then said she to him, 'Did I not bid thee beware of sleeping? Verily, he prospers not who sleeps.' 'O my lady,' answered he, 'I slept not but because of the solacement of my heart by reason of thy promise. But what hath happened, O my lady?' So she told him her adventure with the black, and he said, 'Praised be God for safety!'

Then they fared on at full speed, committing their affair to the Subtle, the All-wise and conversing as they went, till they came to the place where the black lay prostrate in the dust, as he were an Afrit, and Meryem said to Noureddin, 'Dismount; strip him of his clothes and take his arms.' 'By Allah, O my lady,' answered he, 'I dare not dismount nor approach him.' And indeed he marvelled at the black's stature and at the valour and stout-heartedness of the princess and praised her for her deed. They fared on lustily all that night and halted not till the day broke and the sun shone out upon the hills

and plains, when they came to a wide champaign, abounding in herbs and fruits of all kinds. Therein were gazelles frisking and birds singing lustily on the branches: its slopes for flowers were like serpents' bellies and many and various were its channels of running water. And indeed it was as saith the poet and saith well and accomplisheth desire:

As 'twere a sun-scorched tract, a valley ruddy-red, With twice the common tale of herbs and flowers o'erspread.
We halted midst its groves, and it above us bent, As o'er a weanling child the nurses bend the head;
And limpid waters sweet, more pleasant than old wine To boon-companion is, to quench our thirst it shed.
It still shut out the sun, from whatsoever side It smote us, but let in the breeze to cool our bed.
Its pebbles fragrant were as maids with trinkets decked And seemed unto the touch like heaps of pearls a-thread.

And as saith another:

When its birds sing in the dawn o'er its limpid lake, El Welhan longs for its sight ere morning break;
For as it were Paradise 'tis with its fragrant gales And its fruits and its streams that run through its shady brake.

Night dccccxci. Here the two lovers alighted to rest and turning the horses loose to pasture in the valley, ate of its fruits and drank of its streams; after which they sat talking and recalling all that had befallen them and complaining one to the other of the anguish of separation and of that which they had suffered for estrangement and love-longing. As they were thus engaged, there arose in the distance a cloud of dust, which spread till it walled the world, and they heard the neighing of horses and clank of arms.

Now the reason of this was, that the king had gone forth at daybreak, to give the vizier and his daughter good-

morrow, after the custom of kings with their daughters [on the morrow of their wedding-night,] taking with him silken stuffs [as a present] and scattering gold and silver among the eunuchs and tire-women, that they might scramble for it: but when he came to the new palace, he and one of his pages, he found the vizier prostrate on the carpet, knowing not his head from his feet, and searched the palace right and left for his daughter, but found her not; whereat he was sore troubled and concerned and his wit forsook him.

Then he called for hot water and frankincense and virgin vinegar and mingling them together, blew the mixture into the vizier's nostrils and shook him, whereupon he cast the henbane forth of his stomach, as it were a piece of cheese. He repeated the injection, whereupon the vizier came to himself and the king questioned him of his case and that of his daughter. 'O mighty king,' answered the vizier, 'I have no knowledge of her save that she poured me out a cup of wine with her own hand; and from that moment to this I have no recollection of aught nor know I what is come of her.' When the king heard this, the light in his eyes became darkness, and he drew his sword and smote the vizier on the head, that the steel came out gleaming from between his teeth. Then he called the grooms and stable-men and demanded the two horses of them; but they said, 'O king, when we awoke in the morning, we found all the doors open and the two chargers missing; and our chief, the master of the horse, is also missing.' Quoth the king, 'By my faith and all wherein my belief is stablished, none but my daughter hath taken the horses, she and the Muslim captive that used to tend the church and who took her aforetime! Indeed I knew him right well and none delivered him from my hand save this one-eyed vizier; but now is he requited his deed.'

Then he called his three sons, who were three doughty champions, each of whom could cope with a thousand horse in the field and the stead of strife, and bade them mount. So they took horse forthwith and the King and the flower of his knights and nobles and officers mounted with them and followed in the track of the fugitives till they came up with them in the valley aforesaid. When Meryem saw them, she mounted her horse and girt on her sword and took her arms. Then she said to Noureddin, 'How is it with thee and how is thy stomach for battle and strife and contention?' Quoth he, 'Verily, my steadfastness in battle is as the steadfastness of the stake in bran.' And he recited the following verses:

I prithee, Meryem, spare me reproaches and despite And do not thou my slaughter or torment long invite.
I whom a raven's croaking affeareth passing sore, How should I be a warrior or have a mind to fight?
Lo, if I but set eyes on a mouse, I quake for fear; Yea, I bepiss my hosen for terror and affright.
Indeed, I love not thrusting except in bed it be: The kaze my pintle's prowess ignoreth not by night.
This is the way of thinking of every prudent man, And who deems not as I do deems otherwise than right.

When she heard his speech and his verses, she laughed and said, 'O my lord Noureddin, abide in thy place and I will keep thee from their mischief, though they be as the sands of the sea in number. But mount and be behind me, and if we be defeated and put to flight, beware of falling, for none can overtake thy charger.' So saying, she couched her lance and gave her horse the rein, whereupon he darted off with her, like the storm-wind or like water poured forth of the straitness of the pipes. Now Meryem was the doughtiest of the folk of her time and the unique pearl of her age; for her father had taught her, whilst she was yet little, to ride on horseback and

plunge into the ocean of battle in the darkness of the night.

When the King saw her pricking towards them, he knew her but too well and said to his eldest son, 'O Bertaut, thou who art surnamed Ras el Killaut,[1] this is certainly thy sister Meryem who charges upon us, and she seeks to do battle and wage war with us. So go thou out to her and give her battle: and I charge thee by the Messiah and the True Faith, if thou get the better of her, kill her not till thou have propounded to her the Nazarene faith. If she return to her old faith, bring her to me prisoner, but, if she refuse, slay her after the foulest fashion and make of her the vilest of examples, as well as of the accursed wretch who is with her.' 'I hear and obey,' replied Bertaut and pricking out forthright to meet his sister, said to her, 'O Meryem, doth not what hath already befallen on thine account suffice thee, but thou must leave the faith of thy fathers and forefathers and follow after the faith of the rovers in the lands, that is to say, the faith of Islam? By the virtue of the Messiah and the True Faith, except thou return to the faith of the kings thy forefathers and walk therein after the goodliest wise, I will put thee to an ill death and make of thee the most shameful of examples!'

She laughed at his speech and replied, 'Avaunt! God forbid that the past should return or that he who is dead should live again! I will make thee drink the sorest of regrets! By Allah, I will not forsake the faith of Mohammed the son of Abdallah, who directed all peoples into the right road, for it is the true faith; nor will I leave the way of righteousness, though I drink the cup of perdition!' When the accursed Bertaut heard this, the light in his

Night dccccxcii.

[1] *i.e.* Head of Killaut. According to the Muhit el Muhit (as quoted by Dozy) Killaut is "the name of a son of the sons of the Jinn and the Satans."

eyes became darkness and there befell a sore battle between them. They swayed to and fro, fighting, throughout the length and breadth of the valley, whilst all eyes were fixed upon them in admiration: after which they wheeled about and foined and feinted a great while, and as often as Bertaut opened on his sister a gate of war,[1] she parried his attack and put it to nought, of the goodliness of her fashion and her strength and skill in horsemanship and the use of arms.

They abode on this wise till the dust hung vaulted over their heads and they were hidden from men's eyes; and she ceased not to baffle Bertaut and stop the way upon him, till he was weary and his courage ebbed and his resolution was broken and his strength weakened; whereupon she smote him on the nape, that the sword came out gleaming from the tendons of his throat and God hurried his soul to the fire and ill is the abiding-place [to which he went]. Then Meryem wheeled about in the mid-field and the stead of strife and offered battle, crying out and saying, 'Who is for fighting? Who is for jousting? Let no sluggard or weakling come forth to me to-day; ay, let none come forth to me but the champions of the enemies of the Faith, that I may give them to drink the cup of ignominious punishment. O worshippers of idols, O misbelievers, O froward folk, verily this day shall the faces of the people of the True Faith be whitened and theirs be blackened who deny the Compassionate One!'

When the king saw his eldest son slain, he smote his face and rent his clothes and called out to his second son, saying, 'O Bertous, thou who art surnamed Khura es Sous,[2] go forth, O my son, in haste and do battle with thy sister Meryem; avenge me thy brother's death on her

[1] *i.e.* attacked her after a new fashion.
[2] *i.e.* Weevils' dung.

and bring her to me a prisoner, abject and humiliated!' 'I hear and obey, O my father,' answered he and setting spurs to his horse, drove at his sister, who met him in mid-career, and they fought, he and she, a sore battle, yet sorer than the first. Bertous soon found himself unable to cope with her and would have sought safety in flight, but could not avail unto this, of the greatness of her prowess; for, as often as he turned to flee, she drove after him and still clave to him and pressed him hard, till presently she smote him with the sword in his throat, that it issued gleaming from his nape, and sent him after his brother. Then she wheeled about in the mid-field, crying out and saying, 'Where are the horsemen? Where are the braves? Where is the one-eyed vizier, the cripple, the man of the crooked[1] faith?'

Thereupon the king her father cried out with a bleeding heart and eyes ulcerated with tears, saying, 'By the virtue of the Messiah and the true faith, she hath killed my second son!' And he cried out to his youngest son, saying, 'O Fusyan, surnamed Selh es Subyan,[2] go forth, O my son, to do battle with thy sister and take of her the blood-revenge for thy brothers and fall on her, come what may; and if thou conquer her, kill her without mercy!' So he pricked out to Meryem, who ran at him with the best of her skill and courage and prowess and said to him, 'O accursed one, O enemy of God and the Muslims, I will assuredly send thee after thy brothers, and woeful is the abiding-place of the unbelievers!' So saying, she drew her sword and smote him and cut off his head and arms and sent him after his brothers and God hurried his soul to the fire and ill is the abiding-place [to which he went].

[1] *i.e.* the false or perverted faith. The Muslims look upon Christianity as a corrupt and obsolete form of Mohammedanism.
[2] *i.e.* Fæces puerorum.

When the knights and horsemen who rode with her father saw his three sons slain, who were the doughtiest of the folk of their day, there fell on their hearts terror of the Princess Meryem and they bowed their heads in affright and confusion and made sure of destruction. So they turned their backs and addressed themselves to flight. When the king saw his sons slain and his troops in full flight, there fell on him dismay and bewilderment and his heart was on fire. 'Verily,' quoth he, 'the Princess Meryem hath the better of us; and if I venture myself and go out against her alone, most like she will overcome me and slay me without pity, even as she slew her brothers, and make of me the foulest of examples; for she hath no longer any desire for us nor have we any hope of her return. Wherefore, meseemeth I were better guard my honour and return to my capital city.' So he gave reins to his horse and returned to the city.

When he found himself in his palace, fire was loosed in his heart for rage and chagrin for the death of his sons and the defeat of his troops and the violation of his honour; nor did he abide half an hour before he summoned his grandees and officers of state and complained to them of that which his daughter had done with him of the slaughter of her brothers and all he suffered of grief and chagrin therefrom, and sought counsel of them. They all counselled him to write to the Vicar of God in His earth, the Commander of the Faithful, Haroun er Reshid, and acquaint him with the case. So he wrote a letter to the Khalif, containing, after the usual salutations, the following words. 'Know that we have a daughter called Meryem, and a Muslim captive, by name Noureddin Ali, son of the merchant Tajeddin of Cairo, hath debauched her from us and taken her by night and gone forth with her to his own country: wherefore I beg of the favour of our

lord the Commander of the Faithful that he write to all the lands of the Muslims to seize her and send her back to us by a trusty messenger of the servants of His Highness. And in requital of thy help in this matter, we will appoint to thee half of the city of Rome the Great, that thou mayst build therein mosques for the Muslims, and the tribute thereof shall be sent to thee.'

Then he folded the letter and calling his vizier, whom he had appointed in the stead of the one-eyed vizier, bade him seal it with the seal of the kingdom, and the officers of state also set their hands and seals thereto; after which the king bade the vizier carry the letter to Baghdad, the abode of peace, and deliver it into the Khalif's own hand, saying, 'If thou bring her back, thou shalt have of me the fiefs of two Amirs and I will bestow on thee a robe of honour with fringes [of gold].' The vizier set out with the letter and fared on over hill and dale, till he came to the city of Baghdad, where he abode three days, till he was rested, when he sought out the palace of the Commander of the Faithful and craved an audience of him. The Khalif bade admit him; so he entered and kissing the ground before him, presented him with the letter of the King of France, together with rich and rare gifts, beseeming the Commander of the Faithful.

When the Khalif read the letter and apprehended its purport, he commanded his viziers to write despatches to all the lands of the Muslims, setting out the name and favour of Noureddin and the princess and bidding all who found them lay hands on them and send them to the Commander of the Faithful, and warning them to use no delay or neglect in that manner. So the viziers wrote the letters and sealing them, despatched them by couriers to the different governors, who hastened to obey the Khalif's commandment and addressed themselves to make search in all the lands for the persons in question.

Meanwhile, Noureddin and Meryem fared on and [God] the Protector protected them, till they came to the land of Syria and entered the city of Damascus. Now the Khalif's messengers had foregone them thither by a day and the governor of Damascus knew that he was commanded to lay hands on them; so, when they entered the city, the police accosted them and asked them their names. They told them the truth and acquainted them with their story, whereupon they knew them for those of whom they were in search and seizing them, carried them before the governor of the city. He despatched them to the city of Baghdad [under escort of some of his officers], who, when they came thither, sought an audience of the Khalif and kissing the earth before him, said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, this is Meryem, daughter of the King of France, and this is the captive Noureddin, son of the merchant Tajeddin of Cairo, who debauched her from her father and fled with her to Damascus, where we came upon them, as they entered the city, and questioned them. They told us the truth of their case: so we laid hands on them and brought them to thee.'

The Khalif looked at Meryem and saw that she was slender and elegant of form and figure, the handsomest of the folk of her day and the unique pearl of her age and her time. Moreover, [he spoke with her and found her] sweet of speech and fluent of tongue, stable of soul and stout of heart. So she kissed the earth before him and wished him continuance of glory and prosperity and cease of evil and enmity. He was charmed with the beauty of her shape and the sweetness of her voice and the quickness of her answers and said to her, 'Art thou Meryem, daughter of the King of France?' 'Yes,' answered she, 'O Commander of the Faithful and High Priest of those that believe in the Unity of God and Defender of the Faith and Cousin of the Prince of Apostles!'

Then the Khalif turned to Noureddin and seeing him to be a comely youth, as he were the shining full moon on its fourteenth night, said to him, 'And thou, art thou Ali Noureddin, son of the merchant Tajeddin of Cairo?' 'Yes, O Commander of the Faithful and stay of those who seek [after righteousness]!' replied he. 'How comes it,' asked the Khalif, 'that thou hast taken this young lady and fled forth with her of her father's kingdom?' So Noureddin proceeded to relate to the Commander of the Faithful all that had befallen him, first and last; whereat the latter was beyond measure astonished and diverted and exclaimed, 'How manifold are the things that men suffer!' Night

Then he turned to the princess and said to her, 'Know, DCCCXCIV. O Meryem, that thy father, the King of France, hath written to me, concerning thee. What sayst thou?' 'O Vicar of God in His earth,' replied she, 'and Executor of His ordinances and the precepts of His prophet, may He vouchsafe thee eternal happiness and preserve thee from evil and enmity! Thou art Vicar of God in His earth and I have entered thy faith, for that it is the true and righteous one, and have left the religion of the infidels, who make the Messiah a liar,[1] and I am become a true believer in God the Bountiful and in the revelation of His compassionate Apostle. I serve God (blessed and exalted be He!) and acknowledge Him to be the One God and prostrate myself humbly before Him and glorify Him; and I say before the Khalif, "Verily, I testify that there is no god but God and I testify that Mohammed is the apostle of God, whom He sent with guidance [into the right way] and the true faith, that he might cause it to prevail over faiths, all of them, in despite of the idolaters."[2] Is it,

[1] By claiming godhead for him. As has been before observed, the Muslims accuse the Christians of having garbled the teachings of Jesus, for the purpose of suppressing all mention of Mohammed.

[2] *Koran* ix. 33.

therefore, permitted to thee, O Commander of the Faithful, to comply with the letter of the king of the heretics and send me back to the land of those who deny the Faith and give partners to the All-wise King, who magnify the Cross and believe in the divinity of Jesus, for all he was [but] a creature? If thou deal thus with me, O Vicegerent of God, I will lay hold upon thy skirts on the day of appearing before God and make my complaint of thee to thy cousin the Apostle of Allah (whom God bless and preserve!) on the day when wealth availeth not neither children [nor aught], except one come unto God with a whole heart.'[1]

'O Meryem,' answered the Khalif, 'God forbid that I should do this ever! How can I send back a Muslim woman and a true believer in the unity of God and in His Apostle to that which they have forbidden?' Quoth she, 'I testify that there is no god but God and that Mohammed is His Apostle!' 'O Meryem,' rejoined the Khalif, 'may God bless and stablish thee in the way of righteousness! Since thou art a Muslim and a believer in the unity of God, I owe thee an imperative duty, and it is that I should never transgress against thee nor forsake thee, though the world full of gold and jewels be lavished unto me on thine account. So be of good heart and cheerful eye and be thy breast dilated and thy mind at ease. Art thou willing that this youth Ali of Cairo should be thy husband and thou his wife?' 'How should I be other than willing,' replied Meryem, 'seeing that he bought me with his money and hath entreated me with the utmost kindness and for crown of his good offices, he hath ventured his life many times for my sake?'

So the Khalif summoned the Cadi and the witnesses and married her to him. Moreover, he assigned her a dowry and caused the grandees of his realm be present at

[1] *Koran* xxvi. 88, 89.

their marriage, and it was a notable day. Then he turned to the French king's vizier, who was present, and said to him, 'Hast thou heard her words? How can I send her back to her father the infidel, seeing that she is a Muslim and a believer in the Unity of God? Belike he will evil entreat her and deal harshly with her, more by token that she hath slain his sons, and I shall be accountable to her therefor on the Day of Resurrection. And indeed quoth God the Most High, "God shall in nowise give the infidels power over the true-believers."[1] So return to thy king and say to him, "Turn from this thing and hope not to come at thy desire thereof."'

Now this vizier was a fool: so he said to the Khalif, 'O Commander of the Fathful, by the virtue of the Messiah and the true faith, were she forty times a Muslim and forty times thereto, I may not depart from thee without Meryem! And if thou send her not back with me of free will, I will return to her father and cause him despatch thee an army, wherewith I will come upon you from the landward and the seaward and the van whereof shall be at your capital city, whilst the rear is yet on the Euphrates, and they shall lay waste thy dominions.' When the Khalif heard these words from the vizier of the King of France, the light in his face became darkness and he was exceeding wroth at his speech and said to him, 'O accursed one, O dog of the Nazarenes, who art thou that thou shouldst dare to come out against me with the King of the Franks?' [Then to his guards,] 'Take this accursed fellow and put him to death;' and he repeated the following verse:

This is the recompense of those Who their superiors' will oppose.

Then he commanded to cut off the vizier's head and burn his body; but Meryem said, 'O Commander of the

[1] *Koran* iv. 140.

Faithful, defile not thy sword with the blood of this accursed wretch.' So saying, she drew her sword and smote him and made his head fly from his body, and he went to the house of perdition; his abode was Gehenna and evil is the abiding-place [to which he went]. The Khalif marvelled at the power of her arm and the strength of her mind, and they carried the dead vizier forth of the palace and burnt him. Then the Commander of the Faithful bestowed upon Noureddin a splendid dress of honour and assigned them a lodging in his palace. Moreover, he appointed them stipends and allowances and commanded to supply them with all that they needed of raiment and furniture and vessels of price.

They sojourned awhile in Baghdad in all delight and solace of life, till Noureddin longed for his mother and father. So he expounded the matter to the Khalif and sought his permission to repair to his native land and visit his kinsfolk, and he granted him the leave he sought and calling for Meryem, commended them to each other. Moreover, he loaded them with costly presents and rarities and bade write letters to the amirs and scribes and notables of Cairo the [God-]guarded, commending Noureddin and his wife and parents to their care and charging them entreat them with the utmost honour.

When the news reached Cairo, the merchant Tajeddin rejoiced in the return of his son and Noureddin's mother likewise rejoiced therein with an exceeding joy. The amirs and notables of the city went forth to meet him, in obedience to the Khalif's injunction, and indeed it was for them a notable day, wherein the lover and the beloved foregathered and the seeker attained the sought. Moreover, all the amirs made them bride-feasts, each on his own day, and rejoiced in them with an exceeding joy and vied with each other in doing them honour. When

Noureddin foregathered with his father and mother, they rejoiced in each other with the utmost joy and care and affliction ceased from them, whilst his parents rejoiced no less in the Princess Meryem and entreated her with the utmost honour. Every day, there came to them presents from all the amirs and great merchants, and they were daily in new delight and gladness exceeding the gladness of festival. Then they abode in joy and pleasance and good cheer and abounding prosperity, eating and drinking and making merry, till there came to them the Destroyer of Delights and Sunderer of Companies, he who layeth waste houses and palaces and peopleth the bellies of the tombs. So they were removed from the world and became of the number of the dead; and glory be to the Living One, who dieth not and in whose hand are the keys of the Seen and the Unseen!

THE MAN OF UPPER EGYPT AND HIS FRANK WIFE.

(Quoth the Amir Shijaeddin, Prefect of New Cairo) We lay one night in the house of a man of Upper Egypt, and he entertained us and entreated us with the utmost hospitality. Now he was an old man, exceeding swarthy of favour, and he had little children, who were white, of a white mingled with red. So we said to him, 'Harkye, such an one, how comes it that these thy children are white, whilst thou thyself art exceeding swarthy?' Quoth he, 'Their mother was a Frank woman, whom I took in the days of El Melik en Nasir Selaheddin,[1] after the battle

[1] *i.e.* Saladin. See note, Vol. IV. p. 116.

of Hittin,[1] when I was a young man.' 'And how gottest thou her?' asked we, and he said, 'I had a rare adventure with her.' Quoth we, 'Favour us with it;' and he answered, 'With all my heart.

Know that I once sowed a crop of flax in these parts and pulled it and scutched it and spent five hundred dinars on it; after which I would have sold it, but could get no more than this [that I had spent] for it, and the folk said to me, "Carry it to Acre: for there thou wilt assuredly make a good profit by it." Now Acre was then in the hands of the Franks;[2] so I carried my flax thither and sold part of it at six months' credit. One day, as I was selling, there came up a Frankish woman, (now it is the custom of the women of the Franks to go about the market-place [and the streets] with unveiled faces,) to buy flax of me, and I saw of her beauty what dazzled my wit. So I sold her somewhat of flax and was easy with her concerning the price; and she took it and went away. Some days after, she returned and bought more flax of me and I was yet easier with her about the price; and she repeated her visits to me, seeing that I was in love with her.

Now she was used to go in company of an old woman: so I said to the latter, "I am sore enamoured of thy mistress. Canst thou contrive to bring me to enjoy her?" Quoth she, "I will contrive this for thee; but the secret must not

[1] Or Tiberias, 23rd June, 1187, the famous battle which led to the downfall of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and in which the King, Gui de Lusignan and his brother Geoffrey, with Renaud de Châtillon and the Grand Masters of the Templars and Hospitallers, were utterly routed and taken prisoners by Saladin.

[2] It was taken from them by Saladin 29th July, 1187. The story-teller states farther on that three years intervened between his visit to Acre and the battle of Hittin, thus fixing the date of the former at (circa) June, 1184.

go beyond us three, and needs must thou be lavish with money, to boot." And I answered, "Though my life were the price of her favours, it were no great matter." So it was agreed that I should pay her fifty dinars and that she should come to me; whereupon I procured the money and gave it to the old woman. She took it and said, "Make ready a place for her in thy house, and she will come to thee this night." So I went home and made ready what I could of meat and drink and wax candles and sweetmeats. Now my house overlooked the sea and it was the season of summer; so I spread the bed on the roof of the house. Night DCCCXCV.

Presently, the Frank woman came and we ate and drank and the night fell down. We lay down under the sky, with the moon shining on us, and fell to watching the reflection of the stars in the sea: and I said to myself, "Art thou not ashamed before God (to whom belong might and majesty!) and thou a stranger, under the heavens and in presence of the sea, to disobey Him with a Nazarene woman and merit the fiery torment?" Then said I, "O my God, I call Thee to witness that I abstain from this Christian woman this night, of shamefastness before Thee and fear of Thy wrath!" So I slept till the morning, and she arose at peep of day and went away, full of anger. I went to my shop and sat there; and presently she passed, as she were the moon, followed by the old woman, who was angry; whereat my heart sank within me and I said to myself, "Who art thou that thou shouldst forbear yonder damsel? Art thou Seri es Seketi or Bishr Barefoot or Junaid of Baghdad or Fuzail ben Iyaz?"[1]

Then I ran after the old woman and said to her,

[1] Celebrated Soufi devotees and ascetics of the second and third centuries of the Hegira. For Bishr Barefoot, see Vol. II. p. 127. Es Seketi means "the old-clothes-man."

"Bring her to me again." "By the virtue of the Messiah," answered she, "she will not return to thee but for a hundred dinars!" Quoth I, "I will give thee a hundred dinars." So I paid her the money and the damsel came to me a second time; but no sooner was she with me than I returned to my former way of thinking and abstained from her and forbore her for the sake of God the Most High. So she went away and I betook me to my shop, and presently the old woman came up, in a rage. Quoth I to her, "Bring her to me again." And she answered, "By the virtue of the Messiah, thou shalt never again rejoice in her presence with thee, except for five hundred dinars, and thou shalt perish miserably!" At this I trembled and resolved to sacrifice the whole price of my flax and ransom myself therewith. But, before I could think, I heard the crier proclaiming and saying, "Ho, all ye Muslims, the truce that was between us and you is expired, and we give all of you who are here a week from this time to make an end of your business and depart to your own country."

So her visits were cut off from me and I betook myself to getting in the price of my flax, that I had sold upon credit, and bartering what remained in my hands for other commodities. Then I took with me goodly merchandise and departing Acre, full of love and longing for the Frankish woman, for that she had taken my heart and my money, repaired to Damascus, where I sold my merchandise, that I had brought from Acre, at a great price, because of the cutting off of communication by reason of the expiry of the truce; and God (blessed and exalted be He!) vouchsafed me a good profit. Then I fell to trafficking in captive slave-girls, thinking thus to ease my heart of its longing for the Frankish woman, and on this wise I abode three years, till there befell between El Melik en Nasir and the Franks what befell of the

battle of Hittin and other encounters and God gave him the victory over them, so that he took all their kings prisoners and opened[1] the cities of the coast[2] by His leave.

One day, after this, there came a man to me and sought of me a slave-girl for El Melik en Nasir. Now I had a handsome girl; so I showed her to him and he bought her of me for a hundred dinars and gave me ninety thereof, leaving ten still due to me, for that there was no more found with the king that day, because he had expended all his treasures in waging war against the Franks. So they took counsel with him and he said, "Carry him to the tent[3] where are the captives and give him his choice among the damsels of the Franks, so he may take one of them for the ten dinars that are due to him." So they brought me to the prisoners' lodging and showed me all who were therein, and I saw amongst them the Frank damsel with whom I had fallen in love at Acre and knew her right well. Night DCCCXCVI.

Now she was the wife of one of the cavaliers of the Franks. So I said, "Give me this one," and carrying her to my tent, said to her, "Dost thou know me?" She answered, "No;" and I said, "I am the flax-merchant with whom thou hadst to do at Acre. Thou tookst money of me and saidst, 'Thou shalt never again see me but for five hundred dinars.' And now thou art become my property for ten dinars." Quoth she, "This is a mystery. Thy faith is the true one, and I testify that there is no god but God and that Mohammed is the

[1] *i.e.* captured.

[2] *Es Sahil*, i.e. the seaboard (ant. Phœnicia) of Palestine, a name sometimes given by the Arabs to the whole province.

[3] Sic Breslau. Saladin seems to have been encamped without Damascus and the slave-merchant had apparently come out and pitched his tent near the camp, for the purposes of his trade.

Apostle of God!" And she made hearty profession of Islam. Then said I to myself, "By Allah, I will not go in to her till I have set her free and acquainted the Cadi, [so he may marry us!]" So I betook myself to Ibn Sheddad[1] and told him what had passed and he married me to her. Then I lay with her that night and she conceived; after which the troops departed and we returned to Damascus.

Presently there came an ambassador from the king of the Franks, to seek the prisoners, according to the treaty between the kings. So El Melik en Nasir restored all the men and women he held in captivity, till there remained but the woman who was with me and the Franks said, "The wife of such an one the knight is not here." So they enquired after her and making instant search for her, found that she was with me; whereupon they demanded her of me and I went in to her, pale and sore concerned; and she said to me, "What ails thee and what hath befallen thee?" Quoth I, "A messenger is come from the king to take all the captives, and they demand thee of me." "Have no fear," answered she; "bring me to the king and I know what to say to him." So I carried her before the Sultan El Melik en Nasir, who was seated, with the ambassador of the king of the Franks on his right hand, and said to him, "This is the woman that is with me."

Then said the king and the ambassador to her, "Wilt thou go to thy country or to[2] thy husband? For God hath loosed thy bonds and those of thy fellows in captivity." Quoth she, "I am become a Muslim and am great with child, as ye may see, and the Franks shall

[1] Behaeddin ibn Sheddad, a well-known legist of the time, after Cadi of Aleppo. He was then Cadi of the army (Judge-Advocate-General) to Saladin.

[2] Quære read (instead of "to") "abide with" thy husband.

have no more profit of me." "Whether is dearer to thee," asked the ambassador, "this Muslim or thy husband the knight such an one?" And she answered him even as she had answered the Sultan. Then said he to the Franks with him, "Heard ye her words?" They answered, "Yes." And he said to me, "Take thy wife and depart with her." So I took her and went away; but the ambassador sent after me in haste and said, "Her mother sent her a charge by me, saying, 'My daughter is a captive and naked: and I would have thee carry her this chest.' So take it thou and deliver it to her."

Accordingly I carried the chest home and gave it to her. She opened it and found in it all her clothes, and therein I saw the two purses of fifty and a hundred dinars, that I had given her, untouched and tied up with my own tying, wherefore I praised God the Most High. These are my children by her and she is yet alive and it was she dressed you this food.' And we marvelled at his story and at that which had befallen him of good fortune, and God [alone] is [All-]knowing.

THE RUINED MAN OF BAGHDAD AND HIS SLAVE-GIRL.

There was once at Baghdad, of old time, a man of condition, who had inherited wealth galore from his father. He fell in love with a slave-girl; so he bought her and she loved him as he loved her; and he ceased not to spend upon her, till all his wealth was gone and nought remained thereof; wherefore he sought a means of getting his livelihood, but availed not thereunto. Now he had been used, in the days of his wealth, to frequent the assemblies of those who were versed in the art of singing and had thus attained to the utmost skill therein.

So he took counsel with one of his friends, who said to him, 'Meseems thou canst not do better than sing, thou and thy slave-girl, [for your living]; for on this wise thou wilt get money in plenty and wilt eat and drink.' But he misliked this, he and the damsel, and she said to him, 'I have bethought me of a means of relief for thee.' 'What is it?' asked he and she said, 'Do thou sell me; so shall we win quit of this strait, thou and I, and I shall be in affluence; for none will buy the like of me save a man of fortune, and with this I will contrive for my return to thee.'

So he carried her to the market and the first who saw her was a Hashimi[1] of Bassora, a man of taste and breeding and generosity, who bought her for fifteen hundred dinars. (Quoth the young man, the girl's owner), When I had received the price, I repented me and wept, I and the damsel; and I sought to cancel the sale; but the purchaser would not consent. So I took the money in a bag, knowing not whither I should go, now my house was desolate of her, and buffeted my face and wept and wailed as I had never done. Then I entered a mosque and sat weeping, till I was stupefied and losing my senses, fell asleep, with the bag of money under my head for a pillow. Presently, before I could be ware, a man pulled the bag from under my head and ran off with it: whereupon I started up in affright and would have run after him; but lo, my feet were bound with a rope and I fell on my face. So I fell a-weeping and buffeting myself, saying, 'Thy soul[2] hath left thee and thy wealth is lost!'

Night dccccxcvii.

[1] A descendant of Hashim, great-grandfather of Mohammed, and therefore a kinsman of the Abbaside Khalifs, who were directly descended from him. The Khalifs of the Ommiade dynasty were somewhat less directly akin to the Prophet, being the descendants of Hashim's brother, Abdusshems.

[2] *i.e.* beloved one.

Then, of the excess of my chagrin, I betook myself to the Tigris and wrapping my face in my gown, cast myself into the river.

The bystanders saw me and said, 'Sure, [he hath done] this because of some great trouble that hath betided him.' So they cast themselves in after me and bringing me ashore, questioned me of my case. I told them what had befallen me and they condoled with me. Then an old man of them came to me and said, 'Thou hast lost thy money, but why goest thou about to do away thy life and become of the people of the fire?[1] Arise, come with me, that I may see thine abode.' So I went with him to my house and he sat with me awhile, till I became calmer, when I thanked him and he went away. When he was gone, I was like to kill myself, but bethought me of the life to come and the fire; so I fled forth my house to one of my friends and told him what had befallen me. He wept for pity of me and gave me fifty dinars, saying, 'Take my advice and go out forthright from Baghdad and let this provide thee till thy heart be diverted from the love of her and thou forget her. Thou art a man of letters and clerkship and thy handwriting is good and thy breeding excellent: seek out, then, whom thou wilt of the viceroys[2] and throw thyself on his bounty. It may be God will reunite thee with thy slave-girl.'

I hearkened to his words (and indeed my mind was fortified and I was somewhat comforted) and resolved to betake myself to Wasit,[3] where I had kinsfolk. So I went down to the river-side, where I saw a ship moored and the sailors carrying goods and rich stuffs on board. I asked them to take me with them and carry me to Wasit; but they replied, 'We cannot do that, for the ship belongs to

[1] *i.e.* of those destined to hell.

[2] Or governors of provinces.

[3] A town of Irak Arabi, between Baghdad and Bassora.

a Hashimi.' However, I tempted them with [promise of] reward, and they said, 'We cannot take thee on this fashion;[1] if it must be, put off those fine clothes of thine and don sailors' clothes and sit with us, as thou wert one of us.' So I went away and buying sailors' clothes, put them on; after which I bought me somewhat of victual [for the voyage] and returning to the vessel, which was bound for Bassora, embarked with the crew.

Before long I saw my slave-girl herself [come on board], attended by two waiting-women; whereupon my chagrin subsided and I said in myself, 'Now shall I see her and hear her singing, till we come to Bassora.' Soon after, up rode the Hashimi, with a party of folk, and they embarked in the ship, which dropped down the river with them. Presently the Hashimi brought out food and ate with the damsel, whilst the rest ate amidships. Then said he to her, 'How long wilt thou abstain from singing and persist in this mourning and weeping? Thou art not the first that hath been parted from a beloved one.' Wherefore I knew what she suffered for love of me. Then he hung a curtain before her in the side of the ship and calling those who ate apart, sat down with them without the curtain; and I enquired concerning them and behold, they were his brethren.[2] Then he set before them what they needed of wine and dessert, and they ceased not to press the damsel to sing, till she called for the lute and tuning it, sang the following verses:

The company have passed away with those whom I adore; By night they went nor to depart with my desire forbore.
And since their caravan fared hence, live coals of tamarisk-wood Within the lover's heart rage high and higher evermore.

Then weeping overpowered her and she threw down the

[1] *i.e.* clad as thou art.
[2] *i.e.* his kinsfolk of the Hashimi family or perhaps his clients.

lute and left singing; whereat the folk were troubled and I fell down in a swoon. They thought I was possessed[1] and one of them fell to reciting exorcisms in my ear; nor did they cease to comfort her and beseech her to sing, till she tuned the lute again and sang these verses:

I stand lamenting travellers who bound their burdens on; Within my heart their dwelling is, though far away they're gone.
Hard by the ruined camp I stand and question it of them: Waste is the camping-place and void the dwellings thereupon.

Then she fell down in a swoon and weeping arose amongst the folk; and I also cried out and fainted away. The sailors were vexed with me and one of the Hashimi's servants said to them, 'How came ye to take this madman on board?' So they said to each other, 'When we come to the next village, we will put him ashore and rid us of him.' When I heard this, I was sore troubled and summoned up all my courage, saying to myself, 'Nothing will serve me to deliver myself from their hands, except I make shift to acquaint her with my presence in the ship, so she may prevent my putting out.'

Then we sailed on till eventide, when we came to a hamlet[2] and the captain said, 'Come, let us go ashore.' So they all landed, [leaving me in the ship]: whereupon I rose and going behind the curtain took the lute and changed its accord, course[3] by course, and tuning it after a fashion of my own,[4] that she had learnt of me, returned

[1] Of a genie, the common Eastern explanation of an epileptic fit.
[2] Or farm. [3] Or perhaps "mode" (*teriketh*).
[4] Most of the great Arab musicians had their own peculiar fashion of tuning the lute, for the purpose of extending its register or facilitating the accompaniment of songs composed in uncommon keys and rhythms or possibly of increasing its sonority, and it appears to have been a common test of the skill of a great musician, such as Ishac el Mausili or his father Ibrahim, to require him to accompany a difficult song on a

Night dccccxcviii. to my place in the ship. Presently, they came on board again and the moon shone out upon the river and bank. Then said the Hashimi to the damsel, 'God upon thee, trouble not our lives!' So she took the lute, and touching it with her hand, gave a sob, that they thought her soul had departed [her body], and said, 'By Allah, my master is with us in the ship!' 'By Allah,' answered the Hashimi, 'were this so, I would not forbid him our company! Haply he would lighten thy chagrin, so we might enjoy thy singing: but it cannot be that he is on board.' But she said, 'I cannot sing nor play whilst my lord is with us.' Quoth the Hashimi, 'Let us ask the sailors.' And she said, 'Do so.' So he questioned them, saying, 'Have ye carried any one with you?' And they said, 'No.'

Then I feared lest the enquiry should end there; so I laughed and said, 'Yes; I am her master and taught her, when I was her lord.' 'By Allah,' said she, 'that is my lord's voice!' So the servants carried me to the Hashimi, who knew me at once and said to me, 'Out on thee! What plight is this in which I see thee and what hath brought thee to this pass?' So I told him all that had befallen of my affair, weeping the while, and the damsel wailed aloud from behind the curtain. The Hashimi wept sore, he and his brethren, for pity of me, and he said, 'By Allah, I have not drawn near the damsel nor lain with her, nor have I even heard her sing till this day! I am a man to whom God hath been bountiful and I came to Baghdad but to hear singing and seek my allowances of the Com-

lute purposely untuned. As a (partial) modern instance of the practice referred to in the text, may be cited Paganini's custom of lowering or raising the G string of the violin in playing certain of his own compositions. According to the Kitab el Aghani, Ishac el Mausili is said to have familiarized himself, by incessant practice, with the exact sounds produced by each division of the strings of the four-course lute of his day, under every imaginable circumstance of tuning.

mander of the Faithful. I accomplished both my occasions and being about to return home, said to myself, "Let us hear somewhat of the singing of Baghdad." Wherefore I bought this damsel, knowing not how it was with you both; and I take God to witness that, when I reach Bassora, I will free her and marry her to thee and assign you what shall suffice you, and more: but on condition that, whenever I have a mind to hear music, a curtain shall be hung for her and she shall sing to me from behind it, and thou shalt be of the number of my brethren and boon-companions.'

At this I rejoiced and he put his head within the curtain and said to her, 'Will that content thee?' Whereupon she fell to blessing and thanking him. Then he called a servant and said to him, 'Take this young man and do off his clothes and clothe him in costly raiment and incense him[1] and bring him back to us.' So the servant did with me as his master bade him and brought me back to him, and he set wine before me, even as before the rest of the company. Then the damsel fell to singing after the goodliest fashion and chanted these verses:

They rail at me because, upon the parting day, I wept, when my belov'd farewell to me did say.
They never knew the taste of severance nor felt The fire that in my breast for sorrow rageth aye.
Only th' afflicted one of passion knoweth, he Whose heart amongst these steads is lost and gone astray.

The folk rejoiced in her song with an exceeding joy and my gladness redoubled, so that I took the lute from her and preluding after the most melodious fashion, sang the following verses:

[1] *i.e.* perfume his clothes and person with the fragrant smoke of burning aloes-wood or ambergris, a common practice among the Arabs.

Ask favours, if thou needs must ask, of generous men, Who affluence all their lives have known and happy fate.
O' the generous to ask brings honour, but upon The asking from a churl blame and dishonour wait.
When thou must needs abase thyself, if thou must ask, I rede thee still abase thyself unto the great.[1]
The generous to exalt no true abasement is; To magnify the mean doth men humiliate.

The company rejoiced in me with an exceeding joy and they ceased not from pleasure and delight, whilst anon I sang and anon the damsel, till we came to one of the landing-places, where the vessel moored and all on board went ashore and I with them. Now I was drunken with wine and squatted down to make water; but drowsiness overcame me and I slept, and the folk returned to the ship, without missing me, for that they also were drunken, and continued their voyage till they reached Bassora. As for me, I slept on till the heat of the sun aroused me, when I arose and looked about me, but saw no one. Now I had given my spending-money to the damsel and had not a rap left. Moreover, I had forgotten to ask the Hashimi his name and titles and where his house was at Bassora; so I was confounded and it was as if my joy at meeting the damsel had been but a dream; and I abode in perplexity till there came up a great vessel, in which I embarked and she carried me to Bassora.

Now I had never entered the place and knew none
Night there; so I accosted a grocer and taking of him inkhorn
dccccxix. and paper, sat down to write. He admired my handwriting and seeing my dress soiled, questioned me of my case, to which I replied that I was a stranger and poor. Quoth he, 'Wilt thou abide with me and order the accounts of my shop and I will give thee thy food and clothing and half a dirhem a day?' 'It is well,' answered I and abode

[1] *i.e.* not unto the mean.

with him and kept his accounts and ordered his incomings and outgoings for a month, at the end of which time he found his receipts increased and his expenses lessened; wherefore he thanked me and made my wage a dirhem a day. When the year was out, he proposed to me to marry his daughter and become his partner in the shop. I agreed to this and went in to my wife and applied me to the shop. But I was broken in heart and spirit, and grief was apparent upon me; and the grocer used to drink and invite me thereto, but I refused for melancholy.

On this wise I abode two years, till, one day, as I sat in the shop, there passed by a company of people with meat and drink, and I asked the grocer what was to do. Quoth he, 'This is the day of the pleasure-makers, when all the musicians and dancers of the town go forth with the young men of fortune to the banks of the Ubulleh river[1] and eat and drink among the trees there.' My heart prompted me to divert myself with the sight of this thing and I said in myself, 'Belike, I may foregather with her I love among these people.' So I told the grocer that I had a mind to this and he said, 'Up and go with them.' And he made me ready meat and drink and I went till I came to the Ubulleh river, when, behold, the folk were going away.

I was about to follow, when I espied the very bark in which the Hashimi had been with the damsel going along the river and the captain in her. So I cried out to him and he and his company knew me and took me on board with them and said to me, 'Art thou yet alive?' And they embraced me and questioned me of my case. So I told them my story and they said, 'Indeed, we thought

[1] A canal so called, branching off from the Tigris and leading from Bassora to an adjacent town of the same name. Its banks are a favourite pleasure-resort of the townsfolk, and it is said by the Arabs to be one of the four most delightful places in the world, the three others being situate at Damascus, Shiraz and Samarcand respectively.

that drunkenness had gotten the mastery of thee and that thou [hadst fallen into the water and] wast drowned.' Then I asked them of the damsel, and they answered, 'When she came to know of thy loss, she rent her clothes and burnt the lute and fell to buffeting herself and lamenting, till we reached Bassora, when we said to her, 'Leave this weeping and sorrowing.' Quoth she, 'I will don black and make me a tomb beside the house and abide thereby and repent from singing.' So we suffered her to do this and on this wise she abideth to this day.'

Then they carried me to the Hashimi's house, where I saw the damsel as they had said. When she saw me, she gave a great cry, methought she had died, and I embraced her with a long embrace. Then said the Hashimi to me, 'Take her.' And I answered, 'It is well: but do thou free her and marry her to me, according to thy promise.' So he did this and gave us costly goods and store of raiment and furniture and five hundred dinars, saying, 'This is the amount of that which I purpose to allow you monthly, but on condition that thou be my boon-companion and that I hear the girl sing [when I will].' Moreover, he assigned us a house and bade transport thither all that we needed; so, when I went to the house, I found it full of furniture and stuffs and carried the damsel thither. Then I betook me to the grocer and told him all that had befallen me, begging him to hold me excused for putting away his daughter, without offence on her part; and I paid her her dowry[1] and what else behoved me.[2] I abode with the Hashimi on this wise

[1] *i.e.* the contingent dowry. The dowry agreed for on an Arab marriage consists of two parts, one paid down on consummation and the other agreed to be paid to the wife, contingently upon her being divorced by her husband.

[2] *i.e.* the cost of her maintenance during the four months which must, according to Muslim law, elapse before she could marry again.

two years and became a man of great wealth and was restored well-nigh to the former estate of prosperity wherein I had been at Baghdad, I and the damsel. And indeed God the Bountiful put an end to our troubles and vouchsafed us abundant good fortune and caused our patience to issue in the attainment of our desire: wherefore to Him be the praise in this world and the next.

KING JELYAAD OF HIND AND HIS VIZIER SHIMAS; WHEREAFTER ENSUETH THE HISTORY OF KING WIRD KHAN, SON OF KING JELYAAD, WITH HIS WOMEN AND VIZIERS.

There was once, of old days and in bygone ages and times, in the land of Hind, a mighty king, tall and goodly of parts and presence, noble and generous of nature, beneficent to the poor and loving the tillers of the soil and all the people of his kingdom. His name was Jelyaad and under his hand were two-and-seventy [vassal] kings and in his cities three hundred and fifty Cadis. He had threescore and ten viziers and over every ten of them he set a chief. The chiefest of all his viziers was a man called Shimas, who was then[1] two-and-twenty years old, a man of comely presence and noble nature, pleasant of speech and quick in reply. Moreover, he was shrewd and skilful in all manner of business, for all his tender age, sagacious, a man of good counsel and government, versed in all arts and sciences and accomplishments; and the king loved him with an exceeding love and cherished him by reason of his proficiency in eloquence and rhetoric and the art of government and for that which God had given

[1] *i.e.* at the time of commencement of the story.

him of compassion and tender solicitude for the people; for he was a king just in his governance and a protector of his subjects, constant in beneficence to great and small and giving them that which befitted them of good governance and bounty and protection and security and a lightener of their burdens. And indeed he was loving to them all, high and low, entreating them with kindness and clemency and governing them on such goodly wise as none had done before him. But, with all this, God the Most High had not blessed him with a child, and this was grievous to him and to the people of his kingdom.

It chanced, one night, as the king lay in his bed, occupied with anxious thought of the issue of the affair of his kingdom, that sleep overcame him and he dreamt that he poured water upon the roots of a tree, about which were many other trees; and behold there came fire out of this tree and burnt up all that encompassed it; whereupon Jelyaad awoke, affrighted and trembling, and calling one of his servants, bade him fetch the Vizier Shimas in all haste. So he betook himself to Shimas and said to him, 'The king calls for thee, for he hath awoke from his sleep in affright and hath sent me to bring thee to him in haste.'

Night DCCCC.

When Shimas heard this, he arose forthright and going in to the king, found him seated on his bed. So he prostrated himself before him, wishing him continuance of glory and prosperity, and said, 'May God not cause thee grieve, O king! What hath troubled thee this night, and what is the cause of thy seeking me thus in haste?' The king bade him be seated and said to him, 'I have dreamt this night a dream that terrified me, and it was, that methought I poured water upon the roots of a tree and as I was thus engaged, behold, fire issued therefrom and burnt up all the trees that were about it; wherefore I was affrighted and fear took me. Then I awoke and sent to bid thee to me, because of thy much knowledge

and skill in the interpretation of dreams and of that which I know of the extent of thy wisdom and the greatness of thine understanding.'

The vizier bowed his head awhile and presently raising it, smiled; whereupon the king said to him, 'What deemest thou, O Shimas? Tell me the truth of the matter and hide nothing from me.' 'O king,' answered Shimas, 'verily God the Most High granteth thee thy wish and solaceth thine eyes; for the matter of this dream presageth all good, to wit, that God will bless thee with a son, who shall inherit the kingdom from thee, after thy long life. But there is somewhat else that I desire not to expound at this present, seeing that the time is not favourable for its exposition.' The king rejoiced in this with an exceeding joy and great was his contentment; his trouble ceased from him and he said, 'If the case be thus of the happy presage of my dream, do thou complete to me its interpretation, when the fitting time cometh: for that which it behoveth not to expound to me now, it behoveth that thou expound to me, when its time cometh, so my joy may be fulfilled, because I seek nought in this but the approof of God, blessed and exalted be He!'

When the vizier saw that the king was urgent to have the rest of the exposition, he put him off with a pretext; but Jelyaad assembled all the astrologers and interpreters of dreams of his realm and related to them his dream, saying, 'I desire you to tell me the true interpretation of this.' Whereupon one of them came forward and craved the king's leave to speak, which being granted, he said, 'Know, O king, that thy Vizier Shimas is nowise unable to the interpretation of this thy dream; but he shrank from troubling thy repose: wherefore he expounded not unto thee the whole thereof: but, if thou bid me speak, I will acquaint thee with that which he hid from thee.' 'Speak without fear, O interpreter,' replied Jelyaad, 'and

be truthful in thy speech.' 'Know then, O king,' said the interpreter, 'that there will be born to thee a son who shall inherit the kingship from thee, after thy long life; but he shall not order himself towards the folk after thy fashion, but shall transgress thine ordinances and oppress thy subjects, and there shall befall him what befell the mouse with the cat.'[1] 'I seek refuge with God the Most High!' exclaimed the king. 'But what is the story of the cat and the mouse?' 'May God prolong the king's life!' replied the interpreter. 'It is related that

THE CAT AND THE MOUSE.

A grimalkin, that is to say, a cat, went out one night to a certain garden, in quest of what she might devour, but found nothing and became weak for the excess of cold and rain that prevailed that night. As she prowled about in search of prey, she espied a nest at the foot of a tree, and drawing near unto it, sniffed and purred about it till she scented a mouse within and went round about it, seeking to enter and take the mouse. When the latter smelt the cat, it turned its back to her and scraped up the earth with its paws, to stop the door against her; whereupon she counterfeited a weak voice and said, "Why dost thou thus, O my brother? I come to seek refuge with thee, hoping that thou wilt take pity on me and shelter me in thy nest this night; for I am weak, because of the greatness of my age and the loss of my strength, and can hardly move. I have ventured into this garden to-night, and how many a time have I

[1] Sic in all three texts; but the passage should read, "what befell the cat with the mouse," *i.e.* the reward of tyranny. See post, sequel of the story of the Cat and the Mouse.

prayed for death, that I might be at rest from this misery! Behold, here am I at thy door, prostrate for cold and wet, and I beseech thee, by Allah, take my hand of thy charity and bring me in with thee and give me shelter in the vestibule of thy nest; for I am a stranger and wretched and it is said, 'Whoso shelters a stranger and a wretched one in his dwelling, his shelter shall be Paradise on the Day of Reckoning.' And thou, O my brother, it behoves thee to earn a recompense [from God] by succouring me and suffering me abide with thee this night till the morning, when I will go my way." Night
"How shall I suffer thee enter my nest," answered the dccccl.
mouse, "seeing that thou art my natural enemy and thy food is of my flesh? Indeed I fear lest thou play me false, for that is of thy nature and there is no faith in thee, and the byword says, 'It befits not to entrust a whoremonger with a fair woman nor a needy man with money nor fire with firewood.' Neither doth it behove me to entrust myself to thee; and it is said, 'Enmity of kind grows stronger, as the enemy himself grows weaker.'"

The cat made answer in a very faint voice, as she were in the most piteous case, saying, "What thou sayest of admonitory instances is the truth and I deny not my offences against thee; but I beseech thee to forgive that which is past of the enmity of kind between thee and me; for it is said, 'Whoso forgiveth a creature like himself, his Creator will forgive him his sins.' It is true that I was thy sometime enemy, but to-day I am a suitor for thy friendship, and it is said, 'If thou wilt have thine enemy be thy friend, do with him good.' O my brother, I swear to thee by Allah and make a binding covenant with thee that I will never do thee hurt, more by token that I have no power unto this; wherefore do thou trust in God and do good and accept my oath and covenant." "How can

I accept the covenant of one between whom and me there is a rooted enmity," rejoined the mouse, "and whose wont it is to deal treacherously by me? Were the feud between us aught but one of blood, this were easy to me; but it is an enmity of kind between souls, and it is said, 'He who trusts himself to his enemy is as one who puts his hand into a viper's mouth.'" Quoth the cat, full of wrath, "My breast is straitened and my soul faints within me: indeed I am in extremity and ere long I shall die at thy door and my blood will be on thy head, for that thou hadst it in thy power to save me: and this is my last word to thee."

With this the fear of God the Most High overcame the mouse and pity took hold upon his heart and he said in himself, "Whoso would have the succour of God the Most High against his enemy, let him entreat him with compassion and kindness. I commit myself to God in this matter and will deliver this cat from this her strait and earn the reward [of God] for her." So he went forth and dragged the cat into his nest, where she abode till she was rested and somewhat restored, when she began to bewail her weakness and loss of strength and lack of friends. The mouse entreated her friendly and comforted her and busied himself with her service; but she crept along till she got command of the issue of the nest, lest the mouse should escape. So, when the latter would have gone out, after his wont, he drew near the cat; whereupon she seized him and taking him in her claws, began to bite him and shake him and take him in her mouth and lift him up and throw him down and run after him and crunch him and torture him.

The mouse cried out for help, beseeching God of deliverance, and began to upbraid the cat, saying, "Where is the covenant thou madest with me and where are the oaths thou sworest to me? Is this my reward from thee?

I brought thee into my nest and trusted myself to thee: but he speaks sooth who says, 'He who relies on his enemy's promise desireth not salvation for himself.' And again, 'Whoso trusts himself to his enemy merits his own destruction.' Yet do I put my trust in my Creator, for He will deliver me from thee." The cat was about to pounce on him and devour him, when up came a huntsman, with hunting dogs trained to the chase. One of the dogs passed by the mouth of the nest and hearing a great scuffling within, thought there was a fox there, tearing somewhat; so he thrust into the hole, to get at him, and coming upon the cat, seized on her. When she found herself in the dog's clutches, she was forced to take thought to herself and loosed the mouse alive and whole of wound. Then the dog broke her neck and dragging her forth of the hole, threw her down dead: and thus was exemplified the truth of the saying, "He who hath compassion, compassion shall be shown him at the last; and he who oppresseth shall presently be oppressed."

This, then, O king,' added the interpreter, 'is what befell the cat and the mouse and teaches that none should break faith with those who put trust in him; for whoso doth perfidy and treason, there shall befall him the like of that which befell the cat. As a man meteth, so shall it be meted unto him, and he who betaketh himself unto good shall gain his reward [in the world to come]. But grieve thou not, neither let this trouble thee, O king, for that most like thy son, after his tyranny and oppression, will return to the goodliness of thy policy. And I would that learned man, thy Vizier Shimas, had concealed from thee nought in that which he expounded unto thee; and this had been well-advised of him, for it is said, "Those of the folk who most abound in fear are the amplest of them in knowledge and the most emulous of good."'

The king received the interpreter's speech with sub-

mission and dismissing him and his fellows with rich presents, withdrew to his own apartments and fell to musing over the issue of his affair. When the night came, he went in to one of his women, who was most in favour with him and dearest to him of them all, and lay with her: and before four months had passed over her, the child stirred in her belly, whereat she rejoiced with an exceeding joy and told the king. Quoth he, 'My dream said sooth, by God the Helper!' And he lodged her in the goodliest of lodgings and bestowed on her store of rich gifts and entreated her with all honour. Then he sent for his Vizier Shimas and told him what had betided, rejoicing and saying, 'My dream is come true and I have attained my hope. It may be this child will be a son and inherit the kingship after me; what sayst thou of this, O Shimas?' But he was silent and made no reply. Quoth the king, 'What ails thee that thou rejoicest not in my joy and returnest me no answer? Doth the thing mislike thee, O Shimas?'

Thereupon the vizier prostrated himself before him and said, 'O king, may God prolong thy life! What availeth it to sit under the shade of a tree, if there issue fire therefrom, and what is the delight of one who drinketh pure wine, if he be choked withal, and what doth it profit to quench one's thirst with sweet cool water, if one be drowned therein? I am God's servant and thine, O king; but there are three things whereof it befits not the understanding to speak, till they be accomplished; to wit, the traveller, till he return from his journey, the man who is at war, till he have overcome his enemy, and the pregnant woman, till she have cast her burden. For know, O king, that he, who speaks of aught before it be accomplished, is like the fakir and the pot of butter.' 'What is the story of the fakir,' asked the king, 'and what happened to him?' 'O king,' answered the vizier,

Night dccccii.

THE FAKIR AND HIS POT OF BUTTER.

'A fakir abode once with one of the nobles of a certain town, who made him a daily allowance of three cakes of bread and a little butter and honey. Now butter was dear in those parts and the fakir laid all that came to him together in a pot he had, till he filled it and hung it up over his head for safe keeping. One night, as he sat on his bed, with his staff in his hand, he fell a-musing upon the butter and the greatness of its price and said in himself, "Needs must I sell all this butter I have and buy an ewe with the price and take to partner therein a husbandman who has a ram. The first year she will bear a male lamb and a female and the second the like, and these in their turn will bear others, nor will they give over bearing males and females, till they become a great matter. The males I will sell and buy with them bulls and cows, which will also engender and multiply and become many.

Then will I take my share and sell thereof what I will and buy such a piece of land and plant a garden therein and build thereon a great palace. Moreover, I will get me clothes and raiment and slaves and slave-girls and take me to wife the daughter of such a merchant and hold a wedding the like whereof was never seen. I will slaughter cattle and make rich meats and sweetmeats and confections and provide flowers and perfumes and all manner sweet herbs and assemble all the musicians and mimes and mountebanks and player-folk. Then will I bid rich and poor and the learned and captains and grandees, and whoso asks for aught, I will cause it to be brought him. Moreover, I will make ready all manner of meat and drink and send out a crier to cry aloud and

say, 'Whoso seeketh aught, let him [come and] get it.' Then will I go in to my bride, after they have unveiled her before me, and enjoy her beauty and grace; and I will eat and drink and make merry and say to myself, 'Now hast thou attained thy desire,' and will rest from devotion and asceticism.

In due time my wife will bear me a boy, and I shall rejoice in him and make banquets in his honour and rear him delicately and teach him philosophy and mathematics and polite letters.[1] So shall I make his name renowned among the folk and glory in him among the assemblies of the learned. I will enjoin him to do good and he shall not gainsay me, and I will forbid him from lewdness and iniquity and exhort him to the fear of God and the practice of righteousness. Moreover, I will bestow on him rich and goodly gifts, and if I see him assiduous in obedience, I will redouble in my bounties towards him: but, if I see him incline unto disobedience, I will come down on him with this staff." So saying, he raised his hand, to beat his son, but the staff struck the pot of butter, that hung over his head, and broke it; whereupon the potsherds fell upon him and the butter ran down upon his head and beard. So his clothes and bed were spoiled and he became an admonition to whoso will profit by admonition. Wherefore, O king,' added the vizier, 'it behoves not a man to speak of aught ere it come to pass.' 'Thou sayst sooth,' answered the king, 'fair fall thee for a vizier! For thou speakest the truth and counsellest righteousness. Verily, thy rank with me is such as thou couldst wish[2] and thou shalt never cease to have acceptance with me.'

The vizier prostrated himself before the king and wished him continuance of prosperity, saying, 'May God prolong

[1] Syn. good breeding or manners (*adeb*).
[2] *i.e.* I hold thee in such esteem as thou deservest.

thy days and exalt thy dignity! Know that I conceal from thee nought, neither in private nor in public; thy pleasure is my pleasure, and thy wrath my wrath. There is no joy for me but in thy joyance and I cannot sleep, if thou be angered against me, for that God the Most High hath vouchsafed me all good through thy bounties to me; wherefore I beseech Him to guard thee with His angels and make fair thy reward, whenas thou meetest Him.' The king rejoiced in this, and Shimas arose and went out from before him.

In due time the king's wife gave birth to a male child, and the messengers hastened to bear the glad tidings to the king, who rejoiced therein with an exceeding joy and offered up abundant thanks to God, saying, 'Praised be God who hath vouchsafed me a son, after I had despaired! For He is pitiful and tenderly solicitous over His servants.' Then he wrote to all the people of his dominions, acquainting them with the good news and bidding them to his capital; and great were the rejoicings and festivities in all the kingdom. So there came amirs and captains and grandees and sages and men of learning and philosophers from all quarters to the palace and presenting themselves before the king, company after company, according to their several ranks, gave him joy, and he bestowed largesse upon them. Then he signed to the seven chief viziers, whose head was Shimas, to speak, each after the measure of his knowledge, upon the matter in question.

So the Grand Vizier Shimas began and sought leave of the king to speak, which being granted, he spoke as follows. 'Praised be God who brought us forth of nothingness into being and who favoureth His servants with kings who observe justice and equity in that wherewith He hath invested them of dominion and deal righteously with that which He appointeth at their hands

of provision for their subjects; and especially our king, by whom He hath quickened the deadness of our land, with that which He hath conferred upon us of bounties, and hath blessed us, of His protection, with ease of life and tranquillity and justice! What king did ever with his people that which this king hath done with us in making provision for our needs and giving us our dues and doing us justice, each of the other, and in unfailing carefulness over us and redress of our grievances? Indeed, it is of the bounty of God to the people that their king be assiduous in ordering their affairs and in defending them from their enemies; for the end of the enemy's intent is to subdue his enemy and hold him in his hand; and many peoples[1] bring their sons unto kings, servant-wise, and they become with them in the stead of slaves, to the intent that they may repel enemies from them.[2] As for us, no enemy hath trodden our soil in our king's time, by reason of this great good fortune and exceeding happiness, that none may avail to describe, for indeed it passeth description. And verily, O king, thou art worthy of this exceeding happiness, and we are under thy safeguard and in the shadow of thy wings, may God make fair thy reward and prolong thy life!

Indeed, we have long been diligent in supplication to God the Most High that He would vouchsafe an answer to our prayers and continue thee to us and grant thee a virtuous son, to be the solace of thine eyes: and now God (blessed and exalted be He!) hath accepted of us and answered our prayer and brought us speedy relief, even as He did to the fishes in the pond of water.' 'And how was that?' asked the king. 'Know, O king,' answered Shimas, 'that

Night dccccliii.

[1] The Breslau Edition reads "Turks" in lieu of "many peoples."
[2] *i.e.* the parents.

THE FISHES AND THE CRAB.

There was once a pond of water, wherein dwelt a number of fish, and it befell that the water of the pond dwindled and shrank away, till there remained barely enough to suffice them and they were nigh upon death and said, "What will become of us? How shall we do and of whom shall we seek counsel for our deliverance?" Quoth one of them, who was the chiefest of them in wit and age, "There is nothing will serve us but that we seek deliverance of God; but, come, let us go to the crab and seek his counsel, for indeed he is the chiefest and wisest of us all." They all approved of the fish's advice and betook themselves to the crab, whom they found squatted in his hole, without news or knowledge of their strait. So they saluted him and said to him, "O our lord, doth not our affair concern thee, who art our ruler and our chief?" The crab returned their salutation, saying, "And on you be peace! What aileth you and what is your want?" So they told him the strait in which they were by reason of the shrinking of the water, and that, when it should be altogether dried up, destruction would betide them. "Wherefore," added they, "we come to thee, expecting thy counsel, so haply deliverance may be therein, for thou art the chiefest and most experienced of us."

The crab bowed his head awhile and said, "Doubtless ye lack understanding, in that ye despair of the mercy of God the Most High and His care for the provision of all His creatures. Know ye not that God (blessed and exalted be He!) provideth all his creatures without stint and that He fore-ordained their means of livelihood ere He created aught and appointed to each of His creatures a fixed term of life and an allotted provision, of His

divine providence? How then shall we burden ourselves with concern for a thing that is written in His secret purpose? Wherefore, it is my judgment that ye can do no better than to seek aid of God the Most High, and it behoveth each of us to make clean his conscience with his Lord, both in public and private, and pray Him to succour us and deliver us from our strait; for God the Most High disappointeth not the expectation of those who put their trust in Him and rejecteth not the suit of those who supplicate Him. When we have mended our ways, our affairs will prosper and all will be well with us, and when the winter cometh and our land is deluged, by means of our effectual prayer, He will not undo the good He hath built up. So it is my counsel that we take patience and await what God shall do with us. If death come to us, we shall be at rest, and if there befall us aught that calleth for flight, we will flee and depart our land whither God will."

"Thou sayst sooth, O our lord," answered all the fish with one voice. "May God requite thee for us with good!" Then each returned to his place, and in a few days, God sent them a violent rain and the place of the pond was filled fuller than before. On like wise, O King,' continued Shimas, 'we despaired of a child being born to thee, and now that God hath vouchsafed unto us and unto thee this blessed son, we implore Him to make him indeed blessed and render him the solace of thine eyes and a worthy successor to thee and grant us of him the like of that which He hath granted us of thee; for God the Most High disappointeth not those that seek Him and it behoveth none to despair of His mercy.'

Then the second vizier rose and saluting the king, spoke as follows: 'Verily, a king is not called a king, save he give gifts and do justice and rule with equity and munificence and govern his subjects wisely, maintaining

the established laws and usages among them and justifying them, one against another, and sparing their blood and warding off hurt from them; and of his qualities should be that he be never unmindful of the poor and that he succour the highest and lowest of them and give them each his due, so that they all bless him and are obedient to his commandment. Without doubt, a king who is after this wise is beloved of his people and gaineth of this world eminence and of the next glory and the favour of the Creator of both worlds. And we thy subjects acknowledge in thee, O king, all the attributes of kingship I have set out, even as it is said, "The best of things is that the king of a people be just and their physician skilful and their teacher experienced, doing according to his knowledge." Now we enjoy this happiness, after we had despaired of the birth of a son to thee, to inherit thy crown; but God (magnified be His name!) hath not disappointed thine expectation, but hath granted thy prayer, by reason of the goodliness of thy trust in Him and thy submission of thine affairs to Him, and there hath betided thee that which betided the crow with the serpent.' 'What was that?' asked the king. 'Know, O king,' replied the vizier, 'that

THE CROW AND THE SERPENT.

A crow and his wife once dwelt in a tree, in all delight of life, till they came to the time of the hatching of their young, to wit, the season of midsummer, when a serpent issued from his hole and crawled up the tree, till it came to the crows' nest, where it coiled itself up and there abode all the days of the summer, whilst the crow was driven away and found no place wherein to lie. When the days of heat were past, the serpent went away

to its own place and the crow said to his wife, "Let us thank God the Most High, who hath preserved us and delivered us from this serpent, albeit we are forbidden from increase this year. Yet God will not cut off our hope; so let us thank Him for having vouchsafed us safety and bodily weal, for we have none other in whom to trust, and if He will and we live till next year, He will give us other young in the stead of those we have lost this year."

Next year the serpent again sallied forth from its place at the same time and made for the crows' nest: but, as it climbed up the tree, a kite swooped down on it and struck his claws into its head and tore it, whereupon it fell to the ground, senseless, and the ants came out upon it and devoured it. So the crow and his wife abode in peace and quiet and reared a numerous brood and thanked God for their safety and for the young that were born to them. In like manner, O king,' continued the vizier, 'it behoveth us to thank God for that wherewith He hath favoured us and thee in vouchsafing us this happy and blessed child, after despair and hope cut off. May He make fair thy reward and the issue of thine affair!'

Night dcccclb. Then rose the third vizier and said, 'Rejoice, O just king, in the assurance of present prosperity and future felicity;[1] for him, whom the people of the earth love, the people of heaven love also; and indeed God the Most High hath made love to be thy portion and hath stablished it in the hearts of the people of thy kingdom; wherefore to Him be thanks and praise from us and from thee, so He may redouble in His bounty to thee and to us in thee! For know, O king, that man can nought but by commandment of God the Most High and that He is the Giver and all good that befalleth a creature hath its

[1] lit. ultimate reward, *i.e.* in the world to come.

[origin and] issue in Him. He allotteth His favours to His creatures, as it liketh Him; to some He giveth store of gifts and others may hardly get their daily bread. Some He maketh lords and captains, and others recluses, who abstain from the world and aspire but to Him, for He it is who saith, "I am He who harmeth and who advantageth; I make whole and make sick, I enrich and impoverish, I slay and quicken; in my hand is everything and all things have their issue in Me." Wherefore it behoveth all folk to praise Him.

Thou, O king, art of the fortunate pious men of whom it is said, "The happiest of the just is he for whom God uniteth the goods of this world and the next, who is content with that which God allotteth to him and giveth Him thanks for that which He hath established." And indeed he who is froward and seeketh other than that which God hath decreed unto him and for him resembleth the fox [and shall fare as he did] with the wild ass.' 'And what is the story of the fox and the wild ass?' asked the king. 'Know, O king,' replied the vizier, 'that

THE FOX AND THE WILD ASS.

A certain fox was wont every day to leave his earth and go forth in quest of prey. One day, as he was in a certain mountain, the night overtook him and he set out to return. On his way, he fell in with another fox, and each began to tell the other of the prey he had gotten. Quoth the newcomer, "The other day I chanced upon a wild ass and rejoiced in this and thanked God the Most High for bringing him into my power, for that I was anhungred and it was three days since I had eaten. So I tore out his heart and ate it and was full and returned to my earth. That was three days ago and since then I have found

nothing to eat, yet am I still full of meat." When the other fox heard his fellow's story, he envied him his fulness and said in himself, "Needs must I eat a wild ass's heart." So he left eating some days, till he became emaciated and nigh upon death and bestirred not himself neither did his endeavour [to get food], but lay coiled up in his earth.

One day there came out two hunters in quest of prey and started a wild ass. They followed in his track all day, till at last one of them shot at him a barbed arrow, which pierced his heart and killed him, and he fell down before the fox's hole. Then the hunters came up and finding him dead, pulled out the arrow from his heart, but only the shaft came away and the barbed head abode in the wound. So they left him where he lay, expecting that others of the wild beasts would flock to him; but, when it was night and nothing fell to them, they returned to their abiding-places. The fox, hearing the commotion at the mouth of his hole, lay quiet till nightfall, when he came forth of his earth, groaning for weakness and hunger, and seeing the dead ass lying at his door, was like to fly for joy and said, "Praised be God who hath made my desire easy to me without toil! Verily, I had lost hope of coming at a wild ass or aught else; and assuredly God hath sent him to me and made him fall in my place."

Then he sprang on the dead ass and tearing open its belly, thrust in his head and routed about in its guts, till he found the heart and tearing it out, swallowed it: but the barbed head of the arrow stuck in his gullet and he could neither get it down into his belly nor bring it forth of his throat. So he made sure of destruction and said, "Of a truth it beseemeth not the creature to seek [aught] over and above that which God hath allotted to him. Had I been content with what He allotted me, I had

not come to destruction." Wherefore, O king,' added the vizier, 'it behoveth man to be content with that which God hath allotted him and thank Him for His bounties to him and despair not of his Lord. And behold, O king, because of the purity of thine intent and the multitude of thy good works, God hath blessed thee with a son, after despair: wherefore we pray the Most High to vouchsafe him long life and abiding happiness and make him a blessed successor, faithful in the observance of thy covenant, after thy long life.'

Then arose the fourth vizier and said, 'Verily, if the king be a man of understanding, versed in the canons of science and government and policy, upright in purpose and just to his subjects, honouring and revering those to whom honour and veneration are due, using clemency, whenas it behoveth, in the exercise of his power and protecting both governors and governed, lightening their burdens and bestowing largesse on them, sparing their blood and covering their nakedness and fulfilling his covenant with them, he is worthy of felicity both in this world and the next: and this is of that which protecteth him from them[1] and helpeth him to the stablishing of his kingdom and the victory over his enemies and the accomplishment of his desire, together with increase of God's bounty to him and His favouring him for his praise of Him and the attainment of His protection. But the king who is the contrary of this ceaseth never from misfortunes and calamities, he and the people of his realm; for that his oppression embraceth both stranger and kinsman, and there cometh to pass with him that which befell the unjust king with the pilgrim prince.' 'And how was that?' asked King Jelyaad. 'Know, O king,' answered the vizier, 'that

Night dccccb.

[1] *i.e.* preserves him from the ill-will of his subjects.

THE UNJUST KING AND THE PILGRIM PRINCE.

There was once, in the land of the West,[1] a king who was unjust in his rule, tyrannous, violent and capricious, having no regard to the welfare or protection of his subjects nor of those who entered his kingdom; and from every one who came within his realm his officers took four-fifths of his good and left him one-fifth, and no more. God the Most High decreed that he should have a son, who was fortunate[2] and favoured[3] and seeing the things of the world to be unrighteous, renounced them in his youth and put away from him the world and that which is therein and went forth, a pilgrim, serving God the Most High, wandering over deserts and wastes and [bytimes] entering cities.

One day, he came to his father's capital and the guards laid hands on him and searched him, but found nothing upon him but two gowns, one old and the other new. So they stripped the new one from him and left him the old, after they had passing scurvily entreated him; whereat he complained and said, "Out on you, O oppressors! I am a poor man and a pilgrim, and what shall this gown profit you? Except ye restore it to me, I will go to the king and complain to him of you." "We do this by the king's commandment," answered they. "So do what seemeth good to thee."

So he betook himself to the king's palace; but the chamberlains denied him admittance, and he turned away,

[1] Generally Africa, but occasionally Spain or Portugal, one province of which latter country still retains this name, *i.e.* Algarve, corrupted form of El Gherb, the West.

[2] *i.e.* one of those for whom eternal felicity is prepared.

[3] *i.e.* of God.

saying in himself, "There is nothing for me but to watch for his coming out and complain to him of my case and that which hath betided me." Accordingly, he waited till he heard one of the guards announce the king's coming forth; whereupon he crept up, little by little, till he stood before the gate; and when the king came out, he threw himself in his way and made his complaint to him, giving him to know that he was a man of the people of God,[1] who had renounced the world and went wandering over the earth, seeking acceptance of God and entering every city and hamlet, whilst all the folk he met gave him alms according to their power. "I entered this thy city," continued he, "hoping that the folk would deal with me as with others of my condition; but thy men stopped me and stripped me of one of my gowns and loaded me with blows. Wherefore do thou look into my case and take me by the hand and get me back my gown and I will not abide in thy city an hour." Quoth the unjust king, "Who counselled thee to enter this city, unknowing the custom of its king?" And the pilgrim answered, "Give me back my gown and do with me what thou wilt."

When the king heard this, he fell into a rage and said, "O fool, we stripped thee of thy gown, so thou mightest humble thyself [to us]; but since thou troublest us with this clamour, we will strip thy soul from thee." Then he commanded to cast him into prison, where he began to repent of having answered the king and reproached himself for not having left him the gown and made off with his life. When it was the middle of the night, he rose to his feet and prayed long and fervently, saying, "O God, Thou art the Righteous Judge; Thou knowest my case and that which hath befallen me with this unjust king, and I, Thine oppressed servant, beseech Thee, of the fulness of Thy mercy, to deliver me from the hand of this unjust

[1] *i.e.* a devotee.

king and send down on him Thy vengeance; for Thou art not unmindful of the unright of every oppressor. Wherefore, if Thou know that he hath oppressed me, loose on him Thy vengeance this night and send down on him Thy punishment; for Thy rule is just and Thou art the Helper of every afflicted one, O Thou to whom belong the power and the glory to the end of time!"

When the gaoler heard the prisoner's prayer, he trembled in every limb, and behold, a fire broke out in the king's palace and consumed the city and all that were therein, even to the door of the prison, and none was spared save the gaoler and the pilgrim. When the gaoler saw this, he knew that it had not befallen save because of the pilgrim's prayer; so he loosed him and fleeing with him forth of the burning, betook himself, he and the prince, to another city. So was the unjust king consumed, he and his city, by reason of his injustice, and he lost the goods both of this world and the next.

As for us, O august king,' continued the vizier, 'we neither lie down nor rise up without praying for thee and thanking God the Most High for His goodness in giving thee to us, tranquil in reliance on thy justice and the excellence of thy governance; and indeed we were sore concerned for thy lack of a son to inherit thy kingdom, fearing lest there betide us, after thee, a king unlike thee; but now God hath bestowed His favours upon us and done away our concern and brought us gladness in the birth of this blessed child; wherefore we beseech the Most High to make him a worthy successor [to thee] and endow him with eternal glory and felicity and abiding good.'

Night dccccbi. Then rose the fifth vizier and said, 'Blessed be the Most High God, Giver of [all] good gifts! We are well assured that God favours those who are grateful to Him and mindful of His faith; and thou, O august king, art renowned for these illustrious virtues and for just dealing

and equity among thy subjects, in that which is acceptable to God the Most High. By reason of this hath God exalted thy dignity and made thy days happy and bestowed on thee the good gift of this happy child, after thou hadst despaired, wherefrom there hath betided us abiding gladness and joyance that may not be cut off; for before this we were in exceeding anxiety and sore concern, because of thy lack of issue, and full of care, bethinking us of all thy justice and gentle dealing with us and fearful lest God decree death to thee and there be none to succeed thee and inherit the kingdom after thee, and so we be divided in our counsels and dissensions arise between us and there befall us what befell the crows.' 'And what befell the crows?' asked the king. 'Know, O august king,' replied the vizier, 'that

THE CROWS AND THE HAWK.

There was once, in a certain desert, a spacious valley, full of streams and trees and fruits and birds singing the praises of God, the One, the All-powerful, Creator of day and night; and among them was a troop of crows, which led the goodliest of lives under the governance of one of their number, who ruled them with mildness and benignity, so that they were with him in peace and security; and by reason of their wise ordinance of their affairs, none of the other birds could avail against them. In course of time there befell their chief that which is irrevocably appointed to all creatures and he died; whereupon the others mourned sore for him, and what added to their grief was that there was not amongst them one like unto him, who should fill his place. So they all assembled and took counsel together of whom it befitted to set over them: and some of them chose one crow, saying, "It

beseemeth that this one be king over us;" whilst others objected to him and would none of him; and thus there arose division and dissension among them and the strife waxed hot between them.

At last they agreed to sleep the night upon it and that none should go forth at peep of dawn next morning to seek his living, [as of wont], but that all should wait till daybreak, when they should meet all in one place. "Then," said they, "we will all take flight at once and whichsoever soars above the rest in his flying, we will make king over us." So they did as they had agreed and took flight all, but each of them deemed himself higher than his fellow; wherefore quoth this one, "I am highest," and that, "Nay; that am I." Then said the lowest of them, "Look up, all of you, and whomsoever ye find the highest of you, let him be your chief." So they raised their eyes and seeing the hawk soaring over them, said to each other, "We agreed that which bird soever should be the highest of us should be king over us, and behold, the hawk is the highest of us: what say ye to him?" And they all cried out, saying, "We accept of him."

So they called the hawk and said to him, "O father of good, we have chosen thee governor over us, that thou mayst look into our affair." The hawk consented, saying, "God willing, ye shall have of me great good." But, after awhile, he fell to taking a company of them and betaking himself with them afar off to one of the caves, where he struck them down and eating their eyes and brains, threw their bodies into the river. Thus he did every day, it being his intent to destroy them all, [one after another], till, seeing that their number diminished daily, the crows flocked to him and said, "O our king, we complain to thee for that, since the day we made thee king and ruler over us, we are in the sorriest case and every day a company of us is missing and we know not

the cause of this, more by token that the most part thereof are of those in attendance on thee."

Thereupon the hawk waxed wroth with them and said to them, "Verily it is ye who have slain them, and ye forestall me [with accusation]." So saying, he pounced upon them and tearing half a score of their chiefs [in pieces] before the rest, threatened them and drove them out from before him with blows and buffets. So they repented them of that which they had done and said, "We have known no good since the death of our first king, especially in the deed of this stranger in kind; but we deserve [all we suffer], even had he destroyed us to the last of us, and there is exemplified in us the saying of him who saith, 'He who submitteth not himself to the rule of his own people, the enemy hath dominion over him, of his ignorance.' And now there is nothing for it but to flee for our lives, else shall we perish." So they took flight and dispersed to various places.

And we, O king,' continued the vizier, 'we feared lest the like of this befall us and a king become ruler over us, other than thyself; but God hath vouchsafed us this boon and hath sent us this blessed child, and now we are assured of peace and union and security and prosperity in the land. So blessed be God the Great and to Him be thanks and praise and fair honour! And may He bless the king and us all his subjects and vouchsafe unto us and him the utmost felicity and make his life happy and his fortune constant!'

Then arose the sixth vizier and said, 'God grant thee all felicity, O king, in this world and the next! Verily, the ancients say, "He who prayeth and fasteth and giveth parents their due and is just in his rule meeteth his Lord and He is well pleased with him." Thou hast been set over us and hast ruled us justly and thine endeavour in this hath been blessed; wherefore we beseech God the

Most High to make great thy reward and requite thee thy goodness. I have heard what this wise man hath said respecting our fear for the loss of our prosperity, by reason of the death of the king or the advent of another who should not be like him, and how after him dissensions would be rife among us and calamity betide thereupon, and how it behoved us therefore to be instant in prayer to God the Most High, so haply He might vouchsafe the king a happy son, to inherit the kingship after him. But, after all, the issue of that which man desireth of the goods of the world and after which he lusteth is unknown unto him, and it behoveth him to ask not of his Lord a thing whose issue he knoweth not; for that belike the hurt of the thing is nearer to him than its profit and his destruction may be in that he seeketh and there may befall him what befell the serpent-charmer's wife and children and the people of his house.' 'What was that?' asked the king. 'Know, O king,' replied the vizier, 'that

Night dccccbii.

THE SERPENT-CHARMER AND HIS WIFE.

There was once a man, a serpent-charmer, who used to [catch and] train serpents, and this was his trade; and he had a great basket, in which were three snakes; but the people of his house knew this not. Every day he used to take the basket and go round about the town with it, gaining his living and that of his family [by exhibiting the snakes], and at eventide he returned to his house and clapped them back into the basket privily. One day, when he came home, as of wont, his wife asked him what was in the basket and he said, "What wouldst thou with it? Is not victual plentiful with you? Be content with that which God hath allotted to thee and enquire not of aught else." With this she held her peace; but she

said in herself, "Needs must I search the basket and know what is therein." So she egged on her children to ask him of the basket and importune him, till he should tell them what was therein. They concluded that it contained something to eat and sought every day of their father that he should show them what was in it; and he still put them off and forbade them from asking this.

On this wise they abode awhile, till they agreed with their mother that they would neither eat nor drink with their father, till he granted them their prayer and opened the basket to them. One night, the serpent-charmer came home with great plenty of meat and drink and called them to eat with him; but they refused and showed him anger; whereupon he began to coax them with fair words, saying, "Tell me what you would have, that I may bring it you, be it meat or drink or clothes." "O our father," answered they, "we want nothing of thee but that thou open this basket and show us what is therein: else we will kill ourselves." "O my children," rejoined he, "there is nothing good for you therein and indeed the opening of it will be hurtful to you." They only redoubled in despite for all he could say, which when he saw, he began to berate them and threaten them with beating, except they left this; but they redoubled in anger and persistence in asking, till at last he waxed wroth and took a stick to beat them, and they fled from him within the house.

Now the basket was present and he had not hidden it anywhere; so his wife left him occupied with the children and opened the basket in haste, that she might see what was therein; whereupon the serpents came out and bit her and killed her. Then they went round about the house and killed all, great and small, who were therein, except the serpent-charmer, who left the place and went away. If then, O august king,' continued the vizier, 'thou consider this, thou wilt know that it is not for a man to

desire aught but that which God the Most High refuseth not to him; nay, he should be content with what He willeth. And thou, O king, for the abundance of thy wisdom and the excellence of thine understanding, God hath solaced thine eyes with the advent of this thy son, after despair, and hath comforted thy heart; wherefore we pray God to make him of the just kings, acceptable to Himself and to his subjects.'

Then rose the seventh vizier and said, 'O king, I know and endorse all that my brethren, these wise and learned viziers, have said of thy justice and the goodness of thy policy and how thou art distinguished in this from all other kings; wherefore they gave thee the preference over them. Indeed, this is of that which is incumbent on us, O king, and I say, "Praised be God for that He hath guerdoned thee with His bounty and vouchsafed thee, of His mercy, the welfare of the realm and succoured us and thee, on condition that we abound in gratitude to Him; and all this no otherwise than by thine existence!" What while thou remainest to us, we fear not oppression neither dread unright, nor can any take advantage of our weakness; and indeed it is said, "The greatest good of a people is a just king and their greatest evil an unjust one;" and again, "Better dwell with devouring lions than with an unjust Sultan." So praised be God the Most High with eternal praise for that He hath blessed us with thy life and vouchsafed thee this blessed child, whenas thou wast stricken in years and hadst despaired of issue! For the goodliest of the gifts of the world is a virtuous child, and it is said, "He who hath no child, [his life] is without result and he hath no remembrance."

As for thee, because of the righteousness of thy justice and thy pious confidence in God the Most High, thou hast been vouchsafed this happy son; yea, this blessed child cometh as a gift from the Most High God to us

and to thee, for the excellence of thy governance and the goodliness of thy patience; and in this thou hast fared even as fared the spider with the wind.' 'And what is the story of the spider and the wind?' asked the king. 'Know, O king,' answered the vizier, 'that

THE SPIDER AND THE WIND.

A spider once took up her abode on a high retired gate and span her web there and dwelt therein in peace, giving thanks to God the Most High, who had made this dwelling-place easy to her and had set her in safety from noxious reptiles. On this wise she abode awhile, still giving thanks to God for her ease and sustenance, till the Creator bethought Him to try her and make essay of her gratitude and patience. So he sent upon her a strong north-east wind, which carried her away, web and all, and cast her into the sea. The waves bore her ashore and she thanked God for safety and began to upbraid the wind, saying, "O wind, why hast thou dealt thus with me and what good hast thou gotten by carrying me hither from my abiding-place, where indeed I was in safety, secure in my house on the top of the gate?" "Leave thy chiding," replied the wind, "for I will carry thee back and restore thee to thy place, as thou wast aforetime."

So the spider waited patiently, till the north-east wind left blowing and there arose a south-west wind, which caught her up and flew with her towards her dwelling-place; and when she came to her abode, she knew it and clung to it. And we,' continued the vizier, 'beseech God (who hath rewarded the king for his singleness of heart and patience and hath taken pity on his subjects and blessed them with His favour and hath vouchsafed the king this son in his old age, after he had despaired [of

issue] and removed him not from the world, till He had granted him the solace of his eyes and bestowed on him what he hath bestowed of kingship and empire), to vouchsafe unto thy son that which He hath vouchsafed unto thee of kingship and dominion and glory! Amen.'

Then said the king, 'Praised be God over all praise and thanks be to Him over all thanks! There is no god but He, the Creator of all things, by the light of whose signs we know the glory of His greatness and who giveth kingship and dominion over his own country to whom He willeth of His servants! He chooseth of them whom He will to make him His vicegerent and steward over His creatures and commandeth him to just and equal dealing with them and the maintenance of laws and observances and the practice of right and constancy in ordering their affairs to that which is most acceptable to Him and to them. He who doth thus and obeyeth the commandment of his Lord, attaineth his desire, and God preserveth him from the perils of this world and maketh fair his recompense in the world to come; for indeed He neglecteth not the reward of the just: and whoso doth otherwise than as God biddeth him sinneth grievously and disobeyeth his Lord, preferring his temporal above his spiritual weal. He hath no trace in this world and no part in the next: for God spareth not the unjust and the corrupt, nor doth He forsake any of His servants.

These our viziers have set forth how, by reason of our just dealing with our subjects and our wise governance of their affairs, God hath vouchsafed us and them His grace, for which it behoveth us to thank Him, because of the abundance of His mercies. Moreover, each of them hath spoken that wherewith God inspired him concerning this matter, and they have vied with each other in rendering thanks to God the Most High and praising Him for His favours and bounties. I also render thanks to God, for

that I am but a slave commanded; my heart is in His hand and my tongue obedient to Him, accepting that which He adjudgeth to me and to them, come what may.

Each one of them hath said what came to his thought on the subject of this boy and hath set forth that which was of the renewal of [God's] favour to us, after I had reached the age when despair is uppermost and hope faileth. So praised be God who hath saved us from disappointment and from the alternation of rulers, like to the alternation of night and day! For verily, this was a great boon both to us and to them; wherefore we praise God the Most High who hath given a ready answer to our prayer and hath blessed us with this boy and set him in high place, as the inheritor of the kingship. And we entreat Him, of His bounty and clemency, to make him happy in his actions, apt to good works, so he may become a king and a sultan governing his people with justice and equity, guarding them from the perils of error and frowardness of His bounty and grace and goodness!'

When the king had made an end of his speech, the sages and learned men rose and prostrated themselves before God and thanked the king, after which they kissed his hands and departed, each to his own house, whilst the king withdrew into his palace, where he looked upon the new-born child and offered up prayers for him and named him Wird Khan. The boy grew up till he attained the age of twelve,[1] when the king, being minded to have him taught the various branches of knowledge, built him a palace amiddleward the city, wherein were three hundred and threescore rooms, and lodged him therein. Then he

[1] Sic in all the texts; but this is an evident error, as twelve is the age at which the prince is afterwards (see post, p. 216) stated to have completed his education. We should probably here read "seven," that being the age at which most of the royal children in tales of this kind are stated to have commenced the serious work of education.

assigned him three learned men and bade them relax not from teaching him day and night and look that there was no kind of knowledge but they instructed him therein, so he might become versed in all sciences. Moreover, he commanded them to sit with him one day in each of the rooms in turn and write on the door thereof that which they had taught him therein of various kinds of knowledge and report to himself every seven days what he had learnt. So they went in to the prince and stinted not from teaching him day nor night, withholding from him nought of that which they knew; and there was manifest in him quickness of wit and excellence of apprehension and aptness to receive instruction such as none had shown before him. Every seventh day his governors reported to the king what his son had learnt and mastered, whereby Jelyaad became proficient in goodly learning and fair culture; and they said to him, 'Never saw we one so richly gifted with understanding as is this boy, may God bless thee in him and give thee joy of his life!'

When the prince had completed his twelfth[1] year, he knew the better part of all sciences and excelled all the sages and learned men of his day. So his governors brought him to his father and said to him, 'God solace thine eyes, O king, with this happy youth! We bring him to thee, after he hath learnt all manner of knowledge, and there is not one of the learned men of the time who hath attained to that whereto he hath attained [of proficiency].' The king rejoiced in this with an exceeding joy and prostrated himself in gratitude to God (to whom belong might and majesty), saying, 'Praised be God for His mercies that may not be told!' Then he called his chief vizier and said to him, 'Know, O Shimas, that the governors of my son are come to tell me that he hath mastered all kinds of knowledge and there is nothing but

[1] See ante, note, p. 215.

they have instructed him therein, so that he surpasseth all who have foregone him in this. What sayst thou, O Shimas?'

The vizier prostrated himself before God (to whom belong might and majesty) and kissed the king's hand, saying, 'The ruby, though it be embedded in the solid rock, cannot but shine as a lamp, and this thy son is such a jewel; his tender age hath not hindered him from becoming a sage and praised be God for that which He hath bestowed on him! But to-morrow I will call an assembly of the flower of the amirs and men of learning and examine the prince and cause him speak forth that which is with him in their presence.' Night dccccix.

So the king commanded the attendance of the keenest-witted and most accomplished of the erudite and learned and sages of his dominions, and they all presented themselves on the morrow at the door of the palace, whereupon the king bade admit them. Then entered Shimas and kissed the hands of the prince, who rose and prostrated himself to him: but Shimas said, 'It behoveth not the lion-whelp to prostrate himself to any of the beasts, nor is it seemly that light prostrate itself to darkness.' Quoth the prince, 'When the lion-whelp sees the leopard, he prostrates himself to him, because of his wisdom, and light prostrates itself to darkness for the purpose of showing forth that which is therewithin.' Quoth Shimas, 'True, O my lord; but I would have thee answer me that whereof I shall ask thee, by leave of his highness and his folk.' And the youth said, 'With [my father's] permission, I will answer thee.'

So Shimas began and said, 'What is the Eternal, the Absolute, and what are the two essences[1] thereof and whether of the two is the abiding one?' 'God,' answered the prince, '(to whom belong might and majesty,) is the

[1] *i.e.* manifestations or incarnations.

Eternal, the Absolute, for that He is the first, without beginning, and the last, without end. His two essences are this world and the next; and the abiding one of the two is the world to come.' (Q.) 'Thou sayst truly: but tell me, how knowest thou that one of God's essences is this world and the other the world to come?' (A.) '[I know this] because this world was created from nothingness and had not its being from any existing thing; wherefore its affair is referable to the first essence. Moreover, it is a commodity swift of ceasing, the works whereof call for requital, and this presumes the reproduction[1] of that which passes away: so the next world is the second essence.' (Q.) 'How knowest thou that the world to come is the abiding one of the two states?' (A.) 'Because it is the stead of requital for deeds done in this world, prepared by the Eternal without cease.' (Q.) 'Who are the people of this world most to be praised for their practice?' (A.) 'Those who prefer their weal in the world to come to their weal in this world.' (Q.) 'And who is he that prefers his future to his present weal?' (A.) 'He who knows that he dwells in a perishing house, that he was created but to pass away and that, after passing away, he will be called to account; and indeed, were there in this world one abiding for ever, he would not prefer it to the next world.' (Q.) 'Can the future life subsist without the present?' (A.) 'He who hath no present life hath no future life: and indeed I liken the people of this world and the goal to which they fare to certain handicraftsmen, for whom an amir builds a narrow house and lodges them therein, commanding each of them to do a certain work and assigning to him a set term and appointing one to act as steward over them. Whoso doth the work appointed unto him, the steward brings him forth of that straitness; but whoso doth it not is punished.

[1] for the purpose of requital.

After awhile, they find honey exuding from the chinks of the house, and when they have eaten thereof and tasted its sweetness, they slacken in their appointed task and cast it behind their backs. So they endure the straitness and anxiety in which they are, with what they know of the punishment to which they are going, and are content with this trifling sweetness: and the steward leaves not to fetch every one of them forth of the house, [for punishment or reward,] when his appointed term is expired. Now we know the world to be a dwelling, wherein all eyes are dazed, and that each of its folk hath his appointed term; and he who finds the little sweetness that is in the world and occupies himself therewith is of the number of the lost, since he prefers the things of this world to those of the next: but he who pays no heed to this paltry sweetness and prefers the things of the world to come to those of this world, is of those who are saved.' (Q.) 'I accept what thou sayest of this world and the next: but I see they are as two set in authority over man; needs must he content them both, and they are contrary to one another. So, if the creature set himself to seek his livelihood, it is harmful to his soul in the world to come; and if he devote himself to [preparation for] the next world, it is hurtful to his body; and there is no way for him of pleasing both these contraries at once.' (A.) 'Indeed, the quest of one's worldly livelihood with a [pure] intent and on lawful wise is a provision for the quest of the [goods of the] world to come, if a man spend a part of his day in seeking his livelihood in this world, for the sustenance of his body, and devote the rest of his day to seeking [the goods of] the next world, for the repose of his soul and the warding off of hurt therefrom; and indeed I see this world and the next as they were two kings, a just and an unjust.' 'How so?' asked Shimas, and the youth said,

THE TWO KINGS.

'There were once two kings, a just and an unjust. The latter's country abounded in trees and fruits and herbs; but he let no merchant pass without robbing him of his goods and his merchandise, and the merchants endured this with patience, by reason of their gain from the fatness of the land in the means of life and its pleasantness, more by token that it was renowned for its richness in precious stones and jewels. Now the just king, who loved jewels, heard of this land and sent one of his subjects thither, giving him much money and bidding him buy jewels therewith from that country. So he went thither and it being told to the unjust king that a merchant was come to his realm, with much money to buy jewels withal, he sent for him and asked him whence and what he was and what was his errand. Quoth the merchant, "I am of such a country, and the king of the land gave me money and bade me buy therewith jewels from this country; so I obeyed him and came." "Out on thee!" cried the unjust king. "Knowst thou not my fashion of dealing with the people of my realm and how each day I take their good? How then comest thou to my country? And behold, thou hast been a sojourner here since such a time!" "The money is not mine," answered the stranger; "not a doit of it; nay, it is a trust in my hands, till I bring it[1] to its owner." But the king said, "I will not let thee take thy livelihood of my country or go out therefrom, except thou ransom thyself with this money, all of it; else shalt thou die."

Night dccccx. So the man said in himself, "I am fallen between two kings, and I know that the oppression of this one em-

[1] *i.e.* that which he was charged to buy with it.

braceth all who abide in his dominions: and if I content him not, I shall lose both life and money and shall fail of my errand; whilst, on the other hand, if I give him all the money, it will assuredly prove my ruin with the other king, its owner: wherefore nothing will serve me but that I give this one a small part thereof and content him therewith and avert perdition from myself and from the money. Thus shall I get my livelihood of the fatness of this land, till I buy that which I desire of jewels and return to the owner of the money with his need, trusting in his justice and indulgence and fearing not that he will punish me for that which this unjust king taketh of the money, especially if it be but a little."

Then he called down blessings on the unjust king and said to him, "O king, I will ransom myself and this money with a small portion thereof, from the time of my entering thy country to that of my going forth therefrom." The king agreed to this and left him at peace for a year, till he bought jewels with all [the rest of] the money and returned therewith to his master, to whom he made his excuses, confessing to having rescued himself from the unjust king as before related. The just king accepted his excuse and praised him for his wise ordinance and set him on his right hand in his divan and appointed him in his kingdom an abiding inheritance and a happy life.

Now the just king is the similitude of the next world and the unjust king that of this world; the jewels that be in the latter's dominions are good deeds and pious works. The merchant is man and the money he hath with him is the provision appointed him of God. When I consider this, I know that it behoves him who seeks his livelihood in this world to leave not a day without seeking the goods of the world to come, so shall he content this world with that which he gains of the fatness of the earth and the next with that which he spends of his life in seeking after

it.' (Q.) 'Are the soul and the body alike in reward and punishment, or is the [body, as the] luster of lusts and doer of sins, alone affected with punishment?' (A.) 'The inclination unto lusts and sins may be the cause of earning reward by the withholding of the soul therefrom and the repenting thereof; but the affair[1] is in the hand of Him who doth what He will, and by their contraries are things distinguished. Thus subsistence is necessary to the body, but there is no body without soul; and the purification of the soul is in making clean the intent in this world and taking thought to that which shall profit in the world to come. Indeed, soul and body are like two horses running for a wager or two foster-brothers or two partners in affairs. By the intent are good deeds distinguished and thus the body and soul are partners in actions and in reward and punishment, and in this they are like the blind man and the cripple with the overseer of the garden.' 'How so?' asked Shimas, and the prince said,

THE BLIND MAN AND THE CRIPPLE.

'A blind man and a cripple were travelling-companions and used to beg in company. One day they sought admission into the garden of some one of the benevolent, and a kind-hearted man hearing their talk, took compassion on them and carried them into his garden, where he left them and went away, bidding them do no waste nor damage therein. When the fruits became ripe, the cripple said to the blind man, "Harkye, I see ripe fruits and long for them; but I cannot rise to them, to eat thereof; so go thou, for thou art sound of limb, and fetch us thereof, that we may eat." "Out on thee!" replied

[1] Syn. commandment (*el amr*).

the blind man. "I had no thought of them, but now that thou callest them to my mind, I long to eat of them and I cannot avail unto this, being unable to see them; so how shall we do to get at them?" At this moment, up came the overseer of the garden, who was a man of understanding, and the cripple said to him, "Harkye, overseer! I long for some of those fruits; but we are as thou seest; I am a cripple and my mate here is stone-blind: so what shall we do?" "Out on ye!" replied the overseer. "Have ye forgotten that the master of the garden stipulated with you that ye should do no waste nor damage therein? Take warning then and abstain from this." But they answered, "Needs must we get at these fruits, that we may eat thereof: so tell us how we shall contrive this."

When the overseer saw that they were not to be turned from their purpose, he said, "O cripple, let the blind man take thee on his back and carry thee to the tree whose fruit pleaseth thee, so thou mayst pluck what thou canst reach thereof." So the blind man took the cripple on his back and the latter guided him, till he brought him to a tree, and he fell to plucking from it what he would and tearing at its branches, till he had despoiled it; after which they went round about the garden and wasted it with their hands and feet; nor did they cease from this fashion, till they had stripped all the trees in the garden.

Then they returned to their place and presently up came the master of the garden, who, seeing it in this plight, was sore angered and said to them, "Out on ye! What fashion is this? Did I not stipulate with you that ye should do no waste in the garden?" Quoth they, "Thou knowest that we cannot avail to come at any of the fruit, for that one of us is a cripple and cannot rise and the other is blind and cannot see that which is before him: so what is our offence?" But the master answered, saying, "Think ye I know not how ye wrought and how

ye have gone about to do waste in my garden? I know, as if I had been with thee, O blind man, that thou tookest the cripple on thy back and he guided thee, till thou borest him to the trees." Then he punished them grievously and put them out of the garden. Now the blind man is the similitude of the body, and the cripple that of the soul, for that it hath no power of motion but by the body; the garden is the works, for which the creature is rewarded or punished, and the overseer is the reason, which commandeth to good and forbiddeth from evil. Thus the body and the soul are partners in reward and punishment.' (Q.) 'Which of the learned men is most worthy of praise, according to thee?' (A.) 'He who is learned in the knowledge of God and whose knowledge profiteth him.' (Q.) 'And who is this?' (A.) 'He who is instant in seeking to please his Lord and avoid His wrath.' (Q.) 'And which of them is the most excellent?' (A.) 'He who is most learned in the knowledge of God.' (Q.) 'And which is the most experienced of them?' (A.) 'He who is most constant in doing according to his knowledge.' (Q.) 'And which is the purest-hearted of them?' (A.) 'He who is most assiduous in preparing for death and praising God and least of them in hope, and indeed he who familiarizes his soul with the terrors of death is as one who looks into a clear mirror, for that he knows the truth, and the mirror still increases in clearness and brilliance.' (Q.) 'What are the goodliest of treasures?' (A.) 'The treasures of heaven.' (Q.) 'Which is the goodliest of the treasures of heaven?' (A.) 'The praise and magnification of God.' (Q.) 'Which is the most excellent of the treasures of earth?' (A.) 'The practice of kindness.'

Night dccccxi. (Q.) 'Tell me of three different things, knowledge and judgment and wit, and of that which unites them.' (A.) 'Knowledge comes of learning, judgment of experience and wit of reflection, and they are all stablished and united

in reason. He in whom these three qualities combine is perfect, and he who adds thereto the fear of God is in the right course.' (Q.) 'Tell me, is it possible, in the case of a man of learning and wisdom, endowed with sound judgment, lucid intelligence and keen and excelling wit, for desire and lust to change these his qualities?' (A.) '[Yes]; for these passions, when they enter into a man, affect his wisdom and understanding and judgment and wit, and he is like the eagle, which abode in the upper air, of the excess of his subtlety and precaution against the hunters; but, as he was thus, he saw a fowler set up his nets and bait them with a piece of meat; which when he beheld, desire and lust thereof overcame him and he forgot that which he had seen of nets and of the sorry case of all birds that fell into them. So he swooped down from the sky and pouncing upon the piece of meat, was caught in the same snare and could not win free. When the fowler came up and saw the eagle taken in his net, he marvelled exceedingly and said, "I set up my nets, thinking to take therein pigeons and the like of small birds; how came this eagle to fall into it?" It is said that when desire and lust incite a man of understanding to aught, he considers the issue thereof and refrains from that which they make fair and overcomes his passions with his reason; for, when they urge him to aught, it behoves him to make his reason like unto a skilled horseman, who, mounting a skittish horse, curbs him with a sharp bit, so that he goes aright with him and carries him whither he will. As for the ignorant man, who has neither knowledge nor judgment and things are obscure to him and desire and lust lord it over him, verily he does according to his desire and his lust and is of the number of those that perish; nor is there among men one in sorrier case than he.' (Q.) 'When is knowledge profitable and when availeth reason to ward off the ill effects of

desire and lust?' (A.) 'When their possessor uses them in quest of the goods of the next world, for reason and knowledge are altogether profitable; but it behoves their owner to expend them not in the quest of the goods of this world, save in so far as may be needful for gaining his livelihood and defending himself from its mischief.' (Q.) 'What is most worthy that a man should apply himself thereto and occupy his heart withal?' (A.) 'Good works.' (Q.) 'If a man do this, it diverts him from gaining his living: how then shall he do for his livelihood, which he cannot dispense withal?' (A.) 'A man's day is four-and-twenty hours, and it behoves him to employ one [third] part thereof in seeking his living, another in prayer and rest and the remainder in the pursuit of knowledge; for a reasonable man without knowledge is as a barren land, wherein is place for neither tillage nor tree-planting nor grass. Except it be prepared for tillage and planted, no fruit will profit therein; but, if it be tilled and planted, it brings forth goodly fruits. So with the ignorant man: there is no profit in him till knowledge be planted in him: then doth he bear fruit.' (Q.) 'What sayst thou of knowledge without understanding?' (A.) 'It is as the knowledge of a brute, which hath learnt the hours of its feeding and watering and waking, but hath no reason.' (Q.) 'Thou hast been brief in thine answer concerning this; but I accept thy reply. Tell me, how shall I guard myself against the Sultan?' (A.) 'By giving him no hold over thee.' (Q.) 'And how can I but give him hold over me, seeing that he is set in dominion over me and that the rein of my affair is in his hand?' (A.) 'His dominion over thee lies in the duties thou owest him; so, if thou give him his due, he hath no [farther] dominion over thee.' (Q.) 'What are a vizier's duties to his king?' (A.) 'Good counsel and zealous service both in public and private, right judgment, the keeping of his secrets and that he

conceal from him nought of that which he hath a right to know, lack of neglect of aught of his occasions, with whose accomplishment he charges him, the seeking his approof on every wise and the avoidance of his wrath.' (Q.) 'How should the vizier do with the king?' (A.) 'If thou be vizier to the king and wouldst be safe from him, let thy hearing and thy speech to him overpass his expectation of thee and be thy seeking of thy need from him after the measure of thy rank in his esteem, and beware lest thou advance thyself to a dignity whereof he shall not judge thee worthy, for this would be like to presumption in thee against him. So, if thou presume upon his mildness and assume a rank beyond that which he deemeth thy due, thou wilt be like the hunter, who used to trap wild beasts for their skins and throw the flesh away. Now a lion used to come to the place [where the hunter skinned his prey] and eat of the carrion; and in course of time, he clapped up an acquaintance with the hunter, who would throw [meat] to him and wipe his hands on his back, whilst the lion wagged his tail. When the hunter saw his tameness and gentleness and submissiveness to him, he said in himself, "Verily this lion humbleth himself to me and I am master of him, and I see not why I should not mount him and strip off his hide, as with the other wild beasts." So he sprang on the lion's back, presuming on his mildness and deeming himself sure of him; which when the lion saw, he was exceeding wroth and raising his paw, smote the hunter, that he drove his claws into his guts; after which he cast him under his feet and tore him in pieces and devoured him. By this thou mayst know that it behoves the vizier to bear himself towards the king according to that which he seeth of his condition and not to presume upon the superiority of his own judgment, lest the king become jealous of him.' (Q.) 'How shall the vizier grace himself

Night dccccxii.

in the king's sight.' (A.) 'By the performance of the trust of loyal counsel and sound judgment committed to him and the execution of his commandments.' (Q.) 'As for that which thou sayst of the vizier's duty to avoid the king's wrath and perform his wishes and apply himself diligently to the due execution of that wherewith he charges him, that is a matter of course: but how, if the king's whole pleasure be in tyranny and the practice of oppression and extortion, and what shall the vizier do, if he be afflicted with the frequentation of this unjust king? If he strive to turn him from his lust and his desire, he cannot avail unto this, and if he follow him in his lusts and flatter him with false counsel, he assumes the responsibility of this and becomes an enemy to the people. What sayst thou of this?' (A.) 'What thou sayst, O vizier, of his responsibility and sin, arises only in the case of his abetting the king in his wrong-doing; but it behoves the vizier, when the king takes counsel with him of the like of this, to show forth to him the way of justice and equity and caution him against tyranny and oppression and expound to him the principles of good government, alluring him with the reward that pertains to this and restraining him with warning of the punishment that he incurs [in following his perverse inclinations]. If the king incline to his words, his end is gained, and if not, there is nothing for it but that he depart from him on courteous wise, for that in separation is ease for each of them.' (Q.) 'What are the duties of the king to his subjects and of the latter to the king?' (A.) 'They shall do what he orders them with a pure intent and obey him in that which pleases him and pleases God and His apostle. It is the king's duty to protect their possessions and guard their women, even as it is their duty to hearken unto him and obey him and expend their lives freely in his defence and give him his lawful due and praise him

duly for that which he bestoweth upon them of his justice and beneficence.' (Q.) 'Have his subjects any claim upon the king other than that which thou hast said?' (A.) 'Yes: the king's duty to his subjects is more imperative than their duty to him; for that the breach of his duty towards them is more harmful than that of theirs towards him; because the ruin of the king and the loss of his kingdom and fortune betide not but by the breach of his duty to his subjects: wherefore it behoves him who is invested with the kingship to be assiduous in ensuing three things, to wit, the furtherance of the faith, the welfare of his subjects and the due administration of government; for by the assiduous observance of these three things, his kingdom shall endure.' (Q.) 'How doth it behove him to do for his subjects' weal?' (A.) 'By giving them their due and maintaining their laws and usages and employing wise and learned men to teach them and justifying them, one of the other, and sparing their blood and defending their goods and lightening their burdens and strengthening their armies.' (Q.) 'What is the king's duty to his vizier?' (A.) 'None hath a more imperative claim on the king than the vizier, for three reasons: firstly, because of that which betides him with him, in case of error in judgment, and because of the common profit to king and people in case of sound judgment: secondly, that the folk may know the goodliness of the rank which the vizier holds in the king's estimation and so look on him with eyes of veneration and respect and submission; and thirdly, that the vizier, seeing this from king and people, may ward off from them that which they mislike and fulfil to them that which they love.' (Q.) 'I have heard all thou hast said of the attributes of king and vizier and people and approve thereof: but now tell me what is incumbent in the matter of keeping the tongue from lying and folly and slander and excess in

speech.' (A.) 'It behoves a man to speak nought but good and kindness and to talk not of that which concerns him not; to leave detraction nor carry talk he hath heard from one man to his enemy, neither seek to harm his friend nor his enemy with his sultan and reck not of any, neither of him from whom he hopes for good nor of him whose mischief he fears, save of God the Most High; for, in truth, He is the [only] one who harmeth or profiteth. Let him not impute default unto any nor talk ignorantly, lest he incur the burden and the sin thereof before God and earn hatred among men; for know that speech is like an arrow, which, once discharged, none can avail to recall. Moreover, let him beware of confiding his secret to one who shall discover it, lest he fall into mischief by reason of its disclosure, after having relied upon its concealment; and let him be more careful to keep his secret from his friend than from his enemy; for the keeping a secret with all folk is of the performance of trust.' (Q.) 'Tell me how a man should bear himself with his family and friends.' (A.) 'There is no ease for a son of Adam save in good conduct; he should render to his family that which they deserve and to his brethren that which is their due.' (Q.) 'What should one render to one's kinsfolk?' (A.) 'To one's parents, submission and soft speech and affability and honour and reverence. To one's brethren, loyal counsel and readiness to expend one's good for them and assistance in their undertakings and grieving for their grief and joyance in their joy and closing of the eyes toward the errors that they may commit; for, when they experience this from a man, they requite him with the best they can command of good counsel and expend their lives in his defence; so, if thou know thy brother to be trusty, be lavish to him of thy love and helpful to him in all his affairs.'

Night dccccxiii. (Q.) 'I see that brethren are of two kinds, brethren of

trust[1] and brethren of society.[2] As for the first, there is due to them that which thou hast set forth; but now tell me of the others.' (A.) 'As for brethren of society, thou gettest of them pleasance and goodly usance and fair speech and company; so be thou not sparing to them of thy delights, but be lavish to them, like as they are lavish thereof to thee, and render to them that which they render to thee of affability and an open favour and sweet speech; so shall thy life be pleasant and thy speech have acceptance with them.' (Q.) 'Tell me now of the provision decreed by the Creator to all creatures. Hath He allotted to men and beasts each his several provision, to the completion of his appointed term; and if this be so, what maketh him who seeketh his livelihood to incur hardship and toil in the quest of that which he knows he cannot fail of obtaining, if it be decreed to him, though he incur not the misery of endeavour; whilst, if it be not decreed to him, he shall not win thereto, though he strive after it with his utmost endeavour? Shall he therefore leave striving and put his trust in his Lord and rest his body and his soul?' (A.) 'Indeed, we see that to each there is a provision allotted and a term prescribed; but to each provision is a way and means, and he who seeketh would get ease of his seeking by leaving to seek; yet needs must he seek his fortune. Moreover, the seeker is in two cases; either he gains his fortune or fails thereof. In the first case, his pleasure consists, first, in the having gained his fortune, and secondly, in the satisfactory[3] issue of his quest; and in the other case, his pleasure consists, first, in his readiness to seek his living, secondly, in his abstaining from being a burden to the folk, and thirdly, in his freedom from liability to reproach.' (Q.) 'What sayst thou of the means of seeking one's fortune?' (A.) 'A man shall hold lawful that which God (to whom belong

[1] *i.e.* friends. [2] *i.e.* acquaintances. [3] or praiseworthy.

might and majesty) permitteth and unlawful that which He forbiddeth.'

With this the discourse between them came to an end and Shimas and all the learned men, who were present, rose and prostrating themselves before the prince, magnified and extolled him, whilst his father pressed him to his bosom and seating him on the throne of kingship, said, 'Praised be God who hath blessed me with a son to be the solace of mine eyes in my lifetime!' Then said the prince to Shimas, 'O sage that art versed in metaphysical questions, albeit God hath vouchsafed me but little knowledge, yet do I apprehend thine intent in accepting from me what I proffered in answer concerning that whereof thou hast asked me, whether I hit or missed the mark therein, and belike thou forgavest my errors; but now I wish to question thee of a thing, whereof my judgment fails and whereto my capacity is unequal and which my tongue availeth not to set forth, for that it is obscure to me, with the obscurity of limpid water in a black vessel; wherefore I would have thee expound it to me, so no whit thereof may remain doubtful to the like of me, to whom its obscurity may present itself in the future, even as it hath presented itself to me in the past; since God, even as He hath made life to be in water[1] and sustenance in food and the healing of the sick in the physician's skill, so hath He appointed the cure of the ignorant to be in the learning of the wise. Give ear, therefore, to my speech.' 'O luminous of wit and master of apt questions,' replied the vizier, 'thou whose superiority all the learned men attest, by reason of the goodliness of thy discrimination of things and thy departition[2] thereof and the justness of thine answers to the questions I have put to thee, thou knowest that thou canst ask me of nought but thou art better able [than I] to form a just

[1] *i.e.* sperma hominis. [2] Or analysis.

judgment thereon and expound it truly; for that God hath vouchsafed unto thee such wisdom as He hath bestowed on none other: but tell me of what thou wouldst question me.' Quoth the prince, 'Tell me from what did the Creator (magnified be His power!) create the world, albeit there was before it nought and there is nought seen in this world but it is created from something; and the Divine Creator (blessed and exalted be He!) is able to create things from nothing, yet hath His will decreed, for all the perfection of [His] power and grandeur, that He shall create nought but from something.' 'As for those,' answered the vizier, 'who fashion vessels of potters' clay, and other handicraftsmen, who cannot produce one thing except from another, they are themselves but created things: but, as for the Creator, who hath wrought the world after this wondrous fashion, if thou wouldst know His power (blessed and exalted be He!) of calling things into existence, consider the various kinds of created things, and thou wilt find signs and tokens, denoting the perfection of His omnipotence and that He is able to create things out of nothing: nay, He called them into being, after absolute nonentity, for the elements that are the matter of created things were sheer nothingness. I will expound this to thee, so thou mayst be in no doubt thereof, and this the phenomenon of the alternation of night and day shall make clear to thee. When the day departs and the night comes, the day is hidden from us and we know not where it abideth; and when the night passes away with its darkness and its terror, the day comes and we know not the abiding-place of the night. In like manner, when the sun rises upon us, we know not where it has laid up its light, and when it sets, we know not the abiding-place of its setting: and the examples of this among the works of the Creator (magnified be His name and exalted be His power!) abound in what confounds

the thought of the keenest-witted of human beings.' 'O sage,' rejoined the prince, 'thou hast set before me of the power of the Creator what may not be denied; but tell me how He called His creatures into existence.' '[He created them] by [the sole power of] His Word,'[1] answered Shimas, 'which existed before time, and with it He created all things.' 'Then,' said the prince, 'God (be His name magnified and His power exalted!) only willed the existence of created things, before they came into being?' 'And of His will,' replied Shimas, 'He created them with His Word and but for His speech and Manifest Word, the creation had not come into existence. And, O my son, there is no man can tell thee other than this that I have said, except he pervert the words handed down to us of the law of God and turn the truths thereof from their evident meaning. And such a perversion is their saying that the Word hath power [of itself] and I take refuge with God from such a conclusion. Nay, the meaning of our saying that God (to whom belong might and majesty) created the world with His Word is that He (exalted be His name!) is One in His essence and His attributes and not that His Word hath power [of itself]. On the contrary, power is one of God's attributes, even as speech and other attributes of perfection are attributes of God (exalted be His dignity and magnified be His dominion!); wherefore He may not be conceived without His Word, nor may His Word be conceived without Him; for, with His Word, God (extolled be His praise!) created all His creatures, and without His Word, he created nought. Indeed, He created all things but by His Word

Night DCCCCXIV.

[1] The famous λογος of the New Testament and the Alexandrian theologians. The writer of this and the following passages was evidently well acquainted with the Gospel of St. John and other parts of the New Testament, though probably only in the garbled versions that circulated among the Syrian and Arab Christians of his time.

of Truth, and by Truth are we created.' Quoth the prince, 'I apprehend that which thou hast said on the subject of the Creator and accept this from thee with understanding; but I hear thee say that He created the world by His Word of Truth. Now Truth is the opposite of Falsehood; whence then arose Falsehood and its opposition unto Truth, and how comes it to be possible that it should be confounded therewith and be obscure[1] to human beings, so that they need to distinguish between them? And doth the Creator (to whom belong might and majesty!) love Falsehood or hate it? If thou say He loves the Truth and by it created all things and hates Falsehood, how came the latter, which the Creator hates, to invade the Truth, which He loves?' Quoth Shimas, 'Verily God the Most High created man after His own image and likened him to Himself, all of him truth, without falsehood; then He gave him dominion over himself and ordered him and forbade him, and it was man who transgressed His commandment and erred in his disobedience and brought falsehood upon himself of his own will. When God created man with Truth, he had no need of repentance, till Falsehood invaded the Truth by which he was created, by means of the ableness[2] that God had placed in him, being the will and the inclination called acquisitiveness.[3] When Falsehood invaded Truth on this wise, it became confounded therewith, by reason of the will of man and his ableness and acquisitiveness, which is the voluntary part, together with the weakness of human nature: where-

[1] Or doubtful. [2] Or capability (*istitāah*).

[3] Or [the lust of] gain. This is the common meaning of the word *kesb*, but the scholastic writers of the Arabs use it to express the act by which a man seeks to win advantage or avert ill from himself. The Arab casuist of the present tale evidently intended to formulate the Christian dogma of freewill, although his meaning is much obscured by the imperfection of his expression and (in all probability, also) by his defective apprehension of the knotty point of doctrine involved.

fore God created repentance for man, to turn away from him falsehood and stablish him in truth; and He created for him also punishment, if he should abide in the obscurity of falsehood.' Quoth the prince, 'Tell me how came falsehood to invade truth, so as to be confounded therewith and how became man liable to punishment and so stood in need of repentance.' 'When God created man with truth,' replied Shimas, 'He made him loving to Himself and there was for him neither repentance nor punishment; but he abode thus till God put in him the soul, which is of the perfection of humanity, with the inclination to lusts which is inherent therein. From this sprang the growth of falsehood and its confusion with the truth, wherewith man was created and with the love whereof he had been informed; and when man came to this pass, he swerved from the truth with disobedience, and whoso swerves from the truth falls into falsehood.' 'Then,' said the prince, 'falsehood invaded truth only by reason of disobedience and transgression?' 'Yes,' answered Shimas; 'and it is thus because God loves man, and of the abundance of His love to him, He created him having need of Himself, that is to say, of the very Truth: but oftentimes man falls away from this by reason of the inclination of the soul to lusts and turns unto frowardness, wherefore he falls into falsehood by the very act of disobeying his Lord and thus renders himself liable to punishment; and by the putting away from himself of falsehood with repentance and the returning to the love of the truth, he merits reward.' Quoth the prince, 'Tell me the origin of frowardness. We see that all mankind trace their being to Adam, and how comes it that he, being created of God with truth, drew disobedience on himself; then was his disobedience coupled with repentance, after the soul had been set in him, that his issue might be reward or punishment? Indeed, we

see some men constant in frowardness, inclining to that which God loves not and transgressing in this the original exigence of their creation, which is the love of the Truth and drawing on themselves the wrath of their Lord, whilst others are constant in seeking to please their Creator and obeying Him and meriting mercy and recompense. Whence comes this difference between them?' 'The origin of disobedience in mankind,' replied Shimas, 'is attributable to Iblis, who was the noblest of all that God (magnified be His name!) created of angels and men and Jinn, and the love [of the Truth] was inherent in him, for he knew nought but this; but, for that he saw himself unique in this, there entered into him conceit and vainglory and arrogance and he revolted from loyalty and obedience to the commandment of his Creator; wherefore God made him inferior to all creatures and cast him out from love, making his abiding-place to be in disobedience. So, when he knew that God (glorified be His name!) loved not disobedience and saw Adam and the case wherein he was of truth and love and obedience to his Creator, envy entered into him and he cast about to pervert Adam from the truth, that he might be a partaker with himself in falsehood; and by this, Adam incurred chastisement, through his inclining to disobedience, which his enemy made fair to him, and his subjection to his lusts, whenas he transgressed the injunction of his Lord, by reason of the appearance of falsehood. When the Creator (magnified be His praises and hallowed be His names!) saw the weakness of man and the swiftness of his inclining to his enemy and leaving the truth, He appointed to him, of His mercy, repentance, that therewith he might arise from the morass of inclination to disobedience and taking the arms of repentance, overcome therewith his enemy Iblis and his hosts and return to the truth, wherein he was created. When Iblis saw that God

had appointed him a protracted term,[1] he hastened to wage war upon man and to beset him with wiles, to the intent that he might oust him from his Lord's favour and make him a partaker with himself in the curse which he and his hosts had incurred; wherefore God (extolled be His praises!) appointed unto man the power of repentance and commanded him to apply himself to the truth and persevere therein. Moreover, he forbade him from disobedience and frowardness and revealed to him that he had an enemy on the earth warring against him and relaxing not from him night nor day. Thus hath man a right to reward, if he adhere to the truth, in the love of which his essence was created; but he becomes liable to punishment, if his soul master him and drag him into lusts.' 'But tell me,' rejoined the prince, 'by what power is the creature able to transgress against his Creator, seeing that His power is without bounds, even as thou hast set forth, and that nothing can overcome Him nor depart from His will? Deemst thou not that He is able to turn His creatures from disobedience and compel them to adhere eternally to the truth?' 'Verily,' answered Shimas, 'God the Most High (honoured be His name!) is just and equitable and tenderly solicitous over the people of His love.[2] He created His creatures with justice and equity and of the inspiration of His justice and the abundance of His mercy, He gave them dominion over themselves, that they should do whatever they would. He shows them the way of righteousness and bestows on them the power and ability of doing what they will of good: and if they do the opposite thereof, they fall into destruction and disobedience.' (Q.) 'If the Creator, as thou sayest, hath granted men power and ability[3] and

Night dccccxb.

[1] *i.e.* had deferred his final punishment and definitive confinement in Hell till the Day of Resurrection.

[2] *Syn.* those who are deserving of His love. [3] *i.e.* freewill.

they by reason thereof avail to do what they will, why then doth He not come between them and that which they desire of error and turn them to the truth?' (A.) 'This is of the greatness of His mercy and the excellence of His wisdom; for, even as aforetime he showed wrath to Iblis and had no mercy on him, so he showed Adam mercy, by means[1] of repentance, and accepted of him, after He had been wroth with him.' (Q.) 'He is indeed the very Truth, for He it is who requiteth every one according to his works, and there is no Creator but God, to whom belongeth power over all things. But tell me, hath He created that which He loveth and that which He loveth not or only that which He loveth?' (A.) 'He created all things, but favours only that which He loveth.' (Q.) 'What hast thou to say of two things, one whereof is pleasing to God and earns reward for him who practises it?' (A.) 'Expound to me these two things and make me to apprehend them, that I may speak concerning them.' (Q.) 'They are good and evil, the two things innate in the body and the soul.' (A.) 'O wise youth, I see that thou knowest good and evil to be of the works that the soul and the body do [in conjunction]. Good is named good, because in it is the favour of God, and evil evil, for that in it is His wrath. Indeed, it behoveth thee to know God and to please Him by the practice of good, for that He hath commanded us to this and forbidden us to do evil.' (Q.) 'I see these two things, that is, good and evil, to be wrought only by the five senses known in the body of man, to wit, the seat of taste, whence proceed speech, hearing, sight, smell and touch. Tell me whether these five senses were created for good altogether or for evil.' (A.) 'Hear, O man, the exposition of that whereof thou askest and lay it up in thy memory and notify thy heart thereof, for it is a manifest proof.

[1] Or, perhaps, "on account."

Know that the Creator (blessed and exalted be He!) created man with truth and informed him with the love thereof and there proceedeth from it no created thing save by the Most High decree, whose impress is on every phenomenon. It[1] is not apt but to the ordering of justice and equity and beneficence and created man for the love of itself and informed him with a soul, wherein the inclination to lusts was innate and assigned him ableness and appointed the five senses aforesaid to be to him a means of winning Paradise or Hell.' (Q.) 'How so?' (A.) 'In that He created the tongue for speech and the hands for doing and the feet for walking and the eyes for seeing and the ears for hearing and gave them power and incited them to exercise and motion, bidding each of them do that only which pleaseth Him. Now what pleaseth Him in speech is truthfulness and abstaining from its opposite, which is falsehood, and what pleases Him in sight is turning it unto that which He loveth and leaving the contrary, which is turning it unto that which He abhorreth, such as looking unto lusts: and what pleaseth Him in hearing is hearkening to nought but that which is truth, such as admonition and that which is in the scriptures of God, and leaving the contrary, which is hearkening to that which incurreth the wrath of God; and what pleaseth Him in the hands is not hoarding up that which He entrusteth to them, but spending it on such wise as shall please Him and leaving the contrary, which is avarice or spending that which He hath committed to them in disobedience; and what pleaseth Him in the feet is that they be instant in the pursuit of good, such as the quest of instruction, and leave its contrary, which is the walking in other than the way of God. As for the other lusts that man practises, they proceed from the body by commandment of the soul.

[1] *i.e.* Truth.

The lusts that proceed from the body are of two kinds, that of reproduction and that of the belly. As for the first, that which pleaseth God thereof is that it be not except in the way of law, and if it be in the way of sin, He is displeased with it. As for the lust of the belly, eating and drinking, what pleaseth God thereof is that each take nought but that which God hath appointed him thereof, be it little or much, and praise God and thank Him: and what angereth Him thereof is that a man take that which is not his by right. All precepts other than these are false, and thou knowest that God created all things and delighteth only in good and commandeth each member of the body to do that which He hath made incumbent thereon, for that He is the all-wise, the all-knowing.' (Q.) 'Was it foreknown unto God (exalted be His power!) that Adam would eat of the tree from which He forbade him and so leave obedience for disobedience?' (A.) 'Yes, O sage. This was foreknown unto God the Most High, before He created Adam; and the proof and manifestation thereof is the warning He gave him against eating of the tree and His giving him to know that, if he ate thereof, he would be disobedient. And this was in the way of justice and equity, lest Adam should have an argument wherewith he might excuse himself against his Lord. When, therefore, he fell into error and calamity and reproach and disgrace were sore upon him, this passed to his posterity after him; wherefore God sent prophets and apostles and gave them scriptures and they taught us the divine ordinances and expounded to us what was therein of admonitions and precepts and made clear to us the way of righteousness and what it behoved us to do and what to leave undone. Now we are endowed with ableness[1] and he who acts within these limits[2] attains [felicity] and prospers, whilst

[1] *i.e.* freewill. [2] Or who practises these laws.

he who transgresses them and does other than that which these precepts enjoin, sins and is ruined in both worlds. This then is the road of good and evil. Thou knowest that God can all things and created not lusts for us but of His pleasure and will, and He commanded us to use them in the way of lawfulness, so they might be a good to us; but, when we use them in the way of sin, they are an evil to us. So what of good we compass is from God the Most High and what of evil from ourselves[1] His creatures, not from the Creator, exalted be He for this with great exaltation!' (Q.) 'I understand that which thou hast expounded to me concerning God and His creatures; but tell me of one thing, concerning which my mind is perplexed with extreme wonderment, and that is that I marvel at the sons of Adam, how careless they are of the life to come and at their lack of taking thought thereto and their love of this world, albeit they know that they must needs leave it and depart from it, whilst they are yet young in years.' (A.) 'Yes, verily; and that which thou seest of its changefulness and perfidious dealing with its children is a sign that fortune will not endure to the fortunate, neither affliction to the afflicted; for none of its people is secure from its changefulness and even if one have power over it and be content therewith, yet needs must his estate change and removal[2] hasten unto him. Wherefore man can put no trust therein nor profit by that which he enjoyeth of its painted gauds; and knowing this, we know that the sorriest of men in case are those who are deluded by this world and are unmindful of the world to come; for that this present ease they enjoy will not compensate the fear and misery and horrors that will befall them after their removal therefrom. Thus are we certified that, if the creature knew that which will betide

Night dccccxvi.

[1] *Koran* iv. 81. [2] *i.e.* from the world.

him with the coming of death and his severance from that which he presently enjoyeth of delight and pleasance, he would cast away the world and that which is therein; for we are assured that the next life is better for us and more profitable.' 'O sage,' said the prince, 'thou hast with thy shining lamp dispelled the darkness that was upon my heart and hast directed me into the road I must travel in the ensuing of the truth and hast given me a lantern whereby I may see.'

Then rose one of the learned men who were present and said, 'When the season of Spring cometh, needs must the hare seek the pasture as well as the elephant; and indeed I have heard from you both such questions and solutions as I never before heard; but now let me ask you of somewhat. What is the best of the goods of the world?' 'Health of body,' replied the prince, 'lawful provision and a virtuous son.' (Q.) 'What is the greater and what the less?' (A.) 'The greater is that to which a lesser than itself submitteth and the less that which submitteth to a greater than itself.' (Q.) 'What are the four things in which all creatures concur?' (A.) 'Meat and drink, the delight of sleep, the lust of women and the agonies of death.' (Q.) 'What are the three things whose foulness none can do away?' (A.) 'Folly, meanness of nature and lying.' (Q.) 'What is the best kind of lie, though all kinds are foul?' (A.) 'That which averteth harm from its utterer and bringeth profit.' (Q.) 'What kind of truthfulness is foul, though all kinds are fair?' (A.) 'That of a man glorying in that which he hath[1] and boasting himself thereof.' (Q.) 'What is the foulest of foulnesses?' (A.) 'When a man boasteth himself of that which he hath not.'[2] (Q.) 'Who is the most foolish of men?' (A.) 'He who hath no thought but of what he shall put in his belly.'

[1] Or what is in him. [2] Or what is not in him.

Then said Shimas, 'O king, verily thou art our king, but we desire that thou assign the kingdom to thy son after thee, and we will be thy servants and subjects.' So the king exhorted the learned men and others who were present to remember that which they had heard and do according thereto and enjoined them to obey his son's commandment, for that he made him his heir-apparent, so he should be the successor of the king his father; and he took an oath of all the people of his empire, doctors and braves and old men and boys, that they would not oppose him [in the succession] nor transgress against his commandment.

When the prince was seventeen years old, the king sickened of a sore sickness and came nigh unto death, so, being certified that his last hour was at hand, he said to the people of his household, 'This is a mortal sickness that is upon me; wherefore do ye summon the grandees and notables of my empire, so not one of them may remain except he be present.' Accordingly, they made proclamation to those who were near and made known the summons to those who were afar off, and they all assembled and went in to the king. Then said they to him, 'How is it with thee, O king, and how deemest thou for thyself of this thy sickness?' Quoth Jelyaad, 'Verily, this my sickness is mortal and the arrow [of death] hath executed that which God the Most High decreed against me: this is the last of my days in this world and the first of my days in the world to come.' Then said he to his son, 'Draw near unto me.' So he drew near, weeping sore, that he came nigh to wet the bed, whilst the king's eyes brimmed over with tears and all who were present wept. Quoth Jelyaad, 'Weep not, O my son; I am not the first whom this inevitable thing betideth; nay, it is common to all that God hath created. But fear thou God and do good, that shall forego thee to the place whither

all creatures tend. Obey not thy lusts, but occupy thyself with the praises of God in thy standing up and thy sitting down and in thy sleep and thy wake. Make the truth the aim of thine eyes; this is the last of my speech with thee and peace be on thee.' Night dccccxbii.

Then he bequeathed him the kingdom and the prince said, 'O my father, thou knowest that I have never ceased from obedience unto thee and mindfulness of thine injunctions, still carrying out thy commandment and seeking thine approof; for thou hast been to me the best of fathers. How, then, after thy death, shall I depart from that whereof thou approvest? After having fairly ordered my bringing up, thou art now about to depart from me and I have no power to bring thee back to me; but, if I be mindful of thine injunctions, I shall be blessed therein and great good hap will betide me.' Quoth the king, and indeed he was in the last agony, 'Dear my son, cleave fast unto ten precepts, which if thou observe, God shall profit thee herewith in this world and the next, and they are as follows. When thou art angered, curb thy wrath; when thou art afflicted, be patient; when thou speakest, be truthful; when thou promisest, perform; when thou judgest, do justice; when thou hast power, be merciful; deal generously by thy governors and lieutenants; forgive those that transgress against thee; be lavish of good offices to thine enemy and withhold thy mischief from him. Observe also other seven precepts, wherewith God shall profit thee among the people of thy realm, to wit, when thou dividest, be just; when thou punishest, oppress not; when thou makest an engagement, fulfil thine engagement; hearken to those that give thee loyal counsel; abstain from contention; enjoin thy subjects to the observance of the divine laws and of praiseworthy usages; do equal justice between the folk, so they may love thee, great and small, and the froward and corrupt of them may fear thee.'

Then he addressed himself to the amirs and doctors, who were present when he appointed his son to be his successor, saying, 'Beware of transgressing the commandment of your king and neglecting to hearken to your chief, for in this lies ruin for your country and sundering for your union and hurt for your bodies and perdition for your goods, and your enemies would exult over you. Ye know the covenant ye made with me, and even thus shall be your covenant with this youth, and the pact that is between you and me shall be also between you and him; wherefore it behoveth you to give ear unto his commandment and obey him, for that in this is the well-being of your estates. So be ye constant with him unto that wherein ye were with me and your affair shall prosper and your case be good; for, behold, he hath the kingship over you and is the lord of your fortune, and so peace be on you!' Then the death-agony seized him and his tongue was bridled: so he pressed his son to his bosom and kissed him and gave thanks unto God; after which his hour came and his soul departed [his body].

All his subjects and the people of his court mourned over him and they shrouded him and buried him with pomp and honour and reverence; after which they returned with the prince and seating him on the throne of kingship, clad him in the royal robes and crowned him with his father's crown and put the seal-ring on his finger. He ordered himself towards them, a little while, after his father's fashion of mildness and justice and benevolence, till the world waylaid him and tempted him with its lusts, whereupon he seized on its pleasures and turned to its vain delights, forsaking the engagements which his father had commended to him and casting off his obedience to him, neglecting the affairs of his kingdom and walking in a road wherein was his own destruction. In particular, the love of women was stark in him and came to such a

pass that, whenever he heard tell of a fair woman, he would send and take her to wife. After this wise, he collected women more in number than ever had Solomon, son of David, King of the children of Israel, and would shut himself up with a company of them for a month at a time, during which he went not forth neither enquired of his kingdom or its governance nor looked into the grievances of such of his subjects as complained to him; and if they wrote to him, he returned them no answer.

When they saw his neglect of their affairs and interests and those of the state, they were assured that ere long some calamity would betide them and this was grievous to them. So they foregathered privily and took counsel together, and one of them said to the rest, 'Let us go to Shimas, chief of the viziers, and set forth to him our case and acquaint him with the strait wherein we are by reason of this king, so he may admonish him; else, in a little, calamity will betide us, for the world hath intoxicated the king with its delights and beguiled him with its snares.' Accordingly, they repaired to Shimas and said to him, 'O wise and prudent man, the world hath dazed the king with its delights and taken him in its snares, so that he turneth unto vanity and worketh for the disordering of the state. Now with the disordering of the state the commons will be corrupted and our affairs will come to ruin. Months and days we see him not nor cometh there forth from him any commandment to us or to the vizier or whom else. We cannot refer aught to him and he looketh not to the administration of justice nor taketh thought to the case of any of his subjects, in his heedlessness of them. And behold we are come to acquaint thee with the truth of the affair, for that thou art the chiefest and most accomplished of us and it behoveth not that calamity befall a land wherein thou dwellest, seeing that

thou art most able of any to amend this thing. Wherefore go thou and speak with him: belike he will hearken to thy word and return unto God.'

So Shimas arose forthright and repairing to the palace, foregathered with the first of the king's officers to whom he might win and said to him, 'Good my son, I beseech thee ask leave for me to go in to the king, for I have an affair, concerning which I would fain see his face and acquaint him therewith and hear what he shall answer me thereon.' 'O my lord,' answered the officer, 'by Allah, this month past hath he given none leave to come in to him, nor all this time have I looked upon his face; but I will direct thee to one who shall crave admission for thee. Do thou lay hold of such a black, who standeth at his head and bringeth him food from the kitchen. When he cometh forth, to go to the kitchen, ask him what seemeth good to thee; for he will do for thee that which thou desirest.' So the vizier repaired to the door of the kitchen and sat there a little while, till up came the black and would have entered the kitchen; but Shimas [caught hold of him] and said to him, 'O my son, I would fain see the king and speak with him of somewhat that nearly concerneth him; so prithee, of thy kindness, when he hath made an end of his morning-meal and his soul is refreshed, speak thou for me to him and get leave for me to come in to him, so I may bespeak him of that which shall please him.' 'I hear and obey,' answered the black and taking the food, carried it to the king, who ate thereof and his soul was refreshed.

Then said the black to him, 'Shimas standeth at the door and craveth admission, so he may acquaint thee with matters that particularly concern thee.' At this the king was alarmed and disquieted and commanded to admit the vizier. So the black went forth to Shimas and bade him enter; whereupon he went in and prostrating himself before

Night dccccxbiii.

God, kissed the king's hands and called down blessings upon him. Then said the king, 'O Shimas, what hath betided thee that thou seekest admission unto me?' And he answered, saying, 'This long while have I not looked upon the face of my lord the king and indeed I longed sore for thee. So, behold, I have seen thy countenance and come to thee with a word which I would fain say to thee, O king stablished in all prosperity.' Quoth the king, 'Say what seemeth good to thee;' and Shimas said, 'O king, verily God the Most High hath endowed thee, for all the tenderness of thy years, with knowledge and wisdom such as He never vouchsafed unto any of the kings before thee, and hath fulfilled the measure of His bounties to thee with the kingship; and He loveth not that thou depart from that wherewith He hath endowed thee unto other than it, by means of thy disobedience to Him; wherefore it behoveth thee not to wage war upon[1] Him with thy treasures, but to be mindful of His injunctions and obedient unto His commandments. This I say because I have seen thee, this while past, forget thy father and his injunctions and forswear his covenant and neglect his admonition and renounce his justice and wise governance, remembering not God's bounty to thee neither requiting it with gratitude to Him.'

'How so?' asked the king. 'And what is the manner of this?' 'The manner of it,' replied Shimas, 'is that thou neglectest to attend to the affairs of the state and that which God hath committed unto thee of the interests of thy subjects and surrenderest thyself to thine own inclinations, in that which they make fair to thee of the paltry lusts of the world. Verily it is said that the welfare of the state and the faith and the people is of the things over which it behoveth the king to keep watch; wherefore

[1] Syn. (rare) disobey.

it is my counsel, O king, that thou look well to the issue of thine affair, for thus wilt thou find the manifest road wherein is salvation, and give not thyself up to a trifling evanescent delight that leadeth to the abyss of destruction, lest there befall thee that which befell the fisherman.' 'What was that?' asked the king, and Shimas said, 'I have heard tell that

THE FOOLISH FISHERMAN.

A fisherman went forth one day to a certain river, to fish there, as of his wont; and when he came thither and walked upon the bridge, he saw a great fish in the water and said to himself, "It will not serve me to abide here, but I will follow yonder fish whithersoever it goeth, till I take it, for it will dispense me from fishing days and days." So he put off his clothes and plunged into the river after the fish. The current bore him along till he overtook it and laid hold of it, when he turned and found himself far from land. However, he would not loose the fish and return, but ventured himself and gripping it fast with both hands, let his body float with the current, which carried him on till it cast him into a whirlpool which none might enter and be saved therefrom. With this he fell to crying out and saying, "Save a drowning man!" And there came to him folk of the keepers of the river and said to him, "What ailed thee to cast thyself into this grievous peril?" Quoth he, "It was I myself who forsook the plain way wherein was salvation and gave myself over to covetise and perdition." "O fellow," said they, "why didst thou leave the way of safety and cast thyself into this destruction, knowing from of old that none may enter herein and be saved? What hindered thee from throwing away what was in thy hand and saving thyself? So hadst

thou escaped with thy life and not fallen into this perdition, from which there is no deliverance; and now not one of us can rescue thee from this strait." So the man gave up hope of life and lost that which was in his hand and for which his soul had prompted him to venture himself and perished miserably. And I tell thee not this parable, O king,' added Shimas, 'but that thou mayst leave this contemptible thing that diverteth thee from thy duties and look to that which is committed to thee of the governance of thy people and the maintenance of the order of thy kingdom, so that none may see fault in thee.'

'What wouldst thou have me do?' asked the king, and Shimas said, 'To-morrow, if thou be in good health and case, give the folk leave to come in to thee and look into their affairs and excuse thyself to them and promise them good governance and prosperity.' 'O Shimas,' answered the king, 'thou hast spoken advisedly; and to-morrow, if it be the will of God the Most High, I will do that which thou counsellest me.' So the vizier went out from him and told the folk what he had said to him; and on the morrow the king came forth of his seclusion and bade admit the people, to whom he excused himself, promising them that thenceforward he would deal with them as they wished, wherewith they were content and departed each to his dwelling.

Then one of the king's women, who was his best-beloved of them and most in honour with him, went in to him and seeing him pale and thoughtful over his affairs, by reason of that which he had heard from his chief vizier, said to him, 'O king, how comes it that I see thee troubled in mind? Doth aught ail thee?' 'No,' answered he; 'but my pleasures have distracted me from my duties and I know not what hath possessed me to be thus negligent of my affairs and those of my subjects. If I continue on this wise, ere long the kingdom will pass out

of my hand.' 'O king,' rejoined she, 'I see that thou hast been duped by thy viziers and ministers, who wish but to torment and spite thee, so thou mayst have no pleasure of this thy kingship neither enjoy ease nor delight, and would have thee consume thy life in warding off trouble from them, till thy days be wasted in toil and weariness and thou be as one who slayeth himself for another's benefit or like the boy and the thieves.' 'How was that?' asked the king, and she answered, 'It is said that

THE BOY AND THE THIEVES.

Seven thieves once went out to steal, according to their wont, and fell in with a poor orphan boy, who besought them for somewhat to eat. Quoth one of them to him, "Wilt go with us, O boy, and we will feed thee and clothe thee and entreat thee kindly?" And he answered, saying, "Needs must I go with you whithersoever ye will and ye are as my own people." So they took him and fared on with him till they came to a garden, and entering, went round about therein, till they found a walnut-tree laden with ripe fruit and said one to another, "Look which is the lightest and smallest of us and make him climb the tree." And they said, "None of us is smaller than this boy." So they sent him up into the tree and said to him, "O boy, touch not aught of the fruit, lest some one see thee and do thee a mischief." "How then shall I do?" asked he, and they said, "Sit among the boughs and shake them with thy might, so that which is thereon may fall, and we will pick it up. Then, when thou hast made an end of shaking down the fruit, come down and take thy share of that which we have gathered." So he began to shake every branch at

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which he could come, so that the nuts fell and the thieves picked them up and ate [some] and hid [other some] till they were all full, except the boy, who had eaten nought.

As they were thus engaged, up came the owner of the garden and said to them, "What do ye with this tree?" "We have taken nought thereof," answered they; "but we were passing by and seeing yonder boy on the tree, concluded that he was the owner thereof and besought him to give us to eat of the fruit. So he fell to shaking the branches, that the nuts dropped down, and we are not at fault." Quoth the master to the boy, "What sayst thou?" And he answered, "These men lie; but I will tell thee the truth. It is that we all came hither together and they bade me climb the tree and shake its branches, that the nuts might fall down to them, and I obeyed them." "Verily," said the master, "thou hast brought thyself into parlous case; but hast thou profited to eat aught of the fruit?" And he said, "I have eaten nought thereof." "Now know I thy stupidity and folly," rejoined the owner of the garden, "in that thou hast wroughten to ruin thyself and advantage others." Then said he to the thieves, "Go your ways: I have no resort against you." But he laid hands on the boy and punished him. On like wise,' added the favourite, 'thy viziers and officers of state would sacrifice thee to their interests and do with thee as did the thieves with the boy.' 'Thou sayst sooth,' answered the king, 'and I will not go forth to them nor leave my pleasures.'

Then he passed the night with his wife in all delight till the morning, when the chief vizier arose and assembling the officers of state, together with those of the folk who were present with them, repaired with them to the palace, glad and rejoicing [in the anticipation of good]. But the door opened not nor did the king come forth unto them nor give them leave to go in to him. So, when they

despaired of him, they said to Shimas, 'O excellent vizier and accomplished sage, seest thou not the behaviour of this boy, young of years and little of wit, how he addeth falsehood to his offences? See how he hath broken his promise to us and hath failed of that for which he engaged unto us, and this it behoveth thee join to his other sins; but we beseech thee go in to him yet again and see what is the cause of his holding back and refusal to come forth; for we doubt not but that the like of this fashion cometh of his depraved nature, and indeed he hath reached the utmost pitch of stiffneckedness.'

Accordingly, Shimas went in to the king and bespoke him, saying, 'Peace be upon thee, O king! How cometh it that I see thee give thyself up to paltry pleasures and neglect the great affair whereto it behoveth thee apply thyself? Thou art like unto a man, who had a milch-camel and coming one day to milk her, the goodness of her milk caused him forget to hold fast her halter; which whenas she felt, she pulled herself free and made off into the desert. Thus he lost both milk and camel and the mischief that betided him overpassed his profit. Wherefore do thou look unto that wherein is thy welfare and that of thy subjects; for, even as it behoveth not a man to sit for ever at the kitchen door, because he needeth food, so should he not company overmuch with women, by reason of his inclination to them. A man should eat but as much food as will stay his hunger and drink but what will ward off the pangs of thirst; and in like manner it behoveth the man of understanding to content himself with passing two of the four-and-twenty hours of his day with women and spend the rest in ordering his own affairs and those of his people. For to be longer than this in company with women is hurtful both to mind and body, seeing that they command not unto good neither direct thereto: wherefore it behoveth a man to accept from them

neither speech nor deed, for indeed I have heard tell that many men have come to ruin through their women, and amongst others [I have heard tell of] a certain man who perished, for that he obeyed his wife's commandment and had to do with her [at an unseasonable time].' 'How was that?' asked the king, and Shimas answered, saying, 'They tell that

THE MAN AND HIS WILFUL WIFE.

A certain man had a wife whom he loved and honoured, giving ear to her speech and doing according to her counsel. Moreover, he had a garden, which he had newly planted with his own hand, and was wont to go thither every day, to tend and water it. One day his wife said to him, "What hast thou planted in thy garden?" And he answered, "All that thou lovest and desirest, and I am assiduous in tending and watering it." Quoth she, "Wilt thou not carry me thither and show it to me, so I may see it and offer thee up a prayer [for its prosperity], for that my prayers are effectual?" "I will well," answered he; "but have patience with me till the morrow, when I will come and take thee." So, on the morrow, he carried her to the garden and entered with her therein.

Now two young men saw them enter from afar and said to each other, "Yonder man is an adulterer and yonder woman an adulteress, and they have not entered this garden but to do adultery therein." So they followed them, to see what they would do, and hid themselves in a corner of the garden. The man and his wife abode awhile therein, and presently he said to her, "Pray me the prayer thou didst promise me;" but she answered, saying, "I will not pray for thee, until thou fulfil my desire of that which women seek from men." "Out on

thee, O woman!" cried he. "Hast thou not thy fill of me in the house? Here I fear scandal, more by token that thou divertest me from my affairs. Fearest thou not that some one will see us?" Quoth she, "We need have no care for that, seeing that we do neither sin nor lewdness; and as for the watering of the garden, that may wait, for that thou canst water it whenas thou wilt." And she would take neither excuse nor reason from him, but was instant with him in seeking dalliance.

So he arose and lay with her, which when the young men aforesaid saw, they ran upon them and seized them, saying, "We will not let you go, for ye are adulterers, and except we lie with the woman, we will denounce you to the police." "Out on you!" answered the man. "This is my wife and I am the master of the garden." They paid no heed to him, but fell upon the woman, who cried out to him for succour, saying, "Suffer them not to defile me!" So he came up to them, calling out for help; but one of them turned on him and smote him with his dagger and slew him. Then they returned to the woman and ravished her. This I tell thee, O king,' continued the vizier, 'but that thou mayst know that it behoveth not men to give ear unto a woman's talk neither obey her in aught nor accept her judgment in counsel. Beware, then, lest thou don the garment of ignorance, after that of knowledge and wisdom, and follow perverse counsel, after knowing that which is true and profitable. Wherefore ensue thou not a paltry pleasure, whose end is corruption and whose inclining is unto sore and uttermost perdition.'

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When the king heard this, he said to Shimas, 'To-morrow I will come forth to them, if it be the will of God the Most High.' So Shimas returned to the grandees and notables who were present and told them what the king had said. But this came to the ears of the favourite; so she went in to the king and said to him, 'A king's subjects

should be his slaves; but thou art become a slave to thy subjects, for that thou standest in awe of them and fearest their mischief. They do but seek to make proof of thy temper; and if they find thee weak, they will disdain thee; but, if they find thee stout and brave, they will stand in awe of thee. On this wise do ill viziers with their king, for that their wiles are many; but I will make manifest unto thee the truth of their malice. If thou fall in with their demands, they will cause thee leave thy commandment and do their will; nor will they cease to lead thee on from affair to affair, till they cast thee into destruction; and thy case will be as that of the merchant and the thieves.' 'How was that?' asked the king; and she answered, 'I have heard tell that

THE MERCHANT AND THE THIEVES.

There was once a wealthy merchant, who set out for a certain city with merchandise, purposing to sell it there, and when he came thither, he hired a lodging there and took up his abode therein. Now certain thieves saw him, who were wont to lie in wait for merchants, that they might steal their goods; so they went to his house and cast about to enter in, but could find no way thereto, and their captain said, "I will accomplish you his affair." Then he went away and donning a physician's habit, threw over his shoulder a bag containing medicines, with which he set out, crying, "Who lacks a doctor?" and fared on till he came to the merchant's lodging and saw him sitting eating the morning meal. So he said to him, "Dost thou want a physician?" "Not I," answered the merchant; "but sit and eat with me." So the thief sat down over against him and began to eat.

Now this merchant was a great eater; and the thief, seeing this, said to himself, "I have found my opportunity." So he turned to his host and said to him, "It behoveth me to give thee an admonition; and after thy kindness to me, I cannot hide it from thee. I see thee to be a great eater and the cause of this is a disorder in thy stomach; so hasten to take order for thy cure, or thine affair will end in perdition." Quoth the merchant, "My body is sound and my stomach quick of digestion, and though I be a hearty eater, yet is there no disease in me, to God be the praise and the thanks!" "It may so appear unto thee," rejoined the thief; "but I know thou hast a latent disorder in thy vitals and if thou hearken to me, thou wilt medicine thyself." "And where shall I find him who knoweth my remedy?" asked the merchant. "God is the Healer," answered the robber; "but a physician like myself tendeth the sick to the best of his power." And the other said, "Show me my remedy and give me thereof." So he gave him a powder, wherein was great plenty of aloes, saying, "Use this to-night."

When the night came, the merchant tasted the powder and found it nauseous of taste; nevertheless he misdoubted not of it, but swallowed it all and found ease therefrom that night. Next night the thief brought him another powder, wherein was yet more aloes, and he took it. It purged him that night, but he bore with this and rejected it not. When the thief saw that he gave ear unto his word and put trust in him, he brought him a deadly drug and gave it to him. The merchant swallowed it and no sooner had he done this than that which was in his belly fell down and his guts were rent in sunder, and by the morrow he was a dead man; whereupon the thieves came and took all that belonged to him. This,' added the favourite, 'I tell thee, O king, but that thou mayst not give ear to these deluders; else will there befall thee that

whereby thou wilt destroy thyself.' 'Thou sayst sooth,' replied the king; 'I will not go forth to them.'

On the morrow, the folk assembled together and repairing to the king's door, sat there the most part of the day, till they despaired of his coming forth, when they returned to Shimas and said to him, 'O sage philosopher and learned master, seest thou not that this ignorant boy doth but redouble in falsehood to us? Verily it were of reason to take the kingdom from him and give it to another, so our affairs may be set in order and our estates maintained; but go thou in to him a third time and tell him that nought hindereth us from rising against him and taking the kingship from him but [the remembrance] of his father's goodness to us and that which he required from us of oaths and engagements [with respect to him]. However, to-morrow, we will all, to the last of us, assemble here with our arms and break down the gate of the palace; and if he come forth to us and do that which we wish, well and good; else will we go in to him and slay him and put the kingdom in another's hand.'

So Shimas went in to him and said, 'O king, that wallowest in thy lusts and thy pleasures, what is this thou dost with thyself and who prompteth thee thereunto? Indeed, thou sinnest against thyself and there hath ceased from thee that which we knew in thee aforetime of integrity and wisdom and eloquence. Would I knew who hath thus changed thee and turned thee from wisdom to folly and from fidelity to iniquity and from complaisance to stiffneckedness and from acceptance of me to aversion from me! How comes it that I admonish thee thrice and thou neglectest my admonition and that I counsel thee justly and thou still gainsayest my counsel? Tell me, what is this heedlessness and folly and who is it prompteth thee thereunto? Know that the people of thy kingdom have agreed together to come in to thee and slay thee and

give thy kingdom to another. Art thou able to cope with them all and save thyself from their hands or canst thou quicken thyself after slaughter? If, indeed, thou availest to do all this, thou art safe and hast no occasion for my rede; but, if thou have any concern for thy life and thy kingship, return to thy senses and hold fast thy kingdom and show forth to the people the power of thy prowess and acquaint the folk with thine excuse, for they are minded to tear away that which is in thy hand and commit it unto another, being resolved upon revolt and rebellion, impelled thereto by that which they know of thy youth and thy surrender of thyself to lusts and voluptuousness; for that stones, albeit they lie long in water, if thou take them out therefrom and smite one upon another, fire will be struck from them. Now thy subjects are many in number and they have taken counsel together against thee, to transfer the kingship from thee to another and accomplish upon thee that which they desire of thy destruction. So shalt thou fare as did the wolf with the foxes and the lion.' 'How was that?' asked the king, and the vizier answered, 'They say that

Night DCCCCXXI.

THE FOXES AND THE WOLF.

A troop of foxes went out one day to seek food, and as they coasted about in quest of this, they happened upon a dead camel and said to each other, "Verily we have found wherewithal we may live a great while; but we fear lest one of us oppress other and the strong overbear the weak with his strength, and so the weak of us perish; wherefore it behoveth us seek one who shall judge between us and appoint unto each his part, so the strong may not lord it over the weak." As they consulted together, up came a wolf, and some of the foxes said to the others,

"Your counsel is just; let us make this wolf judge between us, for he is the strongest of beasts and his father was sultan over us aforetime; wherefore we hope in God that he will do justice between us." So they accosted the wolf and acquainting him with their determination, said to him, "We make thee judge between us, so thou mayst allot unto each of us his day's meat, after the measure of his need, lest the strong of us overbear the weak and some of us destroy other some."

The wolf consented to take the governance of their affairs and allotted unto each of them what sufficed him that day; but on the morrow he said in himself, "If I divide this camel amongst these weaklings, no part thereof will come to me, save that which they assign to me, and if I eat it alone, they can do me no hurt, seeing that they are a prey to me and to the people of my house. Who shall hinder me from taking it for myself? Surely, it is God who hath bestowed it on me, by way of provision, and no thanks to them. It were best that I keep it for myself, and henceforth I will give them nought." Accordingly, when the foxes came to him, as of wont, and sought of him their food, saying, "O Abou Sirhan,[1] give us our day's provender," he answered, "I have nothing left to give you." Whereupon they went away in the sorriest case, saying, "Verily, God hath cast us into grievous trouble with this vile traitor, that feareth not God neither respecteth Him; but we have neither power nor resource." But one of them said, "Belike it was but stress of hunger that moved him to this; so let him eat his fill to-day, and to-morrow we will go to him again."

So, on the morrow, they again betook themselves to the wolf and said to him, "O Abou Sirhan, we set thee in authority over us, that thou mightest allot unto each of us

[1] Arab popular name for the wolf, answering to our Isengrim.

his day's meat and do the weak justice against the strong of us, and that, when this[1] is finished, thou shouldst do thine endeavour to get us other and so we be still under thy safeguard and protection. Now hunger is sore upon us, for that we have not eaten these two days; so do thou give us our day's meat and thou shalt be free to dispose of the rest as thou wilt." But the wolf returned them no answer and redoubled in his stiffneckedness. So they strove to turn him from his purpose; but he would not be turned. Then said one of the foxes to the rest, "Nothing will serve us but that we go to the lion and cast ourselves on his protection and assign the camel unto him. If he vouchsafe us aught thereof, it will be of his bounty, and if not, he is worthier of it than this filthy fellow."

So they betook themselves to the lion and acquainted him with that which had betided them with the wolf, saying, "We are thy servants and come to thee, imploring thy protection, so thou mayst deliver us from this wolf, and we will be thy slaves." When the lion heard their story, he was jealous for God the Most High and went with them in quest of the wolf, who, seeing him making for him, addressed himself to flight; but the lion ran after him and seizing him, rent him in pieces and restored their prey to the foxes. This shows,' added Shimas, 'that it behoveth no king to neglect the affairs of his subjects; wherefore do thou hearken to my counsel and give credit to that which I say to thee; for thou knowest that thy father, before his decease, charged thee give ear unto loyal counsel. This is the last of my speech with thee and peace be on thee.' Quoth the king, 'I will hearken to thee and to-morrow, God willing, I will go forth to them.'

So Shimas went forth from him and returning to the

[1] *i.e.* the dead camel.

folk, told them that the king had accepted his counsel and promised to come out unto them on the morrow. But, when the favourite heard this saying reported of Shimas and knew that needs must the king go forth to his subjects, she betook herself to him and said to him, 'How great is my wonderment at thy submissiveness and obedience to thy slaves! Knowst thou not that these viziers are thy servants? Why then dost thou exalt them to such a pitch of importance that they conceit them it was they gave thee this kingship and advanced thee to this height and that it is they who confer favours on thee, albeit they have no power to do thee the least hurt? Indeed, it is they who owe thee submission, not thou who owest it unto them, and it is their duty to carry out thine orders; so how cometh it that thou art so mightily affrighted at them? It is said, "Except thy heart be like iron, thou art not fit to be a king." But thy mildness hath deluded these men, so that they presume upon thee and cast off their allegiance to thee, albeit it behoveth that they be constrained unto obedience and enforced to submissiveness unto thee. If, therefore, thou hasten to accept their words and leave them in their present case and fulfil to them the least thing against thy will, they will importune thee and presume upon thee, and this will become their wont. But, if thou hearken to me, thou wilt not advance any one of them to power neither wilt thou accept his word nor encourage him to presume upon thee; else wilt thou fare with them as did the shepherd with the robber.' 'How was that?' asked the king, and she answered, 'They say that

THE SHEPHERD AND THE THIEF.

There was once a shepherd, who fed a flock of sheep in the desert and kept strait watch over them. One night, there came to him a thief, thinking to steal some of his flock and finding him assiduous in guarding them, sleeping not by night neither relaxing in his vigilance by day, prowled about him all night, but could get nothing of him. So, when he was weary of striving, he betook himself to [another part of] the desert and trapping a lion, skinned him and stuffed his hide with straw; after which he carried it to a high place, where the shepherd might see it and be assured thereof, and set it up there. Then he went up to the shepherd and said to him, "Yonder lion hath sent me to demand his supper of these sheep." "Where is the lion?" asked the shepherd; and the thief answered, "Lift thine eyes: there he stands."

Night dccccxxii. The shepherd raised his eyes and seeing the stuffed hide, deemed it a very lion and was mightily affrighted; so he said to the thief, "O my brother, take what thou wilt. I will not anywise gainsay thee." So the thief took what he would of the sheep and redoubled in avidity by reason of the excess of the shepherd's affright. Accordingly, every little while, he would go to him and frighten him, saying, "The lion hath need of this and that, and his intent is to do thus and thus," and take what he would of the sheep; and he stinted not to do thus with him, till he had wasted the most part of his flock. This, O king,' added the favourite, 'I tell thee but that thou suffer not the grandees of thy realm to be deluded by thy mildness and easiness of temper and presume on thee; and in sound judgment their death were better than that they deal thus with thee.' Quoth the king, 'I accept this thine

admonition and will not hearken to their counsel neither go out unto them.'

On the morrow the viziers and officers of state and heads of the people assembled and taking each his arms, repaired to the palace of the king, so they might break in upon him and slay him and make another king in his stead. When they came to the door, they required the doorkeeper to open to them; but he refused, whereupon they sent to fetch fire, wherewith to burn down the doors and enter. The doorkeeper, hearing what was toward amongst them, went in to the king in haste and told him that the folk were gathered together at the gate. 'And,' quoth he, 'they required me to open to them, but I refused and they have sent to fetch fire to burn down the doors withal, so they may come in to thee and slay thee. What dost thou bid me do?' Quoth the king in himself, 'Verily, I am fallen into sheer perdition.'

Then he sent for the favourite and said to her, 'Indeed, Shimas never told me aught but I found it true, and now the folk are come, great and small, purposing to slay me and thee; and for that the doorkeeper would not open to them, they have sent to fetch fire, to burn the doors withal: so will the house be burnt and we therein. What dost thou counsel me to do?' 'Let not thine affair affright thee,' answered she; 'no harm shall betide thee. This is a time in which crackbrains rise against their kings.' 'But what,' asked he, 'dost thou counsel me and how shall I do in this matter?' Quoth she, 'My advice is that thou bind thy head with a fillet and feign thyself sick: then send for the vizier Shimas, who will come and see the case wherein thou art; and do thou say to him, "Verily I purposed to go forth to the folk this day; but this sickness hindered me. So go thou out to them and acquaint them with my case and tell them that to-morrow I will without fail come forth to them and do their occasions

and look into their affairs, so they may be reassured and their anger may subside." Then do thou summon ten of thy father's stoutest slaves, men of strength and prowess, to whom thou canst entrust thyself, giving ear to thy word and obedient to thy commandment, keeping thy secret and devoted to thy love, and bid them on the morrow stand at thy head nor suffer any of the folk to enter, save one by one; and all who enter do thou bid them put to death. If they agree with thee upon this, do thou to-morrow set up thy throne in the audience-chamber and open thy doors.

When the folk see that thou hast opened thy doors, their minds will be set at ease and they will come to thee with a whole heart, [thinking no evil], and seek admission to thee. Then do thou bid admit them, one by one, even as I said to thee, and do thy will with them; but it behoveth thee begin by putting Shimas, their chief and leader, to death; for he is the Grand Vizier and head of the matter. So slay him first and after put all the rest to death, one after another, and spare none whom thou knowest to have broken his covenant with thee; and on like wise slay all whose violence thou fearest. If thou deal thus with them, there will be left them no power to make head against thee; so shalt thou be altogether at rest from them and shalt enjoy thy kingship in peace and do what thou wilt; and know that there is no device that will advantage thee more than this.' 'Verily,' said the king, 'this thy counsel is just and that which thou biddest me well-advised, and I will assuredly do as thou sayest.'

So he called for a fillet and bound his head therewith and feigned sickness. Then he sent for Shimas and said to him, 'O Shimas, thou knowest that I love thee and hearken to thy counsel and thou art to me as brother and father both in one. Moreover, thou knowest that I do all thou biddest me and indeed thou badest me go forth to the folk and sit to judge between them. Now I was

certified that this was loyal counsel on thy part and purposed to go forth to them yesterday; but this sickness betided me and I cannot sit up. I hear that the folk are incensed at my failure to come forth to them and are minded of their malice to do with me that which is not seemly, for that they know not what aileth me. So go thou forth to them and acquaint them with my case and excuse me to them, for I am obedient to their bidding and will do according to their desire; wherefore do thou order this affair and engage thyself to them for me of this, for that thou hast been a loyal counsellor to me and to my father before me, and it is of thy wont to make peace between the folk. To-morrow, if it be the will of God the Most High, I will without fail come forth to them, and peradventure my sickness will cease from me this night, by the blessing of the purity of my intent and the good I purpose them in my heart.'

Shimas prostrated himself to God and called down blessings on the king and kissed his hand, rejoicing. Then he went forth to the folk and told them what he had heard from the king and forbade them from that which they had a mind to do, acquainting them with the king's excuse for his absence and that he had promised to come forth to them on the morrow and deal with them according to their wishes; whereupon they dispersed and returned to their houses.

Meanwhile the king sent for ten slaves of gigantic stature, men of stout heart and great prowess, whom he had chosen from amongst his father's body-guards, and said to them, 'Ye know the favour and esteem in which my father held you and all the bounties and honours he bestowed on you, and I will advance you to yet higher rank with me than this. Now I will tell you the reason thereof and ye are under God's safeguard from me. But [first] I will ask you of somewhat, wherein if ye do my bidding, obeying me in that which I shall command you

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and keeping my secret from all men, ye shall have of me largesse and favour overpassing your desire.'

The slaves answered him with one voice, saying, 'All that thou biddest us, O our lord, will we do, nor will we anywise depart from thy commandment, for thou art our lord and master.' 'God be good to you!' said the king. 'Now will I tell you why I have chosen you out for increase of honour with me. Ye know how generously my father dealt with the people of his dominions and the oath he took from them on my behalf and how they promised him that they would not break faith with me nor gainsay my commandment; and ye saw how they did yesterday, whenas they came all together about me and would have slain me. Now I am minded to do with them somewhat, to wit, I have considered their fashion of yesterday and see that nought but exemplary chastisement will restrain them from the like of this; wherefore I charge you privily to put to death whom I shall point out to you, to the intent that, by slaying their leaders and chiefs, I may ward off evil and calamity from my realm; and the manner thereof shall be on this wise. To-morrow I will sit in this chair in this chamber and give them leave to enter, one by one, coming in at one door and going out at another; and do ye stand, all ten, before me and be attentive to my signs; and whoso enters singly, take him and drag him into yonder chamber and slay him and hide his body.' The slaves answered, 'We hearken to thy word and obey thy commandment.' Whereupon he gave them largesse and dismissed them.

On the morrow he summoned the slaves and bade set up the throne. Then he donned his royal robes and taking the book of the law[1] in his hands, posted the ten slaves before

[1] Lit. the book of judgment or jurisdiction (*kitab el kedsäa*). *Quære* the list of cases to be decided or business to be transacted by the king and his divan in public session.

him and commanded to open the doors. So they opened the doors and the herald proclaimed aloud, saying, 'Whoso hath authority, let him come to the king's carpet!'[1] Whereupon up came the viziers and prefects and chamberlains and stood, each in his rank. Then the king bade admit them, one by one, and the first to enter was Shimas, after the wont of the chief vizier; but no sooner had he presented himself before the king than the ten slaves set upon him, ere he could be ware, and dragging him into the adjoining chamber, despatched him. On like wise did they with the rest of the viziers and doctors and notables, slaying them, one after another, till they made an end of them all. Then the king called the headsmen and bade them put to the sword all who remained of the folk of valour and prowess. So they fell on them and left none whom they knew for a man of mettle but they slew him, sparing only the dregs and refuse of the people. These latter they drove away and they returned each to his folk, whilst the king secluded himself with his pleasures and surrendered his soul to its lusts, ensuing tyranny and oppression and unright, till he outwent all the men of evil who had foregone him.

Now this king's realm was a mine of gold and silver and jacinths and jewels and the neighbouring kings envied him this empire and looked for calamity to betide him. Moreover, one of them [to wit, the King of Farther India] said in himself, 'Now have I gotten my desire of wresting the realm from the hand of yonder crackbrained boy, by reason of that which hath betided of his slaughter of the chiefs of his state and of all the men of valour and mettle that were in his dominions. Now is my occasion to snatch away that which is in his hand, seeing he hath no knowledge of war nor judgment thereto, nor is there any left to counsel him aright or succour him. Wherefore

[1] *i.e.* court.

this very day will I open on him the door of mischief by writing him a letter wherein I will flout him and reproach him with that which he hath done and see what he will answer.'

So he wrote him a letter to the following effect: 'In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful! I have heard tell of that which thou hast done with thy viziers and doctors and men of war and that whereinto thou hast cast thyself of calamity, so that there is neither power nor strength left in thee to repel whoso shall assail thee, more by token that thou transgressest and orderest thyself tyrannously and profligately. Now God hath given me the mastery over thee and hath delivered thee into my hand; wherefore do thou give ear to my word and obey my commandment and build me an impregnable castle amiddleward the sea. If thou canst not do this, depart thy realm and begone with thy life; for I will send unto thee, from the farthest parts of Hind, twelve squadrons of horse, each twelve thousand fighting-men strong, who shall enter thy land and spoil thy goods and slay thy men and take thy women prisoners. Moreover, I will make my Vizier Bediya captain over them and bid him lay strait siege [to thy capital city] till he master it; and I have commanded the bearer of this letter that he tarry with thee but three days. So, if thou do my bidding, thou shalt be saved; else will I send unto thee that which I have said.'

Then he sealed the letter and gave it to a messenger, who journeyed with it till he came to Wird Khan's capital and delivered it to him. When the young king read it, his heart sank within him and his breast was straitened and he made sure of destruction, having none to whom he might resort for counsel or succour. So he rose and went in to his favourite, who, seeing him changed of colour, said to him, 'What ails thee, O king?' Quoth

he, 'To-day I am no king, but slave to the king.' And he opened the letter and read it to her, whereupon she fell to weeping and lamenting and tearing her clothes. Then said he to her, 'Hast thou aught of counsel or resource in this grievous strait?' But she answered, 'Women have no resource in time of war, nor have they strength or judgment. It is men alone who have strength and judgment and resource in the like of this affair.'

When the king heard this, there befell him the utmost grief and repentance and remorse for that wherein he had transgressed against his viziers and officers and the nobles of his people and the chiefs of his state, and he would that he had died ere there came to him the like of this shameful news. Then he said to his women, 'Verily, there hath betided me from you that which befell the heathcock with the tortoises.' 'What was that?' asked they, and he answered, 'It is said that

Night dccccxxiv.

THE HEATHCOCK AND THE TORTOISES.

A number of tortoises dwelt once in a certain island, abounding in trees and fruits and streams, and it chanced, one day, that a heathcock, passing over the island, was overcome with heat and weariness and stayed his flight there. Presently, looking about for a cool place, he espied the resort of the tortoises and lighted down therein. Now they were then abroad in quest of food, and when they returned from their feeding-places to their dwelling, they found the heathcock there. His beauty pleased them and God made him fair in their eyes, so that they extolled their Creator and loved the heathcock with an exceeding love and rejoiced in him, saying one to another, "Assuredly this is of the goodliest of the birds." And they began to caress him and entreat him with kindness. When he saw

that they looked on him with eyes of affection, he inclined to them and made friends with them and took up his abode with them, flying away in the morning whither he would and returning at eventide to pass the night with them.

After awhile, the tortoises, seeing that his [daylong] absence from them desolated them and finding that they saw him not but by night, (for at break of day he still took flight in haste and they knew not what came of him, for all their love to him,) said to each other, "Indeed, we love this heathcock and he is become our friend and we cannot brook parting from him; so how shall we do to make him abide with us always? For he flies away at daybreak and is absent from us all day and we see him not save by night." Quoth one of them, "Be easy, O my sisters. I will bring him not to leave us for the twinkling of an eye." And the rest answered, saying, "An thou do this, we will all be thy slaves."

So, when the heathcock came back from his feeding-place and sat down amongst them, the wily tortoise drew near unto him and called down blessings on him, giving him joy of his safe return and saying, "O my lord, know that God hath vouchsafed thee our love and hath in like manner set in thy heart the love of us, so that thou art become to us a familiar friend and a comrade in this desert place. Now the goodliest of times for those who love each other is when they are in company and the sorest of afflictions for them is absence and separation. But thou leavest us at peep of day and returnest not to us till sundown, wherefore there betideth us sore desolation. Indeed this is exceeding grievous unto us and we abide in sore longing by reason thereof."

"Indeed," answered the bird, "I love you also and yearn for you yet more than you for me, nor is it easy for me to leave you; but I have no help for this, seeing

that I am a bird with wings and may not abide with you always, because that is not of my nature. For a bird, being a winged creature, may not remain still, except it be for the sake of sleep at night; but, as soon as it is day, he flies away and seeks his food in what place soever pleases him." "True," answered the tortoise. "Nevertheless he who hath wings hath no repose at most seasons, for that the good he getteth is not a fourth part of the trouble that betideth him, and the best of all the things for which one striveth is ease of life and contentment. Now God hath appointed love and fellowship between us and thee and we fear for thee, lest some of thine enemies catch thee and thou perish and we be denied the sight of thy face." "Thou sayst sooth," rejoined the heathcock; "but how dost thou counsel me to do?" Quoth the tortoise, "My advice is that thou pluck out thy wing-feathers, wherewith thou speedest thy flight, and abide with us in peace, eating of our meat and drinking of our drink in this pasturage, that aboundeth in trees laden with ripe fruits, and thou and we, we will sojourn in this fruitful place and enjoy each other's company."

The heathcock inclined to her speech, seeking ease for himself, and plucked out his wing-feathers, one by one, in accordance with the tortoise's counsel; then he took up his abode with them and contented himself with the little ease and passing pleasure he enjoyed. Presently up came a weasel and looking at the heathcock, saw that his wings were plucked, so that he could not fly, whereat he was mightily rejoiced and said in himself, "Verily yonder heathcock is fat and scant of feather." So he went up to him and seized him, whereupon the heathcock called out to the tortoises for help; but, when they saw the weasel seize him, they drew apart from him and huddled together, choked with weeping for him, for they saw the beast torture him. Quoth the heathcock, "Is there aught but

weeping with you?" And they answered, saying, "O our brother, we have neither strength nor power nor resource against a weasel." At this the heathcock was grieved and gave up hope of life; and he said to them, "The fault is not yours, but mine own, in that I hearkened to you and plucked out my wing-feathers, wherewith I used to fly. Indeed, I deserve death for having hearkened to you, and I blame you not in aught."

On like wise,' continued the king, 'I do not blame you, O women; but I blame and reproach myself for that I remembered not that ye were the cause of the transgression of our father Adam, by reason whereof he was cast out from Paradise, but forgot that ye are the root of all evil and hearkened to you, of my ignorance and folly and lack of sense and judgment, and slew my viziers and the governors of my state, who were my loyal counsellors in all things and my glory and my strength against whatsoever troubled me. Now find I not one to replace them and see none who shall stand me in their stead; and except God succour me with one of sound judgment, who shall guide me to that wherein is my deliverance, I am fallen into sheer perdition.' Then he arose and withdrew into his bedchamber, bemoaning his viziers and governors and saying, 'Would God those lions were with me, though but for an hour, so I might excuse myself unto them and look on them and make my moan to them of my case and that which hath betided me after them!' And he abode all that day sunken in the sea of troublous thought, eating not neither drinking.

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When the night came, he arose and changing his raiment, donned old clothes and disguised himself and went forth at a venture to walk about the city, so haply he might hear some comfortable word. As he wandered about the streets, he chanced upon two boys of equal age, each about twelve years old, who sat talking under

a wall: so he drew near them whereas he might hear and apprehend what they said, unseen of them, and heard one say to the other, 'O my brother, hear what my father told me yesternight of the calamity that hath betided him in the withering of his crops, before their time, by reason of the lack of rain and the great affliction that is fallen on this city.' Quoth the other, 'Knowst thou not the cause of this affliction?' 'Not I,' answered the first. 'I prithee, tell it me, if thou know it.' 'Yes,' rejoined the second; 'I know it and will tell it thee. Know that I have heard from one of my father's friends that our king put his viziers and ministers to death, without offence done of them, by reason of his love for women and inclination to them; for that his viziers forbade him from this, but he would not be forbidden and commanded to slay them, in obedience to his women. Thus he killed Shimas my father, who was his vizier and the vizier of his father before him and the chief of his council; but thou shalt see how God will do with him by reason of his sins against them and how He shall avenge them of him.' 'How so?' asked the first boy.

'Know,' replied his fellow, 'that the King of Farther India maketh light of our king and hath sent him a letter, rating him and saying to him, "Build me a castle amiddleward the sea, or I will send unto thee Bediya my vizier, with twelve squadrons of horse, each twelve thousand strong, to seize upon thy kingdom and slay thy men and take thee and thy women prisoners." And he hath given him three days' time to answer. Now thou must know, O my brother, that this King of Farther India is a masterful tyrant, a man of might and exceeding prowess, and in his realm are much people; wherefore, except our king make shift to fend him off from himself, he will fall into perdition, whilst the King of Hind will seize on our possessions and slay our men and make

prize of our women.' When the king heard this talk, his agitation redoubled and he inclined to the boys, saying, 'Surely, this boy is a wizard, in that he is acquainted with this thing; for the letter is with me and the secret also and none hath knowledge of this matter but myself. How then knoweth this boy of it? I will resort unto him and talk with him and I pray God that our deliverance may be at his hand.'

Then he approached the boy softly and said to him, 'O dear boy, what is this thou sayest of our king, that he did ill to the utterest in slaying his viziers and the chiefs of his state? Indeed, he sinned against himself and his people and thou art right in that which thou sayest. But tell me, O my son, whence knowest thou that the King of Farther India hath written him a letter, berating him and bespeaking him with the grievous speech whereof thou tellest?' 'O brother,' answered the boy, 'I know this from the sand[1] wherewith I tell the tale of night and day and from the saying of the ancients, "No mystery is hidden from God;" for the sons of Adam have in them a spiritual virtue which discovers to them hidden secrets.' 'True, O my son,' answered Wird Khan; 'but whence learnedst thou the [art of divination by] sand, and thou young of years?' Quoth the boy, 'My father taught it me;' and the king said, 'Is thy father alive or dead?' 'He is dead,' answered the boy.

Then said Wird Khan, 'Is there any resource or device for our king, whereby he may ward off this sore calamity from himself and his kingdom?' And the boy answered, 'It befits not that I speak with thee [of this]; but, if the king send for me and ask me how he shall do to baffle his enemy and win free of his snares, I will acquaint him with that wherein, by the power of God the Most High,

[1] *i.e.* by means of geomancy or divination by sand.

shall be his deliverance.' 'But who shall tell the king of this,' asked Wird Khan, 'that he may send for thee?' Quoth the boy, 'If I hear that he seeketh men of experience and good counsel, I will go up with them to him and tell him that wherein shall be his welfare and the warding off of this affliction from him; but, if he neglect this pressing matter and busy himself with his pleasures among his women and I go to him of my own motion, purposing to acquaint him with the means of deliverance, he will assuredly give orders to slay me, even as he slew those his viziers, and my courtesy to him will be the cause of my destruction; wherefore the folk will think meanly of me and belittle my wit and I shall be of those of whom it is said, "He whose learning exceeds his wit perishes by his ignorance."'

When the king heard the boy's speech, he was assured of his sagacity and the excellence of his merit was manifest unto him. So he was certified that deliverance would betide him and his subjects at the boy's hands and said to him, 'Whence art thou and where is thy house?' 'This is the wall of our house,' answered he. The king took note of the place and leaving the boy, returned to his palace, rejoicing. There he changed his clothes and called for meat and drink, forbidding his women access to him. Then he ate and drank and returned thanks to God the Most High and besought Him of succour and deliverance. Moreover he craved His pardon and forgiveness for that which he had done with his counsellors of state and ministers and turned to Him with sincere repentance, imposing on himself prayer and fasting galore, by way of votive offering.

On the morrow, he called one of his chief officers and describing to him the boy's abiding-place, bade him go thither and bring him to his presence with all gentleness. So the officer sought out the boy and said to him, 'The

king bids thee to him, that good may betide thee from him and that he may ask thee a question; then shalt thou return in peace to thy dwelling.' 'What is the king's occasion with me?' asked the boy, and the officer said, 'My lord's occasion with thee is question and answer.' 'A thousand times hearkening and a thousand times obedience to the commandment of the king!' answered the boy and accompanied the officer to the palace. When he came into the presence, he prostrated himself before God and saluting the king, called down blessings on him. Wird Khan returned his salutation and bade him sit. So he sat down and the king said to him, 'Knowst thou who talked with thee yesternight?' 'Yes,' answered the boy, and the king said, 'And where is he?' 'It is he who speaketh with me at this present,' replied the boy. 'Thou sayst sooth, O friend,' rejoined the king and bade set him a chair beside his own, whereon he made him sit and called for meat and drink.

Night DCCCCXXVI.

Then they talked awhile and the king said, 'O vizier,[1] thou toldest me yesternight that thou hadst a device wherewith thou couldst fend off from us the malice of the King of Hind. What is this device and how shall we contrive to ward off his mischief from us? Tell me, that I may make thee chief of those who speak with me in the realm and choose thee to be my vizier and do according to thy judgment in all thou counsellest me and assign thee a splendid recompense.' 'O king,' answered the boy, 'keep thy recompense to thyself and seek counsel and policy of thy women, who counselled thee to slay my father Shimas and the rest of the viziers.' When the king heard this, he was confounded and sighed and said, 'O dear boy, was Shimas indeed thy father?' 'Yes,' answered the boy; 'Shimas was indeed my father and I am in truth

[1] A courtesy title, to which the boy was entitled as a vizier's son.

his son.' Whereupon the king bowed his head, whilst the tears ran from his eyes, and he craved pardon of God.

Then said he, 'O boy, indeed I did this of my ignorance and by the evil counsel of the women and of the greatness of their malice; but I beseech thee to forgive me and I will set thee in thy father's stead and make thy rank higher than his. Moreover, if thou do away this retribution from us, I will encircle thy neck with a collar of gold and mount thee on the goodliest of steeds and bid the crier make proclamation before thee, saying, "This is the glorious boy, he who sitteth in the second seat after the king!" As for the women, I have it in mind to do vengeance on them at such time as God the Most High shall will it. But tell me now what thou hast with thee of counsel and contrivance, that my heart may be at ease.' Quoth the boy, 'Swear to me that thou wilt not gainsay me in that which I shall say to thee and that I shall be in safety from that which I fear.' And the king answered, 'This is the covenant of God between thee and me, that I will not go from thy word and that thou shalt be my chief counsellor and whatsoever thou biddest me, that will I do; and God the Most High is witness betwixt us of what I say.'

Therewith the boy's breast dilated and the field of speech was opened to him wide and he said, 'O king, my counsel to thee is that thou wait till the expiration of the delay appointed by thee for returning an answer to the courier of the King of Hind; and when he cometh to thee, seeking the answer, do thou put him off to another day. With this he will excuse himself to thee, on the score of his master having appointed him certain fixed days, and press thee for an answer; but do thou rebut him and put him off to another day, without specifying it. Then will he go forth from thee, angry, and betake himself into the midst of the city and speak openly among

the folk, saying, "O people of the city, I am a courier of the King of Farther India, who is a king of great might and of determination such as softeneth iron. He sent me with a letter to the king of this city and limited unto me certain days, saying, 'An thou be not with me by the time appointed, my vengeance shall fall on thee.' Now, behold, I went in to the king of this city and gave him the letter, which when he had read, he sought of me a delay of three days, after which he should return me an answer thereto, and I agreed to this of courtesy and consideration for him. When the three days were past, I went to seek the answer of him, but he put me off to another day; and now I have no patience to wait longer; so I am about to return to my lord the King of Farther India and acquaint him with that which hath befallen me; and ye, O folk, are witnesses between me and him."

This will be reported to thee and do thou send for him and bespeak him gently and say to him, "O thou that strivest for thine own destruction, what moveth thee to blame us among our subjects? Verily, thou deservest present death at our hands; but the ancients say, 'Clemency is of the attributes of the noble.' Know that our delay in answering thy master's letter arose not from neglect on our part, but from our much business and lack of leisure to look into thine affair and write a reply to thy king." Then call for the letter and read it again and laugh immoderately and say to the courier, "Hast thou a letter other than this? If so, we will write thee an answer to that also." He will say, "I have none other than this letter;" but do thou repeat thy question to him a second and a third time, and he will reply, "I have none other at all." Then say to him, "Verily, this thy king lacketh wit in that he writeth us the like of this letter, seeking to arouse our anger against him, so that we shall go forth to him with our troops and invade his

dominions and take his realm. But we will not punish him this time for the vileness of his breeding, [as shown] in this letter, for that he is scant of wit and weak of judgment, and it beseemeth our dignity that we first admonish him and warn him not to repeat the like of these extravagances; and if he again adventure himself and return to the like of this, he will merit present destruction. Indeed, methinks this king of thine must be an ignorant fool, taking no thought to the issue [of that he doth] and having no vizier of sense and good counsel, with whom he may advise. Were he a man of sense, he had taken counsel with a vizier, before sending us the like of this ridiculous letter. But he shall have an answer like unto his letter and overpassing it; for I will give it to one of the boys of the school to answer." Then send for me, and when I come, bid me read the letter and answer it.'

When the king heard the boy's speech, his breast expanded and he approved his counsel and his device pleased him. So he conferred largesse upon him and instating him in his father's office, sent him away, rejoicing. When the three days of delay were expired, that he had appointed unto the courier, the latter presented himself and going in to the king, demanded the answer; but he put him off to another day; whereupon he went to the end of the throne-room and spake unseemly, even as the boy had foresaid. Then he betook himself to the bazaar and said, 'Ho, people of this city, I came with a message from the King of Farther India to your king, and still he putteth me off from an answer. Now the term is past which my master limited unto me and your king hath no excuse, and ye are witnesses unto this.'

When this speech was reported to the king, he sent for the courier and said to him, 'O thou that seekest thine own destruction, art thou not the bearer of a letter

from king to king, between whom are secrets, and how cometh it that thou goest forth among the folk and publishest kings' secrets to the common people? Verily, thou meritest punishment from us; but this we will forbear, for the sake of returning an answer by thee to this fool of a king of thine: and it befitteth not that any return him an answer but the least of the boys of the school.' Then he sent for the vizier's son, who came and prostrating himself to God, offered up prayers for the king's abiding glory and long life; whereupon Wird Khan threw him the letter, saying, 'Read that letter and write me a reply thereto in haste.'

The boy took the letter and reading it, smiled; then he laughed aloud and said to the king, 'Didst thou send for me to answer this letter?' 'Yes,' answered Wird Khan, and the boy said, 'O king, methought thou hadst sent for me on some grave matter; indeed a lesser than I had availed to the answering of this letter; but it is thine to command, O puissant king.' Quoth the king, 'Write the answer forthright, on account of the courier, for that he is appointed a term and we have delayed him another day.' 'I hear and obey,' answered the boy and pulling out paper and inkhorn, wrote the following answer.

Night DCCCCXXVII. 'In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate! Peace be upon him who hath gotten pardon and deliverance and the mercy of the Compassionate One! To proceed. O thou that pretendest thyself a mighty king [and art but a king] in word and not in deed, we give thee to know that thy letter hath reached us and we have read it and have taken note of that which is therein of absurdities and rare extravagances, whereby we are certified of thine ignorance and ill-will unto us. Verily, thou hast put out thy hand to that whereunto thou availest not, and but that we have compassion on God's creatures and the people, we had not held back [our hand] from

thee. As for thy messenger, he went forth to the bazaar and published the news of thy letter to great and small, whereby he merited punishment from us; but we spared him and remitted his offence, not of respect for thee, but of pity for him, seeing that he is excusable with thee.

As for that whereof thou makest mention in thy letter of the slaughter of my viziers and wise men and grandees, this is the truth and [this I did] for a reason that availed with me, and I slew not one man of learning but there are with me a thousand of his kind, wiser than he and more of sense and learning, nor is there with me a child but is filled with knowledge and wisdom, and I have, in the stead of each of the slain, of those who surpass in his kind, what is beyond count. Moreover, each of my troops can cope with a battalion of thine, whilst, as for treasure, I have a manufactory that makes every day a thousand pounds of silver, besides gold, and precious stones are with me as pebbles; and as for the people of my kingdom, I cannot set forth to thee their wealth and beauty and goodliness. How darest thou, therefore, presume upon us and say to us, "Build me a castle amiddleward the sea"? Verily, this is a marvellous thing, and doubtless it arises from the slenderness of thy wit; for, hadst thou aught of sense, thou hadst enquired of the beatings of the waves and the movements of the winds. But fend thou off therefrom the waves and the surges of the sea and still the winds, and we will build thee the castle.

As for thy pretension that thou wilt vanquish me, God forfend that the like of thee should lord it over us and conquer our realm! Nay, God the Most High hath given me the mastery over thee, for that thou hast transgressed against me and provoked me without due cause. Know, therefore, that thou hast merited chastisement from God and from me; but I fear God in respect of thee and thy

subjects[1] and will not take horse against thee but after warning. Wherefore, if thou fear God, hasten to send me this year's tribute; else will I not leave to ride forth against thee with a thousand thousand and a hundred thousand fighting-men, all giants on elephants, and I will range them round about my vizier and bid him beleaguer thee three years, in place of the three days' delay thou appointedst to thy messenger, and I will make myself master of thy kingdom, except that I will slay none but thyself alone and make prisoners therefrom none but thy harem.'

Then the boy drew his own portrait in the margin of the letter and wrote thereunder the words: 'This answer was written by the least of the boys of the school;' after which he sealed it and handed it to the king. The latter gave it to the courier, who took it and kissing the king's hands, went forth from him, rendering thanks to God and the king for the latter's clemency to him and marvelling at the boy's intelligence. He arrived at the court of the king, his master, three days after the expiration of the term appointed to him, and found that he had called a meeting of his council, by reason of the failure of the courier to return at the appointed time. So he went in to the king and prostrating himself before him, gave him the letter. The king took it and questioned him of the cause of his tarrying and how it was with King Wird Khan. So he recounted to him all that he had seen with his eyes and heard with his ears; whereat the king's wit was confounded and he said, 'Out on thee! What tale is this thou tellest me of the like of this king?' 'O mighty king,' answered the courier, 'I am here before thee,[2] but open the letter and read it, and the truth of my speech will appear to thee.'

[1] *i.e.* I am governed by the fear of God in my conduct towards thee and thy subjects.

[2] *i.e.* I am thy slave; do with me what thou wilt.

So the king opened the letter and read it and seeing the portrait of the boy who had written it, made sure of the loss of his kingdom and was perplexed concerning the issue of his affair. Then, turning to his viziers and grandees, he acquainted them with the case and read them the letter, whereat they were mightily affrighted and sought to calm the king's terror with words that were only from the tongue, whilst their hearts were torn with alarm and anxiety; but Bediya, the chief vizier, said, 'Know, O king, that there is no avail in that which my brother viziers have said, and it is my counsel that thou write this king a letter and excuse thyself to him therein, saying, "I love thee and loved thy father before thee and sent thee this letter by the courier only to prove thee and try thy constancy and see what was in thee of stoutness and thy proficiency in matters practical and theoretical and skill in enigmas and that wherewith thou art endowed of all perfections. Wherefore we pray God the Most High to bless thee in thy kingdom and strengthen the defences of thy [capital] city and add to thy dominion, since thou art mindful of thyself and accomplishest the needs of thy subjects." And send it to him by another courier.' 'By the Great God,' exclaimed the king, 'it is a wonder of wonders that this man should be a mighty king and prepared for war, after his slaughter of all the wise men of his kingdom and his counsellors and the captains of his host and that his realm should prosper after this and there should issue therefrom this vast strength! But the most wonderful of all is that the little ones of its schools should return the like of this answer for its king. Verily, of my ill-omened presumption, I have kindled this fire upon myself, and I know not how I shall quench it, save [by acting on] the advice of this my vizier.'

Accordingly he made ready a rich present, with slaves and attendants galore, and wrote the following letter [in

answer to that of Wird Khan]. 'In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! To proceed. O glorious King Wird Khan, son of my dear brother Jelyaad, may God have mercy on thee and continue thee [on life!] Thine answer to our letter hath reached us and we have read it and apprehended its meaning and see therein that which rejoiceth us, and this is the utmost of that which we sought of God for thee; wherefore we beseech Him to exalt thy dignity and stablish the pillars of thy state and give thee the victory over thy foes and those who purpose thee ill. Know, O king, that thy father was my brother and that there were between us in his lifetime pacts and covenants of friendship, and never had he of me nor I of him other than good; and when he was translated [to the mercy of God] and thou sattest upon the throne of his kingship, there betided us the utmost joy and contentment; but, when the news reached us of that which thou didst with thy viziers and the notables of thy state, we feared lest the report of thee should come to the ears of some king other than ourselves and he should presume against thee, for that we deemed thee neglectful of thine affairs and of the maintenance of thy defences and careless of the interests of thy kingdom; so we wrote unto thee what should arouse thee [from thy torpor]. But, when we saw that thou returnedst us the like of this answer, our heart was set at ease for thee, may God give thee enjoyment of thy kingdom and stablish thee in thy dignity! And so peace be on thee.'

Night dcccc xxviii.

Then he despatched the letter and the presents to Wird Khan with an escort of a hundred horse, who fared on till they came to his court and saluting him, presented him with the letter and the gifts. The king read the letter and accepted the presents, lodging the captain of the escort in a befitting place and entreating him with honour. So the news of this was bruited

abroad among the people and the king rejoiced therein with an exceeding joy. Then he sent for the boy, the son of Shimas, and the captain of the hundred horse, and entreating the young vizier with honour, gave him the letter to read; whilst he himself upbraided the captain concerning the king's conduct, and the latter kissed his hands and made his excuses to him, offering up prayers for the continuance of his life and the eternity of his fortune. The king thanked him for his good wishes and bestowed upon him honours and largesse galore. Moreover, he gave his men what befitted them and made ready presents to send by them and bade the young vizier write an answer to their king's letter.

So the boy wrote an answer, wherein, after an elegant exordium, he touched briefly on the question of reconciliation and praised the good breeding of the envoy and of his men, and showed it to the king, who said to him, 'Read it, O dear boy, that we may know what is written therein.' So the boy read the letter in the presence of the hundred horse, and the king and all present marvelled at the excellence of its style and sense. Then the king sealed the letter and delivering it to the captain of the hundred horse, dismissed him with an escort of his own troops, to bring him to the frontier of his country. So the captain returned, confounded at that which he had seen of the boy's knowledge and sagacity and thanking God for the speedy accomplishment of his errand and the acceptance of [the proffered] peace, to the King of Farther India, to whom he delivered the presents and the letter, telling him what he had seen and heard, whereat the king was mightily rejoiced and returned thanks to God the Most High and honoured the envoy, lauding his care and zeal and advancing him in rank: and he was thenceforth in peace and tranquillity and all contentment.

As for King Wird Khan, he returned to the way of

righteousness, abandoning his evil courses and turning to God with sincere repentance; and he altogether forswore women and devoted himself to the ordering of the affairs of his realm and the governance of his people in the fear of God. Moreover, he made the son of Shimas vizier in his father's room and the chief of his counsellors and keeper of his secrets and commanded to decorate his capital and the other cities of his kingdom seven days. At this the subjects rejoiced, glad in the prospect of justice and equity, and fear and alarm ceased from them and they were instant in prayer for the king and for the vizier who had done away this trouble from him and them.

Then said the king to the vizier, 'What is thy counsel for the proper ordering of the state and the prospering of the people and the furnishing of the realm anew with captains and counsellors as before?' 'O king of high estate,' answered the boy, 'in my judgment, it behoves, before all, that thou begin by tearing out from thy heart the root of frowardness and leave thy debauchery and tyranny and devotion to women; for, if thou return to the root of transgression, the second backsliding will be worse than the first.' 'And what,' asked the king, 'is the root of frowardness that it behoves me to tear out from my heart?' 'O mighty king,' answered the vizier, little of years but great of wit, 'the root of frowardness is the ensuing the desire of women and inclining to them and following their counsel and policy; for the love of them troubles the soundest wit and corrupts the most upright nature, and manifest proofs bear witness to my saying, wherein, if thou meditate them and consider their actions and the consequences thereof with eyes intent, thou wilt find a loyal counsellor against thine own soul and wilt stand in no need of my advice.

Look, then, thou occupy not thy heart with the thought of women and do away the trace of them from thy mind,

for that God the Most High hath forbidden the excessive use of them by the mouth of His prophet Moses, so that quoth a certain wise king to his son, "O my son, when thou succeedest to the throne after me, spare to frequent women overmuch, lest thy heart be led astray and thy judgment corrupted; for that their much frequentation leadeth to love of them, and love of them to corruption of judgment." And the proof of this is what befell our lord Solomon, son of David (peace be upon them both!) whom God endowed with knowledge and wisdom and supreme dominion above all men, nor vouchsafed He to any of the kings of old time the like of that which He gave him; and women were the cause of his father's offending.

The examples of this are many, O king, and I do but make mention of Solomon to thee for that thou knowest that to none was given the like of the dominion wherewith he was invested, so that all the kings of the earth obeyed him. Know then, O king, that the love of women is the root of all evil and none of them hath any judgment: wherefore it behoveth a man to confine his use of them within the limits of necessity and not incline to them altogether, for that will cause him fall into corruption and perdition. If thou hearken to my rede, all thine affairs will prosper; but, if thou neglect it, thou wilt repent, whenas repentance will not avail thee.'

'Indeed,' answered the king, 'I have left my sometime inclination to women and have altogether renounced my infatuation for them; but how shall I do to punish them for that which they have done? For the slaying of thy father Shimas was of their malice and not of my own will, and I know not what ailed my reason that I fell in with their proposal to kill him.' Night dccccxxix.

Then he cried out and groaned and lamented, saying, 'Alas for the loss of my vizier and his just judgment and

wise ordinance and for the loss of his like of the viziers and notables of the state and of the goodliness of their apt and sagacious counsels!' 'O king,' said the young vizier, 'know that the fault is not with women alone, for that they are like unto a pleasing commodity, whereto the desires of the beholders incline. To whosoever desireth and buyeth, they sell it, but whoso buyeth not, none forceth him thereto; so that the fault is his who buyeth, especially if he know the harmfulness of the commodity. Now, I warn thee, as did my father before me, but thou hearkenedst not to his counsel.' 'O vizier,' answered the king, 'indeed thou hast fixed this fault upon me, even as thou hast said, and I have no excuse except the Divine ordinances.' 'O king,' rejoined the vizier, 'know that God hath created us and endowed us with ableness[1] and appointed to us will and choice; so, if we will, we do, and if we will, we do not. God commandeth us not to do harm, lest sin attach to us; wherefore it behoveth us to consider that which it is right to do, for that the Most High commandeth us nought but good in all cases and forbiddeth us only from evil; but what we do, we do of our free will, be it right or wrong.'

Quoth the king, 'Thou sayst truly, and indeed my fault arose from my surrendering myself to my lusts, albeit many a time my reason warned me from this and thy father Shimas often warned me likewise; but my lusts carried it over my reason. Hast thou then with thee aught that may [in the future] withhold me from committing this error and whereby my reason may be victorious over the lusts of my soul?' 'Yes,' answered the vizier, 'I can tell thee what will restrain thee from committing this error, and it is that thou put off the garment of ignorance and don that of understanding,

[1] *i.e.* freewill.

disobeying thy passions and obeying thy Lord and reverting to the policy of the just king thy father, fulfilling thy duties to God the Most High and to thy people, applying thyself to the defence of thy faith and the promotion of thy subjects' welfare, governing thyself aright and forbearing the slaughter of thy people.

Look to the issues of things and sever thyself from tyranny and oppression and arrogance and lewdness, practising justice and equity and humility and obeying the commandments of God the Most High, applying thyself to gentle dealing with those of His creatures whom He hath committed to thy governance and being assiduous in fulfilling their prayers unto thee, in accordance with that which is incumbent on thee. If thou be constant in the practice of these virtues, may thy days be serene and may God of His mercy spare thee and make thee revered of all who look on thee; so shall thine enemies be brought to nought, for God the Most High shall put their hosts to the rout, and thou shalt have acceptance with Him and be loved and reverenced of His creatures.'

'Verily,' said the king, 'thou hast quickened mine entrails and enlightened my heart with thy sweet speech and hast opened the eyes of mine understanding, after blindness; and I am resolved to do all thou hast set forth to me, with the help of God the Most High, leaving my former estate of lust and frowardness and bringing forth my soul from duresse into freedom and from fear into safety. It behoveth thee, then, to be joyful and contented, for that I, for all my greater age, am become to thee as a son, and thou to me as a dear father, for all thy tenderness of years, and it is grown incumbent on me to do my utmost endeavour in that thou commandest me.

Wherefore I thank the bounty of God the Most High and thy bounty for that He hath vouchsafed me, by thee, fair fortune and good guidance and just judgment to fend

off my trouble and anxiety; and the deliverance of my people hath been brought about by means of the excellence of thy skill and the goodliness of thine ordinance. Henceforward, thou shalt be the governor of my kingdom and equal to myself in all but sitting upon the throne; and all that thou dost shall be law to me and none shall gainsay thy word, young in years though thou be, for that thou art old in wit and knowledge. So I thank God who hath vouchsafed thee to me, that thou mayst guide me out of the crooked paths of perdition into the way of righteousness.'

Quoth the vizier, 'O august king, know that no merit is due to me for giving thee loyal counsel; for that to succour thee by deed and word is of that which is incumbent on me, seeing that I am but a plant of thy bounty; nor I alone, but my father before me was overwhelmed with thy favours; so that we are both alike partakers in thy munificence, and how shall we not acknowledge this? Moreover thou, O king, art our shepherd and ruler and he who wards off our enemies from us and to whom is committed our protection and our guardian, instant in endeavour for our safety. Indeed, though we lavished our lives in thy service, yet should we not fulfil that which behoveth us of gratitude to thee; but we supplicate God the Most High, who hath set thee in dominion over us and made thee our ruler, and beseech Him to vouchsafe thee long life and success in all thine enterprises and not to try thee with afflictions in thy time, but bring thee to thy desire and make thee to be reverenced till the day of thy death and lengthen thine arms in beneficence and generosity, so thou mayst have commandment over every wise man and subdue every froward one and all men of wisdom and mettle be found with thee in thy realm and all the ignorant and faint-hearted be plucked out therefrom; and we pray Him to withhold from thy people

scarcity and misfortune and sow among them love and good fellowship and cause them to enjoy of this world its prosperity and of the next its felicity, of His grace and bounty and hidden mercies. Amen. For He can all things and there is nought difficult unto Him, in whom all things have their goal and place of returning.'

When the king heard the vizier's prayer, he was mightily rejoiced thereat and inclined to him with his whole heart, saying, 'Henceforth, O vizier, thou art to me in the stead of brother and son and father, and nought but death shall sever me from thee. Thou shalt have the disposal of all that my hand possesses, and if I have no child to succeed me, thou shalt sit on my throne in my stead; for thou art the worthiest of all the people of my realm, and I will invest thee with my kingship and appoint thee my heir presumptive to inherit the kingdom after me, if it be the will of God the Most High, in the presence of the grandees of my state, and call them to witness thereof.'

Then he called his secretary and bade him write to all the notables of his kingdom, summoning them to his court, and caused proclamation to be made in his city unto all the townsfolk great and small, bidding all the amirs and governors and chamberlains and other officers and dignitaries, as well as the sages and doctors of the law, to his presence. Moreover he held a grand divan and made a banquet, never was its like, and bade all the folk, high and low, thereto. So they all assembled and abode in eating and drinking and delight a month's space; after which the king clothed all his household and the poor of his kingdom and bestowed abundant largesse on the men of learning. Night DCCCCXXX.

Then he chose out a number of the sages and wise men, by counsel of the son of Shimas, and caused them go in to him, bidding him choose out six of them, that he might make them viziers under his commandment. So he chose

out six of the oldest of them in years and the most accomplished of them in understanding and knowledge and the speediest of memory and judgment, and presented them to the king, who clad them in the vizier's habit and said to them, 'Ye are become my viziers, under the commandment of this my chief vizier, the son of Shimas. Whatsoever he saith to you or biddeth you thereto, ye shall not in anywise depart from it, albeit he is the youngest of you in years; for he is the eldest of you in wit.'

Then he seated them upon chairs, adorned with gold, after the usage of viziers, and appointed unto them stipends and allowances, bidding them choose out such of the notables of the kingdom and officers of the troops present at the banquet as were most fit for the service of the state, that he might make them captains of tens and hundreds and thousands and appoint to them dignities and assign them provision, after the manner of grandees. This they did with all diligence and he bade them also handsel all who were present with largesse galore and dismiss them each to his country with honour and worship. Moreover he charged his governors rule the people with justice and enjoined them to be tenderly solicitous for rich and poor and bade succour them from the treasury, according to their several degrees. So the viziers wished him continuance of glory and long life, and he commanded to decorate the city three days, in gratitude to God the Most High for His mercies.

When the court was dissolved and all the people had departed, each to his own place, after their affairs had been set in order, the king summoned the son of Shimas and the other six viziers and taking them apart privily, said to them, 'Know, O viziers, that I have been a wanderer from the right way, drowned in ignorance, setting my face against admonition, a breaker of pacts

and promises and a gainsayer of folk of good counsel; and the cause of all this was my befoolment by these women and the wiles with which they beset me and the seeming fairness of their speech, wherewith they beguiled me, and my acceptance of this, for that I deemed their words true and loyal counsel, by reason of the sweetness and softness thereof; but behold, they were deadly poison. And now I am certified that they sought but to ruin and destroy me, wherefore they deserve punishment and requital from me, for the sake of justice, that I may make them an admonition to all who will be admonished. But what deem ye advisedly of putting them to death?'

'O mighty king,' answered the young vizier, 'I have already told thee that women are not alone to blame, but that the fault is shared between them and the men who hearken to them; but they deserve punishment for two reasons: first, for the fulfilment of thy word, because thou art the supreme king; and secondly, by reason of their presumption against thee and their beguilement of thee and their intermeddling with that which concerns them not and whereof it befits them not to speak. Wherefore they have right well deserved death; yet let that which hath befallen them suffice them, and do thou henceforth reduce them to servants' estate. But it is thine to command in this and other than this.'

Some of the viziers seconded Ibn Shimas's advice; but one of them prostrated himself before the king and said to him, 'May God prolong the king's days! If thou be indeed resolved to put them to death, do with them as I shall say to thee.' 'And what is that?' asked Wird Khan. Quoth the vizier, 'It were best that thou bid some of thy female slaves carry the women who played thee false to the apartment, wherein befell the slaughter of thy viziers and sages, and imprison them there; and do thou assign to them a little meat and drink, enough to keep

life in them [and no more]. Let them never be suffered to go forth of that place, and whenever one of them dies, let her abide among them, as she is, till they die all, even to the last of them. This is the least of their desert, for that they were the cause of this great wickedness, ay, and the origin of all the troubles and calamities that have befallen in our time; so shall there be verified in them the words of him who said, "He who diggeth a pit for his brother shall surely himself fall therein, though he go long in safety."'

The king accepted the vizier's counsel and sending for four stalwart female slaves, committed the offending women to them, bidding them carry them to the place of slaughter and imprison them there and allow them every day a little coarse food and a little troubled water. They did with them as he bade; wherefore the women mourned sore, repenting them of that which they had done and lamenting grievously. Thus God gave them their reward of abjection in this world and prepared for them torment in the world to come; nor did they cease to abide in that dark and noisome place, whilst every day one or other of them died, till they all perished, even to the last of them; and the report of this event was bruited abroad in all lands and countries. This is the end of the story of the king and his viziers and subjects, and praise be to God who causeth peoples to pass away and quickeneth the rotten bones, Him who [alone] is worthy to be glorified and magnified and hallowed for ever and ever!

ABOUKIR THE DYER AND ABOUSIR THE BARBER.

There dwelt once, in the city of Alexandria, two men, one of whom was a dyer, by name Aboukir, and the other a barber called Abousir; and they were neighbours in the market, where their shops were side by side. The dyer was a swindler and a liar, an exceeding wicked man, as if indeed his temples were hewn out of the rock or fashioned of the threshold of a Jewish synagogue, nor was he ashamed of any knavery he wrought amongst the folk. It was his wont, when any brought him stuffs to dye, to require of him present payment, on pretence of buying dyestuffs withal. So the man would give him the hire in advance and go away, and he would spend it on meat and drink; after which he would sell the stuff itself and spend its price in eating and drinking and what not else, for he ate not but of the choicest and most delicate meats nor drank but of the best of that which doth away the wit.

When the owner of the stuff came to him, he would say to him, 'Come to me to-morrow before sunrise and thou shalt find thy stuff dyed.' So the man would go away, saying in himself, 'One day is near another,' and return next day at the appointed time, when the dyer would say to him, 'Come to-morrow; yesterday I was not at work, for I had with me guests and was occupied with their service till they went: but come to-morrow before sunrise and take thy stuff dyed.' So he would go away and return on the third day, when Aboukir would say to him, 'Indeed yesterday I was excusable, for my wife was brought to bed in the night and all day I was busy with

one thing and another; but to-morrow, without fail, come and take thy stuff dyed.'

Night DCCCCXXXI.

When the man came again at the appointed time, he would put him off with some other tale, it mattered little what, and would swear to him; nor would he cease to promise and swear to him, as often as he came, till the customer lost patience and said, 'How often wilt thou say to me, "To-morrow"? Give me my stuff: I will not have it dyed.' Whereupon the dyer would make answer, 'By Allah, O my brother, I am abashed at thee; but I will tell the truth and may God harm all who do folk hurt in their goods!' The other would say, 'Tell me what hath happened;' and Aboukir would answer, 'Indeed I dyed thy stuff on matchless wise and hung it on the rope [to dry;] but it was stolen and I know not who took it.' If the owner of the stuff were a good-natured man, he would say, 'God will recoup me;' and if he were ill-conditioned, he would pursue him with exposure and insult, but would get nothing of him, though he complained of him to the judge.

He ceased not to do thus till his report was noised abroad among the folk and they used to warn one another against him and he became a byword amongst them. So they all held aloof from him and none had to do with him save those who knew not his character; but, for all this, he failed not daily to suffer insult and disgrace from God's creatures. By reason of this his trade became slack and he used to go to the shop of his neighbour the barber and sit there, with his eyes on the door of the dyery. Whenever he espied any one who knew him not standing at the dyery-door, with a piece of stuff in his hand, he would go up to him and say, 'What seekest thou, O man?' And the man would answer, 'Take and dye me this thing.' So the dyer would say, 'What colour wilt thou have it?' For, with all his knavery, he could dye all manner of

colours; but he never kept faith with any one; so poverty had gotten the better of him. Then he would take the stuff and say, 'Give me my hire in advance and come to-morrow and take the stuff.' So the stranger would give him the money and go his way; whereupon Aboukir would carry the stuff to the market and sell it and buy meat and vegetables and tobacco and fruit and what not else he needed with the price; but, whenever he saw any one who had given him stuff to dye standing at the door of his shop, he would not show himself to him.

On this wise he abode years and years, till it chanced one day that he received stuff to dye from a masterful man and sold it and spent the price. The owner came to him every day, but found him not in his shop; for, whenever he espied any one who had a claim against him, he would flee from him into the shop of the barber Abousir. At last, the angry man, finding that he was not to be seen and growing weary of coming, repaired to the Cadi and bringing one of the latter's serjeants to the shop, nailed up the door, in presence of a number of Muslims, and sealed it, for that he found therein nothing but some broken pans, to stand him instead of his stuff; after which the serjeant took the key, saying to the neighbours, 'Tell him to bring back this man's goods and take the key of his shop,' and went his way, he and the man.

Then said Abousir to Aboukir, 'What aileth thee? Whoever brings thee aught, thou losest it for him. What is gone of this angry man's stuff?' 'O my neighbour,' answered the dyer, 'it was stolen from me.' 'Wonderful!' exclaimed the barber. 'Whenever any one gives thee aught, a thief steals it from thee! Art thou then the resort of the whole college of thieves? But I doubt me thou liest: so tell me the truth.' 'O my neighbour,' replied Aboukir, 'none hath stolen aught from me.' 'What then dost thou with the people's goods?' asked Abousir. And the dyer

said, 'Whenever any one giveth me aught to dye, I sell it and spend the price.' Quoth Abousir, 'Is this permitted thee of God?' 'I only do this out of poverty,' answered Aboukir, 'because trade is dull with me and I am poor and have nothing.' And he went on to complain to him of the slackness of his trade and his lack of means.

Abousir in like manner lamented the slackness of his own trade, saying, 'I am a master of my craft and have not my equal in this city; but no one is shaved at my shop, because I am a poor man; and I loathe this craft, O my brother.' 'And I also,' answered Aboukir, 'loathe my own craft, by reason of its slackness; but, O my brother, what call is there for our abiding in this city? Let us depart from it and divert ourselves with foreign travel, carrying our crafts in our hands, the which are in demand in all countries; so shall we breathe the air and be rid of this grievous trouble.' And he ceased not to commend travel to Abousir, till the latter became wishful to set out, whereat Aboukir rejoiced and recited the following verses:

Night dccccxxii.

Forsake thy native land, if thou advancement seek, and hie Abroad; for five advantages in foreign travel lie.
The putting off of care, the gain of livelihood and lore And manners and the company of noble folk and high.
If it be said, 'Distress and woe and severance of loves And hardships still in travel be beneath a foreign sky,"
I trow 'twere better for a man that he should die than live Still in humiliation's house, 'twixt envier and spy.

Then they agreed to travel together and Aboukir said to Abousir, 'O my neighbour, we are become brethren and there is no difference between us, so it behoves us to recite the first chapter of the Koran [in token of agreement] that he of us who gets work shall of his profit feed him who is out of work, and whatever is left, we will

lay in a chest; and when we come back to Alexandria, we will divide it fairly and equally.' 'So be it,' answered Abousir, and they repeated the first chapter of the Koran on this understanding. Then Abousir locked up his shop and gave the keys to the landlord, whilst Aboukir left his shop locked and sealed and let the key lie with the Cadi's serjeant; after which they took their gear and embarked on the morrow in a galleon upon the salt sea. They set sail the same day and fortune attended them, for, of Abousir's great good luck, of all that were in the ship (and there were therein an hundred and twenty men, besides the captain and the crew,) there was not a single barber. So, when they spread the sails, the barber said to the dyer, 'O my brother, this is the sea and we shall need meat and drink, and we have but little victual with us and it may be the voyage will be long upon us; wherefore methinks I will shoulder my gear and pass among the passengers, and belike some one will say to me, "Come hither, O barber, and shave me," and I will shave him for a cake of bread or a para or a draught of water: so shall we both profit by this.'

'There is no harm in that,' replied the dyer and laid down his head and slept, whilst the barber took his razor and shaving-tackle and throwing over his shoulder a rag, to serve as napkin (for that he was poor), passed among the passengers. Quoth one of them, 'Ho, master, come and shave me.' So he shaved him, and the man gave him a para. 'O my brother,' said Abousir, 'I have no use for this para; hadst thou given me a cake of bread, it were more blessed to me in this sea, for I have a shipmate and we are short of victual.' So he gave him a cake of bread and a piece of cheese and filled him the basin with sweet water. The barber carried all this to Aboukir and bade him eat the bread and cheese and drink the water. So he ate and drank, whilst Abousir again took up his

shaving-gear and went round about the deck among the passengers. One man he shaved for two cakes of bread and another for a piece of cheese, and he was in demand, because there was no other barber on board. So he bargained with every one who said to him, 'Ho, master, shave me!' for two cakes of bread and a para, and they gave him whatever he sought, so that, by sundown, he had gotten thirty cakes of bread and thirty paras, besides store of cheese and olives and botargoes.

Amongst the rest he shaved the captain, to whom he complained of his lack of victual for the voyage, and the captain said to him, 'Have no care for that, so long as ye sail with us; for thou art welcome to bring thy comrade every night and sup with me.' Then he returned to the dyer, whom he found still asleep; so he aroused him; and when Aboukir awoke, he found at his head bread and cheese and olives and botargoes galore and said, 'Whence gottest thou all this?' 'From the bounty of God the Most High,' replied Abousir. Then Aboukir would have eaten; but the barber said to him, 'Eat not of this, O my brother; but leave it to serve us another time; for know that I shaved the captain and complained to him of our lack of victual: whereupon quoth he, "Bring thy comrade and sup both of ye with me every night and welcome." And this night we sup with him for the first time.' But Aboukir replied, 'I am sea-sick and cannot rise from my place; so let me sup off these things and go thou alone to the captain.' 'So be it,' said Abousir and sat looking at the other, as he ate, and saw him hew off gobbets, as the quarryman hews stone from the mountain, and gulp them down with the gulp of an elephant that has not eaten for days, bolting one mouthful before he was rid of the previous one and glaring the while at that which was before him with the glower of a ghoul and blowing as the hungry bull blows over his beans and straw.

Presently up came a sailor and said to the barber, 'O master, the captain bids thee come to supper and bring thy comrade.' Quoth the barber to the dyer, 'Wilt thou come with us?' But he answered, 'I cannot walk.' So the barber went by himself and found the captain and his company sitting awaiting him, with a tray before them, wherein were a score or more of dishes. When the captain saw him, he said, 'Where is thy friend?' And Abousir answered, 'O my lord, he is sea-sick.' 'That will do him no harm,' answered the captain; 'his sickness will pass off; but do thou carry him his supper and come back, for we await thee.' Then he set apart a dish of kabobs and putting therein some of each dish, till there was enough for ten, gave it to Abousir, who took it and carried it to the dyer, whom he found grinding away with his dog-teeth at that which was before him, as he were a camel, and heaping mouthful on mouthful in his haste. Quoth Abousir, 'Did I not say to thee, "Eat not [of this]"? Indeed the captain is a man of exceeding kindness. See what he hath sent thee, for that I told him thou wast sick.' 'Give it here,' answered the dyer. So the barber gave it to him and he snatched it from him and fell upon it, like a ravening dog or a raging lion or a roc pouncing on a pigeon or one who is well-nigh dead for hunger and seeing victual, falls to eating thereof.

Then Abousir left him and going back to the captain, supped and enjoyed himself and drank coffee with him; after which he returned to Aboukir and found that he had eaten all that was in the platter and thrown it aside, empty. So he took the empty dish and gave it to one of the captain's servants, then went back to Aboukir and slept till the morning. On the morrow he continued to shave, and all he got by way of meat and drink he gave to Aboukir, who ate and drank and sat still, rising not save to do his natural occasions, and

Night dcccc xxxiii.

every night the barber brought him a full dish from the captain's table.

They fared thus twenty days, at the end of which time the galleon cast anchor in the harbour of a city; whereupon they took leave of the captain and landing, entered the town and took them a lodging in a khan. Abousir furnished the room and buying a cooking pot and a platter and spoons and what else they needed, fetched meat and cooked it; but Aboukir fell asleep the moment he entered the khan and awoke not till his companion aroused him and set the tray of food before him. When he awoke, he ate and saying to Abousir, 'Blame me not, for I am giddy,' fell asleep again. Thus he did forty days, whilst, every day, the barber took his tools and making the round of the city, wrought for that which fell to his lot, and returning, found the dyer asleep and aroused him. No sooner did he wake than he fell ravenously upon the food, eating as one who cannot have his fill nor be content; after which he went to sleep again.

On this wise he passed other forty days, and whenever the barber said to him, 'Sit up and shake off this torpor and go forth and take an airing in the city, for it is a bright and pleasant place and hath not its equal among the cities,' he would answer, saying, 'Blame me not, for I am [still] giddy.' Abousir cared not to vex him nor give him hard words; but, on the forty-first day, he himself fell sick and could not go abroad; so he pressed the porter of the khan into his service, and he did their occasions and brought them meat and drink four days, whilst Aboukir did nothing but eat and sleep. At the end of this time, the barber's sickness redoubled on him, till he lost his senses for stress thereof; and Aboukir, feeling the pangs of hunger, arose and sought in his comrade's clothes, where he found a thousand paras. So he took them and shutting the door of the chamber upon Abousir,

went out, without telling any; and the doorkeeper of the inn was then at market and thus saw him not go out.

Aboukir betook himself to the bazaar and clad himself in rich apparel, at a cost of five hundred paras; then he proceeded to walk about and divert himself by viewing the place, which he found a city whose like was not among cities; but he noted that all its people were clad in clothes of white and blue, without other colour. Presently he came to a dyer's and seeing nought but blue in his shop, pulled out to him a kerchief and said, 'O master, take this kerchief and dye it and take thy hire.' Quoth the dyer, 'The cost of dyeing this will be twenty dirhems.' 'In our country,' said Aboukir, 'we dye it for two.' 'Then go and dye it in your own country,' answered the dyer. 'As for me, my price is twenty dirhems and I will not bate a tittle thereof.' 'What colour wilt thou dye it?' asked Aboukir; and the dyer said, 'I will dye it blue.' Quoth Aboukir, 'But I want it dyed red.' 'I know not how to dye red,' answered the dyer. 'Then dye it green,' rejoined Aboukir. But the dyer said, 'I know not how to dye green.' 'Yellow,' said Aboukir. 'Nor yet yellow,' answered the dyer; and Aboukir went on to name the different colours to him, one after another, till the dyer said, 'We are here in this city forty master-dyers, neither more nor less; and when one of us dies, we teach his son the craft. If he leave no son, we abide wanting one, and if he leave two sons, we teach one of them the craft, and if he die, we teach his brother. This our craft is straitly ordered and we know not how to dye aught but blue.'

Then said Aboukir, 'Know that I also am a dyer and know how to dye all colours; and I would have thee take me into thy service on hire, and I will teach thee my art, so thou mayst glory therein over all the company of dyers.' But the dyer answered, 'We never admit a

stranger into our craft.' 'And what if I open a dyery for myself?' asked Aboukir. 'We will not suffer thee to do that,' replied the other; whereupon he left him and going to a second dyer, made him the like proposal; but he returned him the same answer as the first; and he ceased not to go from one to another, till he had made the round of the whole forty; but they would not accept of him either to master or journeyman. Then he repaired to the Syndic of the Dyers and told him what had passed, and he said, 'We admit no stranger into our craft.'

With this Aboukir became exceeding wroth and going up to the king of the city, made complaint to him, saying, 'O king of the age, I am a stranger and a dyer by trade;' and he told him what had passed between himself and the dyers of the town, adding, 'I can dye various kinds of red, such as rose-colour and carnation,[1] and various kinds of green, such as grass-green and pistachio-green and olive and parrot's wing, and various kinds of black, such as coal-black and blue-black, and various shades of yellow, such as orange and lemon-colour,' and went on to name to him the rest of the colours. Then said he, 'O king of the age, there is not a dyer in thy city who can avail to any one of these colours, for they know not how to dye aught but blue; yet will they not admit me amongst them, either as master or journeyman.' 'Thou sayst sooth for that matter,' answered the king; 'but I will open thee a dyery and give thee capital and have thou no care for them; for whoso offereth to do thee hindrance, I will hang him over the door of his shop.'

Then he sent for builders and said to them, 'Go round about the city with this master, and whatsoever place pleases him, be it shop or khan or what not, turn out its occupier and build him a dyery after his wish. Whatso-

[1] Or jujube-plum colour (*unnabiy*).

ever he bids you, that do ye and gainsay him not in aught.' And he clad him in a handsome suit and gave him two white slaves, to serve him, and a horse with housings of brocade and a thousand dinars, saying, 'Provide thyself with this, against the building be completed.' So Aboukir donned the dress and mounting the horse, became as he were an amir. Moreover the king assigned him a house and bade furnish it; so they furnished it for him and he took up his abode therein. Night DCCCCXXXIV.

On the morrow he mounted and rode through the city, looking about him, whilst the architects went before him, till he saw a place that pleased him and said, 'This place is good;' whereupon they turned out the owner thereof and carried him to the king, who gave him, to the price of his holding, what more than contented him. Then the builders fell to work, whilst Aboukir said to them, 'Build thus and thus and do this and that,' till they built him a dyery that had not its like; whereupon he presented himself before the king and informed him that they had made an end of building the dyery and that there needed but the price of the dye-stuffs and gear to set it a-work. Quoth the king, 'Take these four thousand dinars to thy capital and let me see the outcome of thy dyery.' So he took the money and went to the market, where, finding dye-stuffs[1] plentiful and [well-nigh] valueless, he bought all that he needed of materials for dyeing; and the king sent him five hundred pieces of stuff, which he proceeded to dye of all colours and spread them before the door of his dyery.

When the folk passed by the shop, they saw this wonderful sight, whose like they had never in their lives seen; so they crowded about the door, staring and questioning the

[1] Literally, indigo (*nileh*); but the word is evidently used here to express dye-stuffs in general, as it stands to reason that, in a town where dyeing was confined to blue, indigo would be much in demand and high in price, whilst the other colours would be valueless.

dyer and saying, 'O master, what are the names of these colours?' Quoth he, 'This is red and that yellow and the other green,' and so on with the rest of the colours. And they fell to bringing him stuffs and saying to him, 'Dye this for us like this and that and take what thou seekest [to thy hire].' When he had made an end of dyeing the king's stuffs, he took them and went up with them to the divan; and when the king saw them he rejoiced in them and bestowed abundant largesse on the dyer. Moreover, all the troops brought him stuffs, saying, 'Dye for us thus and thus;' and he dyed for them to their wish, and they threw him gold and silver. On this wise his fame spread abroad and his shop was called the Sultan's dyery. Good came in to him at every door and he became the owner of slaves, male and female, and amassed store of wealth. None of the other dyers dared say a word to him, but they used to come to him, kissing his hands and excusing themselves to him for the affronts they had done him aforetime and offering themselves to him as journeymen; but he would none of them.

Meanwhile Abousir abode three days, prostrate and unconscious, in the chamber where Aboukir had left him, at the end of which time the doorkeeper of the khan, chancing to look at the chamber-door, observed that it was shut and bethought himself that he had seen and heard nothing of the two companions [for some time]. So he said to himself, 'Belike they have made off, without paying the rent of the chamber, or perhaps they are dead, or what is to do with them?' And he waited till sunset, when he went up to the chamber-door and heard the barber groaning within. He saw the key in the lock; so he opened the door and entering, found Abousir lying, groaning, and said to him, 'No harm to thee: where is thy friend?' 'By Allah,' answered Abousir, 'I only came to my senses this day and called out; but none answered

me. God on thee, O my brother, look for the purse under my head and take five paras from it and buy me something to eat, for I am sore anhungred.'

The porter put out his hand and taking the purse, found it empty and said to the barber, 'The purse is empty; there is nothing in it.' Whereupon Abousir knew that the dyer had taken that which was therein and fled and said to the porter, 'Hast thou not seen my friend?' 'I have not seen him these three days,' answered the porter, 'and indeed methought you had departed, thou and he.' 'Not so,' said Abousir; 'but he coveted my money and seeing me sick, took it and fled.' Then he fell a-weeping and lamenting, but the porter said to him, 'No harm shall come to thee, and God will requite him his deed.' So saying, he went away and cooked him a mess of broth, whereof he ladled out a platterful and brought it to him; nor did he cease to tend him and maintain him with his own monies for two months' space, at the end of which time he sweated and God made him whole of his sickness. Then he stood up and said to the porter, 'So God the Most High enable me, I will surely requite thee thy kindness to me; but none requiteth save God of His bounty!' 'Praised be He for thy recovery!' answered the porter. 'I dealt not thus with thee but of desire for the favour of God the Bountiful.'

Then the barber went forth of the khan and walked about the markets of the town, till chance brought him to that wherein was Aboukir's dyery, and he saw the vari-coloured stuffs spread before the shop and the people crowding to look upon them. So he questioned one of the townsmen and said to him, 'What place is this and how comes it that I see the folk crowding together?' And the man answered, saying, 'This is the sultan's dyery, which he set up for a foreigner, by name Aboukir; and whenever he dyes a [new] piece of stuff, we all flock to

him and divert ourselves by gazing upon his handiwork, for that we have no dyers in our land who know how to dye these colours; and indeed there befell him with the dyers who are in the city thus and thus.' And he went on to tell him all that had passed between Aboukir and the dyers and how he had complained of them to the sultan and he had taken him by the hand and built him that dyery and given him this and that; brief, he told him all that had passed.

At this the barber rejoiced and said to himself, 'Praised be God who hath prospered him, so that he is become a master of his craft! Indeed, the man is excusable, for of a surety he hath been diverted from thee by his work and hath forgotten thee; but thou didst him kindness and entreatedst him generously, what time he was out of work; so, when he seeth thee, he will rejoice in thee and entreat thee generously, even as thou entreatedst him.' So he made for the door of the dyery and saw Aboukir seated on a high divan in the doorway, clad in royal apparel and attended by four black and four white slaves all dressed in the richest of clothes. Moreover, he saw the workmen, ten black slaves, standing at work; for, when Aboukir bought them, he taught them the craft of dyeing, and he himself sat amongst his cushions, as he were a grand vizier or a most mighty king, putting his hand to nought, but only saying to the men, 'Do this and do that.'

The barber went up to him and stood before him, doubting not but that, when he saw him, he would rejoice in him and salute him and entreat him with honour and make much of him; but, when eye met eye, the dyer said to him, 'O rascal, how many a time have I bidden thee stand not at the door of this workshop? Hast thou a mind to disgrace me with the folk, knave that thou art?' [And he cried out, saying], 'Seize him!' So the slaves ran at him and laid hold of him; and the dyer said,

'Throw him down.' So they threw him down and Aboukir rose and taking a stick, dealt him a hundred blows on the back; after which they turned him over and he dealt him other hundred on his belly. Then he said to him, 'Hark ye, scurril knave that thou art! If ever again I see thee standing at the door of this dyery, I will forthwith send thee to the king, and he will commit thee to the master of police, that he may strike off thy head. Begone, may God not bless thee!'

So Abousir [arose and] departed from him, broken-hearted by reason of the beating and humiliation that had betided him; whilst the bystanders said to Aboukir, 'What hath this man done?' Quoth he, 'He is a thief, who steals the people's goods: he hath robbed me of stuffs, how many a time! and I still said in myself, "God forgive him! He is a poor man," and cared not to deal harshly with him; so I used to give the folk the worth of their goods and forbid him gently; but he would not be forbidden; and if he come again, I will send him to the king, who will put him to death and rid the folk of his mischief.' And the bystanders fell to reviling the barber in his absence. Night DCCCCXXXV.

Meanwhile, the latter returned to the khan, where he sat pondering that which Aboukir had done with him, till the pain of the beating subsided, when he went out and walked about the markets of the city. Presently, he bethought him to go to the bath; so he said to one of the townsfolk, 'O my brother, which is the way to the bath?' 'And what manner of thing is the bath?' asked the other. Quoth Abousir, 'It is a place where people wash themselves and do away their defilements, and it is of the best of the good things of the world.' 'Get thee to the sea,' replied the townsman; but the barber replied, 'I want the bath.' Quoth the other, 'We know not what manner of thing is the bath, for we all resort to the sea;

even the king, when he would wash, betaketh himself to the sea.'

When Abousir was certified that there was no bath in the city and that the people knew not the bath nor the fashion thereof, he betook himself to the king's divan and kissing the earth before him, called down blessings on him and said, 'I am a stranger and a bath-keeper by trade, and I entered thy city and thought to go to the bath; but found not one therein. How cometh a city of this comely fashion to lack a bath, seeing that the bath is of the goodliest of the delights of this world?' Quoth the king, 'What manner of thing is the bath?' So Abousir proceeded to set forth to him the attributes of the bath, saying, 'Thy city will not be complete till there be a bath in it.' 'Welcome to thee!' said the king and clad him in a dress that had not its like and gave him a horse and two black and two white slaves and four slave-girls. Moreover he appointed him a furnished house and honoured him yet more abundantly than he had honoured the dyer.

Then he sent builders with him and bade them build him a bath in what place soever should please him. So he took them and went with them through the midst of the city, till he saw a place that pleased him. He pointed it out to the builders and they set to work, under his direction, and wrought till they built him a bath that had not its like. Then he made them paint it, and they painted it on rare wise, so that it was a delight to the beholders; after which Abousir went up to the king and told him that they had made an end of building and decorating the bath, adding, 'There lacks nought but the furniture.' The king gave him ten thousand dinars, with which he furnished the bath and ranged the napkins on the cords; and all who passed by the door stared at it and their mind was confounded at its decorations. So the people crowded to this thing, whose like they had

never in their lives seen, and stood staring at it and saying, 'What is this thing?' To which Abousir replied, 'This is a bath;' and they marvelled thereat.

Then he heated water and set the bath a-work; and he made a fountain in the [central] basin, which ravished the wit of all who saw it of the people of the city. Moreover he sought of the king ten white slaves not yet come to manhood, and he gave him ten boys like moons: whereupon Abousir proceeded to shampoo them, saying, 'Do thus and thus with the customers,' [till they were perfect in the bathman's craft]. Then he burnt perfumes and sent out a crier to cry aloud in the city, saying, 'O creatures of God, get ye to the bath, for it is called the Sultan's Bath!' So the people came to the bath and Abousir bade the slave-boys wash their bodies. The folk went down into the bath and coming forth, seated themselves on the estrade, whilst the boys shampooed them, even as Abousir had taught them; and they ceased not to enter the bath and do their occasion thereof and go out, without paying, for the space of three days.

Then the barber invited the king, who took horse with his grandees and rode to the bath, where he put off his clothes and entered; whereupon Abousir came in to him and rubbed his body with the bath-gloves, peeling the dirt from his skin [in rolls] like lamp-wicks and showing them to the king, who rejoiced therein, till his body shone for very smoothness and purity; after which Abousir mingled rose-water with the water of the tank and the king went down therein. When he came forth, his body was refreshed and he felt a lightness and liveliness such as he had never in his life known. Then the barber made him sit on the estrade and the boys proceeded to shampoo him, whilst the censers smoked with the finest aloes-wood.

Then said the king, 'O master, is this the bath?' And Abousir answered, 'Yes.' 'As my head liveth,' quoth the king, 'my city is not become a city indeed but by this bath! But what pay takest thou for each person?' 'That which thou biddest me will I take,' replied Abousir; and the king said, 'Take a thousand dinars for every one who washeth in thy bath.' But Abousir said, 'Pardon, O king of the age! All men are not alike, but there are amongst them rich and poor, and if I take of each a thousand dinars, the bath will stand empty, for the poor man cannot avail to this price.' 'How then wilt thou do for the price?' asked the king. 'I will leave it to the generosity [of the customers],' answered the barber. 'Each who can afford aught shall pay that which his soul grudgeth not to give, and we will take from every man, after the measure of his condition. So will the folk come to us and he who is rich shall give according to his station and he who is poor shall give what he can afford. On this wise the bath will still be at work and prosper; but a thousand dinars is a king's gift, and not every man can avail thereto.'

The grandees of the kingdom confirmed Abousir's words, saying, 'This is the truth, O king of the age! Thinkest thou that all folk are like unto thee, O glorious king?' 'You say sooth,' answered the king; 'but this man is a stranger and poor and it behoveth us to deal generously with him, for that he hath made in our city this bath, whose like we have never in our lives seen and without which our city were not adorned nor had gotten importance; wherefore, if we guerdon him with increase of pay, it will not be much.' But the grandees said, 'If thou wilt guerdon him, let it be of thine own monies, and be the king's bounty extended to the poor by means of the low price of the bath, so the folk may bless thee; but, as for the thousand dinars, we are the grandees of thine

empire, yet do our souls grudge to pay it; and how then should the poor afford it?' Quoth the king, 'O my grandees, for this time let each of you give him a hundred dinars and a white slave and a black and a slave-girl.' 'It is well,' answered they; 'but after to-day each who enters shall give him only what he can afford, without grudging.' 'So be it,' said the king; and they gave him each as he had said.

Now the number of the nobles who were washed with the king that day was four hundred souls; so that the sum of that which they gave him was forty thousand dinars, besides four hundred black and four hundred white slaves and a like number of slave-girls. Moreover, the king gave him ten thousand dinars, besides ten white slaves and ten black and a like number of slave-girls; whereupon Abousir kissed the earth before him and said, 'O august king, lord of just judgment, what place will suffice me for all these slaves and women?' Quoth the king, 'O lackwit, I bade not my nobles deal thus with thee but that we might gather together unto thee great plenty of wealth; for maybe thou wilt bethink thee of thy country and family and yearn unto them and be minded to return to thy native place; so shalt thou take from our country store of wealth, to maintain thyself withal, what while thou livest in thine own land.' 'O king of the age,' replied Abousir, '(may God advance thee!) these many slaves and women are a king's behoof, and hadst thou ordered me ready money, it were more profitable to me than this army; for they must eat and drink and be clothed, and whatever betideth me of wealth, it will not suffice to their support.'

Night dcccc xxxvi.

The king laughed and said, 'By Allah, thou sayst sooth! They are indeed a mighty host, and thou mayst not avail unto their maintenance; but wilt thou sell them to me for a hundred dinars each?' Quoth Abousir, 'I sell them to

thee at that price.' So the king sent to his treasurer for the money and he brought it and gave Abousir the whole of the price, in full; after which the king restored the slaves to their former owners, saying, 'Let each of you who knoweth his slaves take them; for they are a gift from me to you.' So they obeyed his commandment and took each his own; whilst the barber said to the king, 'God ease thee, O king of the age, even as thou hast eased me of these ghouls, whom none may fill save God!' The king laughed, and gave him reason; then, taking the grandees of his realm, returned to his palace; but Abousir passed the night in counting his money and laying it up in bags and sealing them; and he had with him twenty black slaves and a like number of white and four slave-girls to serve him.

On the morrow, as soon as it was day, he opened the bath and sent out a crier to make proclamation, saying, 'Whoso entereth the bath and washeth shall give that which he can afford and which his generosity deemeth fit.' Then he seated himself by the chest and customers flocked in upon him, each putting down that which was easy to him, nor was eventide come before the chest was full of the good gifts of God the Most High. Presently the queen desired to go to the bath, and when this came to Abousir's knowledge, he divided the day, on her account, into two parts, appointing the time between day-break and noon to the men and that between noon and sundown to the women. When the queen came, he stationed a female slave behind the pay-chest; for he had taught four slave-girls the service of the bath, so that they were become expert bathwomen. So, when the queen entered, this pleased her and her breast dilated and she laid down a thousand dinars.

On this wise his report was noised abroad in the city, and all who entered the bath he entreated with honour,

were they rich or poor, and good came in upon him at every door. Moreover he made acquaintance with the king's officers and got him friends and companions. The king himself used to come to him one day in every week, and the other days of the week were for rich and poor alike; and he was wont to deal courteously with the folk and use them with the utmost of consideration. It chanced that the king's sea-captain came in to him one day in the bath; so Abousir put off his clothes and going in with him, proceeded to shampoo him and entreated him with the utmost courtesy. When he came forth, he made him sherbet and coffee; and when he would have given him somewhat, he swore that he would accept nothing from him. So the captain abode under obligation to him, by reason of his exceeding kindness and courtesy to him, and knew not how to requite him his generous dealing with him.

Meanwhile Aboukir, hearing all the people talking rapturously of the bath and saying, 'Verily, this bath is the Paradise of this world! God willing, O such an one, thou shalt go with us to-morrow to this delectable bath,' said to himself, 'Needs must I go like [the rest of the] folk and see this bath that hath taken their wits.' So he donned his richest clothes and mounting a mule, rode to the bath, attended by four white slaves and four black, walking before and behind him. When he alighted at the door, he smelt the fragrance of burning aloes-wood and saw people going in and out and the benches full of great and small. So he entered the vestibule and saw Abousir, who rose to him and rejoiced in him: but the dyer said to him, 'Is this the fashion of men of honour? I have opened me a dyery and am become master-dyer of the city and acquainted with the king and have risen to fortune and lordship; yet camest thou not to me nor askedst of me nor saidst, "Where is my comrade?" For

my part, I sought thee in vain and sent my slaves and servants to make search for thee in all the inns and other places; but they knew not whither thou hadst gone, nor could any give me news of thee.' Quoth Abousir, 'Did I not come to thee and didst thou not make me out a thief and beat me and disgrace me before the folk?'

At this Aboukir made a show of concern and said, 'What manner of talk is this? Was it thou whom I beat?' 'Yes,' answered Abousir, 'it was I.' Whereupon Aboukir swore to him a thousand oaths that he knew him not and said, 'There was a fellow like unto thee, who used to come every day and steal the people's stuff, and I took thee for him.' And he went on to feign repentance, beating hand upon hand and saying, 'There is no power and no virtue save in God the Most High, the Supreme! Indeed, I have sinned against thee; but would that thou hadst made thyself known to me and said, "I am such an one!" Indeed the fault is with thee, for that thou madest not thyself known unto me, more by token that I was distraught for much business.' 'God pardon thee, O my comrade!' replied Abousir. 'This was fore-ordained, and reparation is with God. Enter and put off thy clothes and bathe at thine ease.' 'I conjure thee by Allah, O my brother,' said the dyer, 'forgive me!' And Abousir said, 'God acquit thee of blame and forgive thee! Indeed this thing was decreed to me from all eternity.'

Then said Aboukir, 'Whence gottest thou this lordship?' 'He who prospered thee prospered me,' answered Abousir. 'For I went up to the king and set forth to him the fashion of the bath, and he bade me build one.' And the dyer said, 'Even as thou art an acquaintance of the king, so also am I; and God willing, I will make him love and tender thee more than ever, for my sake; for he knows not that thou art my comrade; but I will tell him of this and commend thee to him.' 'There needs no com-

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mendation,' answered Abousir; 'for He who inclineth [men's hearts unto love] is [ever]-present; and indeed the king and all his court love me [already] and have given me this and that.' And he told him the whole story and said to him, 'Put off thy clothes behind the chest and enter the bath, and I will go in with thee and shampoo thee.' So he put off his clothes and Abousir, entering the bath with him, soaped him and shampooed him and busied himself with his service till he came forth, when he brought him the morning meal and sherbets, whilst all the folk marvelled at the honour he did him.

Then Aboukir would have given him somewhat; but he swore that he would take nothing from him and said to him, 'Shame upon thee! Thou art my comrade, and there is no difference between us.' 'By Allah, O my comrade,' said Aboukir, 'this is a fine bath of thine, but there lacks one thing to thy fashion therein.' 'And what is that?' asked Abousir. 'It is the depilatory, to wit, the paste compounded of orpiment and quicklime,' answered the dyer, 'that removes the hair with ease. Do thou prepare it and next time the king comes, present it to him, teaching him how he shall cause the hair fall off by means thereof, and he will love thee with an exceeding love and honour thee.' Quoth Abousir, 'Thou sayst sooth, and if it be the will of God the Most High, I will do this.'

Then Aboukir mounted his mule and riding to the palace, went in to the king and said to him, 'O king of the age, I have a warning to give thee.' 'And what is thy warning?' asked the king. Quoth Aboukir, 'I hear that thou hast built a bath.' 'Yes,' answered the king; 'there came to me a stranger and I founded the bath for him, even as I founded the dyery for thee; and indeed it is a magnificent bath and an ornament to my city.' And he went on to set forth to him the virtues of the bath. 'Hast thou entered therein?' asked the dyer. And the king

answered, 'Yes.' 'Praised be God,' exclaimed Aboukir, 'who hath preserved thee from the mischief of yonder villain and enemy of the faith, to wit, the bath-keeper!' 'And what of him?' asked the king. 'Know, O king of the age,' replied Aboukir, 'that, if thou enter the bath again, after this day, thou wilt surely perish.' 'How so?' inquired the king; and the dyer answered, 'This bath-keeper is thine enemy and the enemy of the faith, and he induced thee not to set up this bath but because he designed to poison thee therein. He hath made for thee somewhat which, when thou enterest the bath, he will present to thee, saying, "This is an unguent, which if one apply to his privy parts, it will remove the hair with ease."

Now it is no unguent, but a deadly drug and a violent poison; for the Sultan of the Christians hath promised this filthy fellow to release to him his wife and children, if he will kill thee; for they are captives in the hands of the Sultan in question. I myself was captive with him in their land, but I opened a dyery and dyed for them various colours, so that they inclined the king's heart unto me and he bade me ask a boon of him. I sought of him freedom and he set me free, whereupon I made my way hither, and seeing yonder man in the bath, asked him how he had effected his escape and that of his wife and children. Quoth he, "We ceased not to be in captivity, I and my wife and children, till one day the King of the Christians held a court, at which I was present, amongst a number of other people. Presently, I heard them discourse of the kings and name them, one after another, till they came to the name of the king of this city, whereupon the King of the Christians cried out, 'Alas!' and said, 'None irketh me[1] in the world, but the king of such a city![2] Whosoever will contrive me his slaughter,

[1] Syn. none overcometh me. [2] Breslau, The King of Isbaniyeh.

I will give him all he asks.' So I went up to him and said, 'If I contrive thee his slaughter, wilt thou set me free, me and my wife and children?' 'Yes,' answered the king, 'and I will give thee [to boot] whatsoever thou shalt desire.'

So we agreed upon this and he sent me in a galleon to this city, where I presented myself to the king and he built me this bath. So now I have nought to do but to slay him and return to the King of the Christians, that I may redeem my wife and children and ask a boon of him." Quoth I, "And how wilt thou go about to kill him?" "By the simplest of all devices," answered he; "for I have compounded him somewhat wherein is poison; so, when he comes to the bath, I shall say to him, 'Take this unguent and anoint thy privy parts therewith, for it will cause the hair to drop off.' So he will take it and anoint himself therewith, and the poison will work in him a day and a night, till it reaches his heart and destroys him; and meanwhile I shall have made off and none will know that it was I slew him." When I heard this,' added Aboukir, 'I feared for thee, being beholden to thee for thy goodness, wherefore I have told thee thereof.'

When the king heard the dyer's story, he was exceeding wroth and said to him, 'Keep this secret.' Then he betook himself to the bath, that he might dispel doubt with assurance; and when he entered, Abousir put off his clothes and betaking himself [as of wont] to the service of the king, proceeded to shampoo him; after which he said to him, 'O king of the age, I have made an unguent for removing the hair from the privy parts.' 'Bring it to me,' said the king. So the barber brought it to him and the king, finding it nauseous of smell, was assured that it was poison; wherefore he was incensed and called out to his guards, saying, 'Seize him!' So they seized

him and the king donned his clothes and returned to his palace, boiling with rage, whilst none knew the cause of his anger; for, of the excess of his wrath, he had acquainted no one therewith and none dared ask him. Then he repaired to the audience-chamber and causing Abousir to be brought before him, with his hands bound behind his back, sent for his sea-captain and said to him, 'Take this villain and tie him in a sack with two quintals of quicklime. Then lay him in a boat and row out with him in front of my palace, where thou wilt see me sitting at the lattice. Do thou say to me, "Shall I cast him in?" and if I answer, "Cast," throw him into the sea, so the lime may be slaked on him, to the intent that he shall die drowned and burnt.'

'I hear and obey,' answered the captain and taking Abousir, carried him to an island, that lay over against the king's palace, where he said to him, 'Harkye, I once visited thy bath and thou entreatedst me with honour and accomplishedst all my wants and I had great pleasure of thee: moreover, thou sworest that thou wouldst take no pay of me, and I love thee with a great love. So tell me how the case stands between thee and the king and what abomination thou hast done with him that he is wroth with thee and hath commanded me that thou shouldst die this horrid death.' 'By Allah, O my brother,' answered Abousir, 'I have done nothing, nor do I know of any crime I have committed against him that merits this!' 'Verily,' rejoined the captain, 'thou wast in high favour with the king, such as none ever enjoyed before thee, and all who are prosperous are envied. Belike some one envied thee thy good fortune and missaid of thee to the king, by reason whereof he is become thus enraged against thee: but be of good cheer; no harm shall befall thee: for, even as thou entreatedst me generously, without knowledge of me, so now I will deliver thee. But, if I

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release thee, thou must abide with me in this island till some galleon set sail from the city to thy native land, when I will send thee thither therein.'

Abousir kissed his hand and thanked him for this; after which the captain fetched the lime and laid it in a sack, together with a great stone, the bigness of a man, saying, 'I put my trust in God.' Then he gave the barber a net, saying, 'Cast this net into the sea, so haply thou mayst take somewhat of fish. For I am bounden to furnish the king's kitchen with fish every day; but to-day I have been distracted from fishing by this calamity that hath befallen thee, and I fear lest the cook's servants come to me in quest of fish and find none. So, if thou take aught, they will find it and thou wilt veil my face,[1] whilst I go and play off my device in front of the palace and feign to cast thee into the sea.' 'Go,' answered Abousir; 'and God be thy helper. I will fish the while.'

So the captain laid the sack in the boat and rowed till he came under the palace, where he saw the king seated at the lattice and said to him, 'O king of the age, shall I cast him in?' 'Cast,' answered the king and signed to him with his hand, whereupon something flashed and fell into the sea. Now this that had fallen into the sea was the king's seal-ring, which was enchanted on such wise that, when the king was wroth with any one and was minded to slay him, he had but to sign to him with his right hand, whereon was the ring, and there issued lightning therefrom, which smote the offender, and thereupon his head fell from his shoulders. It was this ring that gave him authority over the troops, nor did he overcome the mighty save by means thereof; so, when it dropped from his finger, he concealed the matter and kept silence, for that he dared not say, 'My ring is fallen

[1] *i.e.* save me from disgrace.

into the sea,' for fear of the troops, lest they should rise against him and slay him.

Meanwhile, Abousir cast the net into the sea and drew it up full of fish. Then he cast it again and it came up full of fish; nor did he cease to cast it and pull it up full, till there was a great heap of fish before him. So he said to himself, 'By Allah, I have not eaten fish this long while!' And chose himself a large fat fish, saying, 'When the captain comes back, I will bid him fry it for me, so I may make the morning meal of it.' Then he cut its throat with a knife he had with him; but the knife stuck in its gills and there he saw the king's seal-ring; for the fish had swallowed it and destiny had driven it to the island, where it had fallen into the net. So he took the ring and put it on his little finger, not knowing its properties. Presently, up came two of the cook's underlings in quest of fish and seeing Abousir, said to him, 'O man, whither is the captain gone?' 'I know not,' answered he and signed to them with his right hand; when, behold, their heads dropped from their shoulders.

At this Abousir was amazed and said, 'I wonder who slew them!' And their case was grievous to him and he was still musing upon it, when the captain returned and seeing the two men lying dead and the ring on Abousir's finger, said to him, 'O my brother, move not thy hand whereon is the ring; else thou wilt slay me.' Abousir wondered at this speech and the captain coming up to him, said, 'Who slew these two men?' 'By Allah, O my brother,' answered the barber, 'I know not!' 'Thou sayst sooth,' rejoined the captain; 'but tell me whence hadst thou that ring?' Quoth Abousir, 'I found it in this fish's gills.' 'True,' said the captain, 'for I saw it fall flashing from the king's palace and disappear in the sea, what time he signed towards [the sack in which he deemed] thee [to be], saying, "Cast him in." So I cast

the sack into the water, and it was then that the ring slipped from his finger and fell into the sea, where the fish swallowed it, and God drove it to thee, so that thou tookest it, for this ring was thy lot; but knowest thou its property?' 'I knew not that it had any properties,' answered Abousir, and the captain said, 'Know, then, that the king's troops obey him not save for fear of this ring, for it is enchanted, and when he was wroth with any one and had a mind to put him to death, he would sign at him therewith and his head would drop from his shoulders; for there issued a lightning from the ring and its ray smote the object of his wrath, who died forthright.'

At this, Abousir rejoiced with an exceeding joy and said to the captain, 'Carry me back to the city.' 'That will I,' answered he, 'now that I no longer fear for thee from the king; for, wert thou to sign at him with thy hand, purposing to kill him, his head would fall down before thee; and if thou be minded to slay him and all his troops, thou mayst do so without hindrance.' So saying, he embarked with him in the boat and rowed him back to the city, where Abousir landed and going up to the palace, entered the council-chamber, where he found the king seated in the midst of his officers, sore concerned by reason of the ring and daring not tell any of its loss. Night DCCCCXXXIX.

When he saw Abousir, he said to him, 'Did we not cast thee into the sea? How hast thou made shift to come forth therefrom?' 'O king of the age,' answered Abousir, 'whenas thou badst throw me into the sea, thy captain carried me to an island and questioned me of the cause of thy wrath against me, saying, "What hast thou done with the king, that he should decree thy death?" "By Allah," answered I, "I know not that I have offended against him in aught!" Quoth he, "Thou wast in high favour with the king, and most like some one envied thee and slandered thee to him, so that he is become incensed

against thee. But, when I visited thee in thy bath, thou entreatedst me hospitably, and I will requite thee thy hospitality by setting thee free and sending thee back to thine own country." Then he laid a great stone in the sack and cast it into the sea in my stead; but, when thou signedst to him to throw me in, thy seal-ring dropped from thy finger into the sea, and a fish swallowed it.

Now I was on the island, fishing, and this fish came up [in the net] with others; whereupon I took it, thinking to broil it; but, when I opened its maw, I found the ring therein; so I took it and put it on my finger. Presently, up came two of the servants of the kitchen, in quest of fish, and I signed to them with my hand, knowing not the property of the ring, and their heads fell off. Then the captain came back and seeing the ring on my finger, acquainted me with its enchantment; and behold, I have brought it back to thee, for that thou dealtest bounteously by me and entreatedst me with the utmost generosity, nor is that which thou hast done me of kindness lost upon me. Here is thy ring; take it; and if I have done with thee aught deserving of death, tell me my crime and slay me and thou shalt be quit of my blood.' So saying, he pulled the ring from his finger and gave it to the king, who put it on and his life returned to him.

Then he rose to his feet and embracing Abousir, said to him, 'O man, thou art indeed of the flower of the noble! Bear me not malice, but forgive me the wrong I have done thee. Had any but thou come by this ring, he had never restored it to me.' 'O king of the age,' answered Abousir, 'if thou wouldst have me forgive thee, tell me what was my offence that drew down thine anger upon me, so that thou commandedst to put me to death.' 'By Allah,' rejoined the king, 'it is clear to me that thou art altogether guiltless of offence, since thou hast done this good deed; only the dyer denounced thee to me;' and

he told him all that Aboukir had said. 'By Allah, O king of the age,' replied Abousir, 'I know not the King of the Christians and have never journeyed to their country, nor did it ever enter my thought to kill thee; but this dyer was my comrade and neighbour in the city of Alexandria, and life was straitened upon us there; wherefore we departed thence, to seek our fortunes, by reason of the straitness of our livelihood there, after we had recited the first chapter of the Koran together [in token of our agreement] that he who got work should feed him who lacked thereof; and there befell me with him such and such things.'

Then he went on to relate to the king all that had befallen him with the dyer; how he had robbed him and left him alone and sick in the khan and how the porter had fed him of his own monies till God recovered him of his sickness, when he went forth and walked about the city with his shaving gear, as of his wont, till he espied a dyery, about which the folk were crowding; so he looked at the door and seeing Aboukir seated on a bench there, went in to salute him, whereupon he accused him of being a thief and beat him grievously; brief, he told him his whole story, from first to last, and added, 'O king of the age, it was he who counselled me to make the depilatory and present it to thee, saying, "The bath is perfect in all things but that it lacketh this;" and know, O king, that this unguent is harmless and we use it in our country, where it is one of the requisites of the bath; but I had forgotten it: so, when he visited the bath, I entreated him with honour and he reminded me thereof. But do thou send after the porter of such a khan and the workmen of the dyery and question them all of that which I have told thee.'

So the king sent for them and questioned them and they acquainted him with the truth of the matter. Then

he sent to fetch the dyer, bidding bring him barefoot and bareheaded, with his hands bound behind him. Now he was sitting in his house, rejoicing in Abousir's [supposed] death, when, before he could be ware, the king's guards rushed in upon him and cuffed him on the nape of the neck; after which they bound him and carried him into the royal presence, where he saw Abousir seated by the king's side and the porter and workmen of the dyery standing before him. Quoth the porter to him, 'Is not this thy comrade whom thou robbedst of his money and leftest with me sick in the khan?' And the workmen said to him, 'Is not this he whom thou badest us seize and beat?'

Therewith Aboukir's baseness was made manifest to the king and he was certified that he merited a punishment yet sorer than that which Munker and Nekir[1] deal [to the wicked after death]. So he upbraided him and said to his guards, 'Take him and parade him about the city and the markets; then lay him in a sack and cast him into the sea.' Whereupon quoth Abousir, 'O king of the age, accept my intercession for him; for I pardon him all he hath done with me.' 'If thou pardon him his offences against thee,' answered the king, 'I cannot pardon him his offences against me.' And he cried out, saying, 'Take him.' So they took him and paraded him about the city, after which they laid him in a sack with quicklime and cast him into the sea, and he died, drowned and burnt.

Night dccccxl.

Then said the king to the barber, 'O Abousir, ask of

[1] "Munkir [Munker] and Nakir [Nekir] are the two angels that preside at the 'examination of the tomb.' They visit a man in his grave directly after he has been buried and examine him concerning his faith: if he acknowledge that there is but one God and that Mohammed is His prophet [apostle], they suffer him to rest in peace; otherwise they beat him with iron maces, till he roars so loud[ly] that he is heard by all from east to west, except by men and Ginns [Jinn]."—*Palmer's Koran*, Introduction.

me what thou wilt and it shall be given thee.' And he answered, saying, 'I ask of thee to send me back to my own country, for I care no longer to abide here.' Then the king offered to make him his vizier; but he consented not; so he gave him great store of gifts, over and above that which he had bestowed on him aforetime; and amongst the rest a galleon laden with goods; and the crew of this galleon were slaves; so he gave him these also. Then he took leave of the king and set sail; nor did he cast anchor till he reached Alexandria and made fast to the shore there. Then they landed and one of his servants, seeing a sack on the beach, said to Abousir, 'O my lord, there is a great heavy sack on the sea-shore, with the mouth tied up and I know not what therein.' So Abousir came up and opening the sack, found therein the dead body of Aboukir, which the sea had borne thither. He took it forth and burying it near Alexandria, built over the grave a place of visitation and endowed it for pious uses, writing over the door the following verses:

A man is by his actions known among his fellows aye: The actions of the freeborn man his generous birth betray.
Backbite not any, lest thyself backbitten be in turn. Whoso saith aught, his fellow-men the like of him will say.
Abstain from lewd and ribald words: I rede thee speak them not At any time, or if it be in earnest or in play.
The dog, good manners if he use, is suffered in the house; The lion, of his ignorance, is fettered night and day.
The carrion of the waste floats up upon the topmost sea, Whilst on the lowest of its sands the pearls neglected stay.
But for its feather-headedness and levity of wit, The sparrow never with the hawk to jostle would essay.
Lo, on the pages of the air is written, in the sky, 'Whoso doth good, the like thereof his actions shall repay.'
Beware of gathering sugar, then, from out the colocynth: Still in the tasting will the thing its origin bewray.

After this Abousir abode awhile, till God took him to

Himself, and they buried him hard by the tomb of his comrade Aboukir; wherefore the place was called Aboukir and Abousir; but it is now known as Aboukir [only]. This, then, is that which hath reached us of their history, and glory be to Him who endureth for ever and by whose will the days and nights succeed each other!

ABDALLAH THE FISHERMAN AND ABDALLAH THE MERMAN.

There was once a fisherman named Abdallah, who had a wife and nine children and was very poor, owning nothing but his net. Every day he used to go to the sea to fish, and if he caught little, he sold it and spent the price on his children, after the measure of that which God vouchsafed him of provision; but, if he caught much, he would cook a good mess of meat and buy fruit and spend without stint till nothing was left him, saying in himself, 'To-morrow's provision will come to-morrow.' Presently, his wife gave birth to another child, making ten in all, and it chanced that day that he had nothing at all; so she said to him, 'O my master, see [and get] me wherewithal I may sustain myself.' Quoth he, 'Under favour of God the Most High, I am going to-day to the sea, to fish in the name of this new-born child, that we may see its luck.' And she answered, 'Put thy trust in God.'

So he took his net and went down to the sea-shore, where he cast it in the name of the little child, saying, 'O my God, make his living easy, not hard, and abundant, not scant!' Then he waited awhile and drew in the net, which came up full of rubbish and sand and pebbles and weeds, and he found therein no fish, neither much nor little. He cast it again and waited, then drew it in, but

found no fish in it, and threw it a third and a fourth and a fifth time, with no better success. So he removed to another place, beseeching God the Most High to grant him his daily bread, and thus he did till the end of the day, but caught not so much as a sprat; whereat he fell a-marvelling in himself and said, 'Hath God then created this new-born child, without [an appointed] provision? This may never be; He who slits the corners of the mouth hath engaged for its provision, for He is the Bountiful, the Provider!' So saying, he shouldered his net and turned homeward, broken-spirited and heavy at heart for his family, for that he had left them without food, more by token that his wife was in the straw.

As he trudged along, saying in himself, 'How shall I do and what shall I say to the children to-night?' he came to a baker's oven and saw a crowd about it; for it was a time of dearth and food was scant with the folk; so they were proffering the baker money, but he paid no heed to any of them, by reason of the much crowd. The fisherman stood looking and snuffing the smell of the hot bread,—and indeed his soul longed for it, by reason of his hunger,—till the baker caught sight of him and cried out to him, saying, 'Come hither, O fisherman!' So he went up to him, and the baker said to him, 'Dost thou want bread?' But he was silent. 'Speak,' said the baker, 'and be not ashamed, for God is bountiful. If thou have no money, I will give thee [bread] and have patience with thee till good [fortune] betide thee.' 'By Allah, O master,' replied Abdallah, 'I have indeed no money! But give me bread enough for my family, and I will leave thee this net in pawn till the morrow.' 'Nay, good fellow,' rejoined the baker, 'this net is [as it were] thy shop and the means of thy livelihood;[1] so, if thou pawn it, where-

[1] Lit. the door of thy provision.

withal wilt thou fish? Tell me how much [bread] will suffice thee?' 'Ten paras' worth,' replied the fisherman.

So he gave him ten paras' worth of bread and ten paras in money, saying, 'Take these ten paras and cook thyself a mess of meat therewith; so wilt thou owe me twenty paras, for which bring me fish to-morrow; but, if thou catch nothing again, come and take thy bread and thy ten paras, and I will have patience with thee till better luck betide thee, when thou shalt bring me fish for all thou owest me.' 'May God the Most High reward thee,' said the fisherman, 'and requite thee for me with all good!' Then he took the bread and the money and went away, glad at heart, and buying what he could [of meat and vegetables], returned to his wife, whom he found sitting up, soothing the children, who were weeping for hunger, and saying to them, 'Your father will be here anon with what ye may eat.' So he set the bread before them and they ate, whilst he told his wife what had befallen him, and she said, 'God is bountiful.'

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On the morrow, he shouldered his net and went forth of his house, saying, 'I beseech thee, O Lord, to vouchsafe me this day what shall whiten my face with the baker!' When he came to the sea-shore, he proceeded to cast his net and pull it in; but there came up no fish therein; and he toiled thus till ended day and caught nothing. Then he set out homeward, in sore concern, and the way to his house lay past the baker's shop; so he said in himself, 'How shall I go home? But I will hasten past that the baker may not see me.' When he reached the shop, he saw a crowd about it and quickened his pace, being ashamed to face the baker; but the latter raised his eyes to him and cried out to him, saying, 'Ho, fisherman! Come and take thy bread and spending-money. Meseems thou forgettest.' 'By Allah,' answered Abdallah, 'I had not forgotten; but I was ashamed to face thee,

because I have caught no fish to-day.' 'Be not ashamed,' answered the baker. 'Said I not to thee, "At thy leisure, till good hap betide thee"?'

Then he gave him the bread and the ten paras and he returned and told his wife, who said, 'God is bountiful. If it please the Most High, good luck shall yet betide thee and thou shalt give the baker his due.' On this wise he did forty days, betaking himself daily to the sea, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, and returning [at nightfall], without fish; and still he took bread and spending-money of the baker, who never named the fish to him nor neglected him nor kept him waiting, like the folk,[1] but gave him the bread and the ten paras [forthright]. Whenever the fisherman said to him, 'O my brother, reckon with me,' he would say, 'Go thy ways; this is no time for reckoning. [Wait] till good luck betide thee, and then I will reckon with thee.' And the fisherman would go away, blessing and thanking him.

On the one-and-fortieth day, he said to his wife, 'I have a mind to tear up the net and be quit of this life.' 'Why wilt thou do this?' asked she. And he said, 'Meseems there is an end of my getting my living from the sea. How long shall this last? By Allah, I am consumed with shame before the baker and I will go no more to the sea, so I may not pass by his shop, for I have no other way home; and every time I pass, he calls me and gives me the bread and the ten paras. How much longer shall I run in debt to him?' 'Praised be God the Most High,' replied his wife, 'who hath inclined his heart to thee, so that he giveth thee our daily bread! What mislikest thou in this?' Quoth he, 'I owe him now a great sum of money, and

[1] It seems doubtful whether this phrase means, "He did not neglect him, as most folk would have done," or "He did not keep him waiting, as he did the rest of the folk."

he will without fail demand his due.' 'Hath he vexed thee with words?' asked his wife. 'Nay,' answered Abdallah; 'on the contrary, he still refuses to reckon with me, saying, "[Wait] till good luck betide thee."' And his wife said, 'If he press thee, say to him, "[Wait] till there come the good luck for which we hope, thou and I."' 'And when will the good luck come that we hope for?' asked the fisherman. 'God is bountiful,' answered she; and he said, 'Thou sayst sooth.'

Then he shouldered his net and went down to the sea-side, saying, 'O Lord, provide Thou me, though but with one fish, that I may give it to the baker!' And he cast his net into the sea and pulling it in, found it heavy; so he tugged at it till, after sore travail, he got it ashore and found in it a dead ass, swollen and stinking; whereat his soul sickened and he freed it from the net, saying, 'There is no power and no virtue save in God the Most High, the Supreme! Verily, I can no more! I say to yonder woman,[1] "There is no more provision for me in the sea; let me leave this craft." And she still answers me, "God is bountiful: good will betide thee." Is this dead ass the good of which she speaks?' And he was sore chagrined.

Then he removed to another place, so he might be quit of the stench of the dead ass, and cast his net there. He waited awhile, then drew it in and found it heavy; whereupon quoth he, 'Good; we are hauling up all the dead asses in the sea and ridding it of its rubbish.' However he gave not over tugging at the net, till the blood streamed from the palms of his hands, and when he got it ashore, he saw a man in it and took him for one of the Afrits of the lord Solomon, whom he was wont to imprison in vessels of brass and cast into the sea, supposing that the vessel had burst for length of years and that the Afrit

[1] *i.e.* his wife.

had come forth and fallen into the net; wherefore he fled from him, crying out and saying, 'Mercy, mercy, O Afrit of Solomon!' But the creature called out to him from within the net and said, 'Come hither, O fisherman, and flee not from me; for I am a human being like thyself. Release me, so thou mayst get a recompense for me [of God].'

So the fisherman took heart and coming up to him, said to him, 'Art thou not an Afrit of the Jinn?' 'Nay,' replied the other, 'I am a mortal and a believer in God and His Apostle.' 'Who threw thee into the sea?' asked the fisherman; and he answered, 'I am of the children of the sea and was going about therein, when thou castest the net over me. We are people who obey God's commandments and show loving-kindness unto the creatures of the Most High, and but that I fear and dread to be of the disobedient, I had rent thy net; but I accept that which God hath decreed unto me; wherefore thou art become my owner and I thy captive. Wilt thou then set me free for the love of God the Most High and make a covenant with me and become my friend? I will come to thee every day in this place, and do thou come to me and bring me a gift of the fruits of the land. For with you are grapes and figs and melons and peaches and pomegranates and what not else, and all thou bringest me will be acceptable unto me. Moreover, with us are coral and pearls and chrysolites and emeralds and rubies and other precious stones, and I will fill thee the basket, wherein thou bringest me the fruit, with precious stones of the jewels of the sea. What sayst thou to this, O my brother?'

Quoth the fisherman, 'Be the first Chapter of the Koran between thee and me upon this.' So they recited the Fatiheh,[1] [in token of their agreement], and the fisherman

[1] *i.e.* the first chapter of the Koran. See note, Vol. VI. p. 6.

loosed the merman from the net and said to him, 'What is thy name?' 'My name is Abdallah of the sea,' answered he; 'and if thou come hither and see me not, do thou call out and say, "Where art thou, O Abdallah, O merman?" And I will be with thee presently. But thou, what is thy name?' 'My name also is Abdallah,' answered the fisherman. Quoth the other, 'Thou art Abdallah of the land and I am Abdallah of the sea; but abide here till I go and fetch thee a present.' And the fisherman said, 'I hear and obey.'

Night dccccxlii.

Then the merman went down into the sea [and disappeared]; whereupon the fisherman repented him of having released him and said in himself, 'How know I that he will come back to me? Indeed, he beguiled me, so that I released him, and now he will laugh at me. Had I kept him, I might have made a show of him for the diversion of the people of the city and taken money from all the folk and entered with him the houses of the great.' And he repented him of having let him go and said, 'Thou hast let thy prey go from thy hand.' But, as he was thus bemoaning his credulity, behold, the merman returned to him, with his hands full of pearls and coral and emeralds and rubies and other jewels, and said to him, 'Take these, O my brother, and excuse me, for I had no basket that I might fill it for thee.'

The fisherman rejoiced and took the jewels from the merman, who said to him, 'Come hither every day, before sunrise,' and taking leave of him, went down into the sea; whilst the other returned to the city, rejoicing, and stayed not till he came to the baker's shop and said to him, 'O my brother, good luck is come to us [at last]; so do thou reckon with me.' 'There needs no reckoning,' answered the baker. 'If thou have aught, give it me; and if not, take thy bread and spending-money and begone, against good betide thee.' 'O my friend,' rejoined the fisherman,

'indeed good hath betided me of God's bounty, and I owe thee much money; but take this.' So saying, he took up, at a handful, half of the pearls and coral and rubies and other jewels he had with him, and gave them to the baker, saying, 'Give me some ready money to spend this day, till I sell these jewels.'

So the baker gave him all the money he had by him and all the bread in his basket and rejoiced in the jewels he had given him, saying, 'I am thy slave and thy servant.' Then he set all the bread on his head and following the fisherman home, gave it to his wife and children, after which he repaired to the market and fetched meat and vegetables and all kinds of fruit. Moreover, he left his shop and abode with Abdallah all that day, busying himself in his service and doing all his occasions. 'O my brother,' said the fisherman, 'thou weariest thyself.' 'This is my duty,' answered the baker; 'for I am become thy servant and thou hast overwhelmed me with thy bounties.' 'Not so,' rejoined the fisherman; 'it is thou who wast my benefactor in the days of dearth and straitness.' And the baker passed the night in feasting with him and became a faithful friend to him. Then the fisherman told his wife what had befallen him with the merman, whereat she rejoiced and said, 'Keep thy secret, lest the magistrates come down upon thee.' But he said, 'Though I keep my secret from all the folk, yet will I not hide it from the baker.'

On the morrow, he rose before the sun and shouldering a basket, which he had filled overnight with all manner fruits, repaired to the sea-shore, where he set down the basket and called out, saying, 'Where art thou, O Abdallah, O merman?' And he answered, saying, 'Here am I, at thy service;' and came forth to him. The fisherman gave him the fruit and he took it and plunging into the sea with it, was absent awhile, after which he

came up, with the basket full of all kinds of precious stones and jewels. The fisherman set it on his head and went away; and when he came to the baker's shop, the latter said to him, 'O my lord, I have baked thee forty brioshes and have sent them to thy house; and now I will bake wastel-bread, and as soon as it is done, I will bring it to the house and go and fetch thee meat and vegetables.'

Abdallah gave him three handsful of jewels out of the basket and going home, set it down there. Then he took a jewel of price of each sort and going to the jewel-bazaar, stopped at the Syndic's shop and said to him, 'Buy these jewels of me.' 'Show them to me,' said the Syndic. So he showed them to him and the jeweller said, 'Hast thou other than these?' 'Yes,' answered Abdallah, 'I have a basketful at home.' 'And where is thy house?' asked the Syndic. 'In such a quarter,' replied the fisherman; whereupon the Syndic took the jewels from him and said to his servants, 'Lay hold of him, for he is the thief who stole the queen's jewels.' And he bade beat him. So they beat him and bound his hands behind him; after which the Syndic and all the people of the jewel-market arose and set out [to carry him to the king], saying, 'We have gotten the thief.' Quoth one, 'None robbed such an one but this knave,' and another, 'It was none but he stole all that was in such an one's house;' and some said this and some that.

But he was silent and spoke not a word nor answered any of them, till they brought him before the king, to whom said the Syndic, 'O king of the age, when the queen's necklace was stolen, thou sentest to acquaint us therewith, requiring of us the discovery of the culprit; wherefore I strove beyond the rest of the folk and have taken the thief for thee. Here he is before thee, and

these jewels we have recovered from him.' Thereupon the king said to the eunuch, 'Carry these jewels to the queen and say to her, "Are these thy jewels that thou hast lost?"' So the eunuch carried the jewels to the queen, who marvelled at them and sent to the king to say, 'I have found my necklace in my own place and these jewels are not my property; nay, they are finer than those of my necklace. Wherefore oppress thou not the man; but, if he will sell them, buy them of him for thy daughter Umm es Suwood, that we may string them on a necklace for her.' **Night dccccxliii.**

When the eunuch returned and told the king what the queen said, he cursed the Syndic of the jewellers and his company with the curse of Aad and Themoud,[1] and they said to him, 'O king of the age, we knew this man for a poor fisherman and deemed these jewels too much for him [to come by honestly], so made sure that he had stolen them.' 'Wretches that ye are!' cried the king. 'Do ye begrudge a true-believer good fortune? Why did ye not question him? Peradventure God the Most High hath vouchsafed him these things from a source on which he did not reckon. Why did ye make him out a thief and dishonour him amongst the folk? Begone, and may God not bless you!'

So they went out in affright and the king said to Abdallah, 'O man, (may God bless thee in that He hath bestowed on thee!) no harm shall befall thee; but tell me truly, whence gottest thou these jewels; for I am a king and have not the like of them.' 'O king of the age,' answered the fisherman, 'I have a basketful of them at home.' And he told him of his friendship with the merman, adding, 'We have made a covenant together

[1] Two fabulous tribes of idolaters, repeatedly mentioned in the Koran as having been destroyed by thunder from heaven, for refusing to hearken to the prophets Houd and Salih.

that I shall bring him every day a basketful of fruit and that he shall fill me the basket with these jewels.' 'O man,' said the king, 'this is thy lot; but wealth hath need of station.[1] I will protect thee for the nonce against men's usurpations; but it may be I shall be deposed or die and another be made king in my stead, and he shall put thee to death, because of his love of the things of this world and his covetousness. Wherefore I am minded to marry thee to my daughter and make thee my vizier and bequeath thee the kingdom after me, so none may oppress thee after my death.'

Then said he to his officers, 'Carry this man to the bath.' So they carried him to the bath and washed his body and clad him in royal apparel, after which they brought him back to the king, and he made him his vizier and sent to his house couriers and the soldiers of his guard and all the wives of the notables, who clad his children in royal apparel and mounting the former in a horse-litter, with the little child in her lap, carried her to the palace, whilst the guards and couriers and Cadis walked before her. Moreover, they brought her elder children in to the king, who made much of them, taking them in his lap and seating them by his side; for they were nine male children and the king had no [male] offspring, nor had he been blessed with any child, save this one daughter, Umm es Suwood. Meanwhile the queen entreated Abdallah's wife with honour and bestowed favours on her and made her her vizieress. Then the king commanded to draw up the contract of marriage between his daughter and the fisherman, who assigned to her, as her dower, all the precious stones and jewels in his possession, and they opened the chapter of festivity. Moreover, the king made proclamation, commanding to

[1] *i.e.* for the purpose of protecting its possessor from the greed and oppression of his fellows.

decorate the city, in honour of his daughter's wedding, and Abdallah went in to the princess and did away her maidenhead.

Next morning, the king looked out of window and saw Abdallah carrying on his head a basket full of fruit. So he said to him, 'What hast thou there, O my son-in-law, and whither goest thou?' 'I go to my friend Abdallah the merman,' answered the fisherman; and the king said, 'O my son-in-law, this is no time to go to thy friend.' Quoth Abdallah, 'Indeed, I fear to break tryst with him, lest he reckon me a liar and say, "The things of the world have distracted thee from me."' 'True,' rejoined the king. 'Go to thy friend and God help thee!' So he passed through the city on his way to the sea-shore, and as he went, he heard those who knew him say, 'There goes the king's son-in-law to exchange fruit for jewels;' whilst those who knew him not said, 'Harkye, how much a pound? Come, sell to me.' And he answered, saying, 'Wait till I come back to thee,' for that he would not vex any.

Then he fared on till he came to the sea-shore and foregathered with his friend the merman, to whom he delivered the fruit, receiving jewels in return. As he passed by the shop of the baker, on his return, he saw it closed; and thus he did ten days, during which time the shop abode shut and he saw nothing of the baker. So he said in himself, 'This is a strange thing! I wonder what is come of the baker!' Then he enquired of his neighbour, saying, 'O my brother, where is thy neighbour the baker and what hath God done with him?' 'O my lord,' answered he, 'he is sick and cometh not forth of his house.' 'Where is his house?' asked Abdallah; and the other replied, 'In such a quarter.'

So he went thither and enquired of him; but, when he knocked at the door, the baker looked out of window and

seeing his friend the fisherman, with a full basket on his head, came down and opened the door to him. Abdallah entered and throwing himself on the baker, embraced him and wept, saying, 'How dost thou, O my friend? Every day, I pass by thy shop and see it closed; so I asked thy neighbour, who told me that thou wast sick; and I enquired for thy house, that I might see thee.' 'God requite thee for me with all good!' answered the baker. 'Nothing ails me; but it was told me that the king had taken thee, for that certain of the folk had lied against thee and accused thee of being a thief; wherefore I feared and shut my shop and hid myself.' 'It is well,' said Abdallah and told him all that had befallen him with the king and the Syndic of the jewellers, adding, 'Moreover, the king hath given me his daughter to wife and made me his vizier: so do thou take what is in this basket to thy share and fear nothing.'

Then he left him, after having done away his fear from him, and returned with the empty basket to the king, who said to him, 'O my son-in-law, it would seem thou hast not foregathered with thy friend the merman to-day.' 'I went to him,' replied Abdallah; 'but that which I got of him I gave to my friend the baker, to whom I owe kindness.' 'Who is this baker?' asked the king; and the fisherman answered, 'He is a benevolent man, who did with me thus and thus in the days of my poverty and never neglected me a single day nor vexed my spirit.' Quoth the king, 'What is his name?' 'His name is Abdallah the baker,' replied the fisherman; 'and my name is Abdallah of the land and that of my friend the merman Abdallah of the sea.' 'And my name, also, is Abdallah,' rejoined the king; 'and the servants of God[1] are all brethren. So send and fetch thy friend the baker, that I may make him my vizier of the left.'

[1] Abdallah means "servant of God."

So he sent for the baker and the king invested him with the vizier's habit and made him vizier of the left, making Abdallah of the land his vizier of the right. On this wise the fisherman abode a whole year, every day carrying the merman the basket full of fruit and receiving it back, full of jewels; and when fruit failed from the gardens, he carried him raisins and almonds and hazel-nuts and walnuts and figs and so forth; and all that he brought him the merman accepted and returned him the basket full of jewels, as of wont.

Night DCCCCXLIV.

It chanced one day that he carried him the basket, full of dry[1] fruits, according to custom, and his friend took them from him. Then they sat down to converse, the fisherman on the beach and the merman in the water, near the shore, and conversed; and the talk went round between them, till it fell upon the subject of tombs; whereupon quoth the merman, 'O my brother, they say that the Prophet (whom God bless and preserve!) is buried with you on the land. Knowest thou his tomb?' 'Yes,' answered Abdallah. 'It lies in a city called Yethrib.'[2] 'And do the people of the land visit it?' asked the merman. 'Yes,' replied the fisherman, and the other said, 'I give you joy, O people of the land, of visiting [the tomb of] that noble and compassionate prophet, which whoso visits merits his intercession! Hast thou

[1] Lit. "dessert" (*nucl*); but this latter word properly includes *dried* (as well as dry) fruits and confections. The Arabs divide fruits into *wet* or *fresh* (*i.e.* soft-skinned or pulped, such as cherries and peaches) and *dry* (*i.e.* hard-skinned or shelled, such as nuts and almonds).

[2] The ancient name of the city of Medina, which latter name (abridged form of that of Medinet en Nebi, the city of the Prophet) was not given to it till after the Hegira. Thus the Breslau edition; but the Boulac and Calcutta texts read, "in a city called Teibeh." Teibeh or Teyyibeh (the excellent) is one of the many names of honour of the Holy City and is rarely used, Yethrib being the common ancient and Medina the common modern name.

visited it, O my brother?' 'No,' answered the fisherman; 'for I was poor and had not what to spend by the way, nor have I been at my ease but since I knew thee and thou bestowedst on me this good fortune. But it behoves me to visit it, after I have made the pilgrimage to the Holy House of God,[1] and nought withholds me therefrom but my love for thee, for I cannot leave thee for one day.'

'And dost thou set the love of me,' rejoined the merman, 'before the visitation of the tomb of Mohammed (whom God bless and preserve!), who shall intercede for thee on the day of appearance before God and shall save thee from the fire and through whose intercession thou shalt enter Paradise? And dost thou, for the love of the world, leave to visit the tomb of thy Prophet Mohammed, whom God bless and preserve?' 'No, by Allah,' replied Abdallah. 'I set the visitation of the Prophet's tomb above all else, and I crave thy leave to visit it this year.' 'I grant thee leave,' answered the merman; 'but I have a trust to give thee; so come thou with me into the sea, that I may carry thee to my city and my house and entertain thee there and give thee a deposit; and when thou standest by the Prophet's tomb, do thou lay it thereon, saying, "O apostle of God, Abdallah the merman salutes thee and sends thee this present, imploring thine intercession to save him from the fire."'

'O my brother,' said the fisherman, 'thou wast created in the water and it is thine abiding-place and doth thee no hurt; but, if thou shouldst come forth to the land, would any harm betide thee?' 'Yes,' answered the merman; 'my body would dry up and the breezes of the land would blow upon me and I should die.' 'And I, in like manner,' rejoined the fisherman, 'was created on the land and it is my abiding-place; but, if I went down into the sea, the water would enter my belly and

[1] At Mecca.

choke me and I should die.' 'Have no fear for that,' replied the other; 'for I will bring thee an ointment, wherewith when thou hast anointed thy body, the water will do thee no hurt, though thou shouldst pass the rest of thy life going about in the sea; and thou shalt lie down and rise up in the sea and nought shall harm thee.' 'If the case be so,' said the fisherman, 'well and good; but bring me the ointment, so I may make proof of it.' 'So be it,' answered the merman and taking the basket, disappeared in the sea.

After awhile, he returned with an ointment, as it were the fat of oxen, yellow as gold and sweet of savour. 'What is this, O my brother?' asked the fisherman. 'It is the liver-fat of a kind of fish called the dendan,'[1] answered the merman, 'which is the biggest of all fish and the fellest of our foes. Its bulk is greater than that of any beast of the land, and were it to meet a camel or an elephant, it would swallow it at one mouthful.' 'O my brother,' asked Abdallah, 'what eateth this baleful [beast]?' 'It eateth of the beasts of the sea,' replied the merman. 'Hast thou not heard the byword, "Like the fishes of the sea: the strong eateth the weak"?'

'True,' answered the fisherman; 'but have you many of these dendans in the sea?' And the other said, 'Yes, there be many of them with us. None can tell their tale save God the Most High.' Quoth Abdallah, 'Verily, I fear lest, if I go down with thee into the sea, one of these beasts fall in with me and devour me.' 'Have no fear,' replied the merman. 'When it sees thee, it will know thee for a son of Adam and will fear thee and flee. It feareth none in the sea as it feareth a son of Adam; for that, if it eat him, it dieth forthright, because his flesh is

[1] The dictionaries are silent as to this fish, which appears to be a fabulous monster, partaking of the attributes of the shark and the cachalot or sperm-whale.

a deadly poison to this kind of creature; nor do we gather its liver-fat save by means of a man, when he falleth into the sea and is drowned; for that his favour becometh changed and ofttimes his flesh is torn; so the dendan eateth him, deeming him of the beasts of the sea, and dieth. Then we light upon it dead and take the fat of its liver. Moreover, wherever there is a son of Adam, though there be in that place a hundred or two hundred or a thousand or more of these beasts, if they but hear him cry once, they all die forthwith and not one of them can avail to remove from its place; wherefore, whenas a son of Adam falleth into the sea, we take him [ere he can drown] and anoint him with this fat and go round about the sea with him, and whenever we see a dendan or two or three or more, we bid him cry out and they all die forthright for his once crying.'

Night dccccxlv.

Quoth the fisherman, 'I put my trust in God,' and putting off his clothes, buried them in a hole, which he dug in the beach; after which he rubbed his body from top to toe with the ointment. Then he descended into the water and diving, opened his eyes and the water did him no hurt. So he walked right and left, and if he would, he rose [to the surface], and if he would, he sank to the bottom. And he saw the water of the sea vaulted over him, as it were a tent; yet it did him no hurt. Then said the merman to him, 'What seest thou, O my brother?' 'O my brother,' answered Abdallah, 'I see [that which is] good; and indeed thou spokest truth in that which thou saidst to me; for the water doth me no hurt.' Quoth the merman, 'Follow me.'

So he followed him and they fared on from place to place, whilst Abdallah saw mountains of water before him and on his right and left and diverted himself by gazing thereon and on the various kinds of fish, some great and some small, that sported in the sea. Some of

them were like unto buffaloes, others to oxen and others to dogs and yet others unto human beings; but all to which they drew near fled, whenas they saw the fisherman, who said to the merman, 'O my brother, how is it that I see all the fish, to which we draw near, flee from us?' 'Because they fear thee,' answered the other; 'for all things that God hath made fear the son of Adam.'

The fisherman ceased not to gaze upon the marvels of the sea, till they came to a high mountain and fared on beside it. Presently, he heard a great cry and turning, saw some black thing, the bigness of a camel or bigger, coming down upon him from the mountain and crying out. So he said to his friend, 'What is this, O my brother?' 'This is the dendan,' answered the merman. 'It cometh down in quest of me, seeking to devour me; so cry thou out at it, O my brother, ere it win to us; else will it snatch me up and devour me.' So Abdallah cried out at it and it fell down dead; which when he saw, he said, 'Extolled be the perfection of God and His praise! I smote it not with sword nor knife; how comes it, then, that, for all the vastness of the creature's bulk, it could not endure my cry, but died?' 'Marvel not,' replied the merman; 'for, by Allah, O my brother, were there a thousand or two thousand of these creatures, yet could they not endure the cry of a son of Adam.'

Then they fared on, till they came to a city, whose inhabitants the fisherman saw to be all women, there being no male among them; so he said to his companion, 'O my brother, what city is this and what are these women?' 'This is the city of women,' answered the merman, 'for its inhabitants are of the women of the sea.' 'Are there any males among them?' asked the fisherman; and the merman said, 'No.' 'Then how,' said Abdallah, 'do they conceive and bear young, without males?' Quoth the other, 'The king of the sea banishes them hither and

they conceive not neither bear children. All the women of the sea, with whom he is wroth, he sends to this city and they cannot leave it; for, should one of them come forth therefrom, any of the beasts of the sea that saw her would devour her. But in the other cities of the sea there are both males and females.'

'Are there then other cities than this in the sea?' asked the fisherman, and the merman said, 'There are many.' 'And is there a Sultan over you in the sea?' asked the fisherman. 'Yes,' answered the merman. Then said Abdallah, 'O my brother, I have indeed seen many marvels in the sea!' 'And what hast thou seen of the marvels [of the sea]?' quoth the merman. 'Hast thou not heard the saying, "The marvels of the sea are more in number than the marvels of the land"?' 'True,' answered the fisherman and fell to gazing upon the women, whom he saw having faces like moons and hair like women's hair, but their hands and feet were in their bellies and they had tails like fishes' tails.

When the merman had shown him the people of the city, he carried him forth therefrom and forewent him to another city, which he found full of folk, both males and females, after the fashion of the women aforesaid and having tails; but there was neither selling nor buying amongst them, as with the people of the land, nor were they clothed, but went all naked and with their privities uncovered. 'O my brother,' said Abdallah, 'I see males and females alike with their privities exposed.' And the other said, 'This is because the folk of the sea have no clothes.' 'And how do they, when they marry?' asked the fisherman. 'They do not marry,' answered the merman; 'but every one who hath a mind to a female doth his will of her.' Quoth Abdallah, 'This is unlawful. Why doth he not ask her in marriage and dower her and make her a wedding-festival and marry her, in accordance with

that which is pleasing to God and His Apostle?' 'We are not all of one religion,' answered his companion. 'Some of us are Muslims, believers in the unity of God, others Jews and Christians and what not else; and each marries in accordance with the ordinances of his religion; but those of us who marry are mostly Muslims.'

Quoth the fisherman, 'Ye are naked and have neither buying nor selling among you: of what then is your wives' dowry? Do ye give them jewels and precious stones?' 'Jewels with us are but stones without value,' answered the merman: 'but upon him who is minded to marry they impose a dowry of a certain number of fish of various kinds, that he must catch, a thousand or two thousand, more or less, according to the agreement between himself and the bride's father. As soon as he brings the required amount, the families of the bride and bridegroom assemble and eat the marriage-banquet; after which they bring him in to his bride, and he catches fish and feeds her; or, if he be unable, she catches fish and feeds him.' 'And how if a woman commit adultery?' asked the fisherman. 'If a woman be convicted of this case,' answered the merman, 'they banish her to the City of Women; and if she be with child, they leave her till she be delivered, when, if she give birth to a girl, they banish her with her, naming her adulteress, daughter of adulteress, and she abideth a maid till she die; but, if she give birth to a male child, they carry it to the Sultan of the Sea, who puts it to death.'

Abdallah marvelled at this and the merman carried him to another city and thence to another and another, till he had shown him fourscore cities, and he saw the people of each city to be different from those of every other. Then said he to the merman, 'O my brother, are there yet other cities in the sea?' 'And what hast thou seen of the cities of the sea and its wonders?' replied the other. 'By the

virtue of the noble prophet, the benign, the compassionate, were I to show thee a thousand cities a day for a thousand years, and in each city a thousand marvels, I should not have shown thee one carat of the four-and-twenty carats of the cities of the sea and its wonders! I have but shown thee our own province and country, nothing more.'

'O my brother,' said the fisherman, 'since this is the case, what I have seen sufficeth me, for I am sick of eating fish, and these fourscore days I have been in thy company, thou hast fed me morning and night upon nothing but raw fish, neither broiled nor boiled.' 'And what is broiled and boiled?' asked the merman. Quoth Abdallah, 'We broil fish with fire and boil it [in water] and dress it in various ways and make many dishes of it.' 'And how should we come by fire in the sea?' rejoined the other. 'We know not broiled nor boiled nor aught else of the kind.' Quoth the fisherman, 'We also fry it in olive-oil and oil of sesame,' and the merman said, 'How should we come by olive-oil and oil of sesame in the sea? Verily we know nothing of that thou namest.'

'True,' said Abdallah, 'but, O my brother, thou hast shown me many cities; yet hast thou not shown me thine own city.' Quoth the merman, 'As for mine own city, we passed it long since, for it is near the land whence we came, and I only left it and came with thee hither, thinking to divert thee with the sight of the [greater] cities of the sea.' 'That which I have seen of them sufficeth me,' replied Abdallah; 'and now I would have thee show me thine own city.' 'So be it,' answered the other and returning on his traces, carried him back thither and said to him, 'This is my city.'

Abdallah looked and saw a city small by comparison with those he had seen; then he entered with his companion and they fared on till they came to a cavern. Quoth the merman, 'This is my house and all the houses

in the city are on this wise, caverns, great and small, in the mountains; as likewise are those of all the other cities of the sea. For every one who is minded to make him a house repairs to the king and says to him, 'I wish to make me a house in such a place.' Whereupon the king sends with him a band of the fish called peckers, which have beaks that crumble the hardest rock, appointing a certain dole of fish to their wage. They betake themselves to the mountain chosen by the owner of the house and hew therein the house, whilst the owner catches fish for them and feeds them, till the cavern is finished, when they depart and the owner of the house takes up his abode therein. After this wise do all the people of the sea; they traffic not with one another nor serve each other save by means of fish; and their food is fish and they themselves are a kind of fish.'

Then he said to him, 'Enter.' So Abdallah entered and the merman cried out, saying, 'Ho, daughter mine!' whereupon there came to him a damsel with a face like the round of the moon and long hair, heavy buttocks, languishing black eyes and slender waist; but she was naked and had a tail. When she saw the fisherman, she said to her father, 'O my father, what is this lacktail thou hast brought with thee?' 'O my daughter,' answered he, 'this is my friend of the land, from whom I use to bring thee the fruits of the earth. Come hither and salute him.' So she came forward and saluted the fisherman with eloquent tongue and fluent speech; and her father said to her, 'Bring victual for our guest, by whose coming a blessing hath betided us:' whereupon she brought him two great fishes, each the bigness of a lamb, and the merman said to him, 'Eat.' So he ate, in his own despite, for stress of hunger; because he was weary of eating fish and they had nothing else.

Before long, in came the merman's wife, who was fair

to look upon, and with her two children, each having in his hand a young fish, which he munched as a man would munch a cucumber. When she saw the fisherman with her husband, she said, 'What is this lacktail?' And she and her sons and daughter came up to him and fell to examining his breech and saying, 'Yea, by Allah, he is tailless!' And they laughed at him. So he said to the merman, 'O my brother, hast thou brought me hither to make me a laughing-stock for thy wife and children?' 'Pardon, O my brother,' answered the merman. 'Those who have no tails are rare among us, and whenever one such is found, the Sultan taketh him, to make him sport, and he abideth a marvel amongst us, and all who see him laugh at him. But, O my brother, excuse these young children and this woman, for they lack understanding.' Then he cried out to his family, saying, 'Hold your peace!' So they were afraid and kept silence; whilst he went on to soothe Abdallah's mind.

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Presently, as they were talking, in came half a score mermen, tall and strong and stout, and said to him, 'O Abdallah, it hath reached the king that thou hast with thee a lacktail.' 'Yes,' answered the merman, 'and this is he; but he is not of us nor of the children of the sea. He is my friend of the land and hath come to me as a guest and I purpose to carry him back to the land.' Quoth they, 'We cannot depart without him; so, if thou have aught to say, arise and come with him to the king; and whatsoever thou wouldst say to us, that say thou to the king.' Then said the merman to the fisherman, 'O my brother, my excuse is manifest, and we may not gainsay the king: but go thou with me to him and I will do my endeavour to deliver thee from him, if it please God. Fear not, for he deemeth thee of the children of the sea; but, when he seeth thee, he will know thee to be of the children of the land, whereupon he will surely entreat

thee with honour and restore thee to the land.' 'It is thine to decide,' replied Abdallah. 'I will put my trust in God and go with thee.'

So he took him and carried him to the king, who, when he saw him, laughed at him and said, 'Welcome to the lacktail!' And all who were about the king fell to laughing at him and saying, 'Yea, by Allah, he is tailless!' Then Abdallah of the sea came forward and acquainted the king with the fisherman's case, saying, 'This man is of the children of the land and he is my friend and cannot live amongst us, for that he loves not the eating of fish, except it be fried or boiled; wherefore I desire that thou give me leave to restore him to the land.' 'Since the case is so,' answered the king, 'I give thee leave to restore him to his place, after due entertainment. Bring him the guest-meal.'

So they brought him fish of various kinds and colours and he ate, in obedience to the king's commandment; after which the latter said to him, 'Ask a boon of me.' Quoth he, 'I ask of thee that thou give me jewels;' and the king said, 'Carry him to the jewel-house and let him choose that whereof he hath need.' So his friend carried him to the jewel-house and he chose out what he would, after which the merman brought him back to his own city and pulling out a purse, said to him, 'Take this deposit and lay it on the tomb of the Prophet, whom God bless and preserve!' And he took it, knowing not what was therein.

Then the merman went forth with him, to bring him back to land, and by the way he heard singing and merry-making and saw a table spread with fish and folk eating and singing and holding high festival. So he said to his friend, 'What ails these people to rejoice thus? Is there a wedding toward amongst them?' 'Nay,' answered Abdallah of the sea; 'only one of them is dead.' 'Do ye then,' asked the fisherman, 'when one dieth amongst you,

rejoice for him and sing and feast?' 'Yes,' replied the merman; 'and ye of the land, what do ye?' 'When one dieth amongst us,' said Abdallah, 'we weep and mourn for him and the women buffet their faces and rend the bosoms of their garments, in token of mourning for the dead.' The merman stared at him with wide eyes and said to him, 'Give me the deposit.' So he gave it to him.

Then he set him ashore and said to him, 'Henceforward our love and our friendship are at an end, and thou shalt no more see me, nor I thee.' 'Why sayst thou this?' asked the fisherman; and the other said, 'Are ye not, O folk of the land, a deposit of God?'[1] 'Yes,' answered Abdallah. 'Why then,' asked the merman, 'is it grievous to you that God should take back His deposit and wherefore weep ye over it? How can I entrust thee with a deposit for the Prophet, whom God bless and preserve, seeing that, when a child is born to you, ye rejoice in it, albeit God the Most High setteth the soul therein as a deposit; and yet, when He taketh it again, it is grievous to you and ye weep and mourn? Since it is uneath to thee to give up the deposit of God, how shall it be easy to thee to give up the deposit of the Prophet?[2] Wherefore we reck not of your companionship.' So saying, he left him and disappeared in the sea.

The fisherman donned his clothes and taking the jewels, went up to the king, who received him with open arms and rejoiced at his return, saying, 'How dost thou, O my son-in-law, and what is the cause of thine absence from me this while?' So he told him his story and acquainted him with that which he had seen of marvels in the sea, whereat the king wondered. Moreover, he told him what

[1] *i.e.* is not the life (or soul) in you a deposit, etc.

[2] *i.e.* how shall I trust thee to deposit on the Prophet's tomb the purse which I committed to thee, and how can I be sure that thou wilt not keep it for thyself?

the merman had said [anent the mourning for the dead]; and the king replied, 'Indeed thou wast at fault to tell him this.' Nevertheless, he continued for some time to go down to the sea-shore and call upon the merman; but he answered him not nor came to him; so, at last, he gave up hope of him and abode, he and the king his father-in-law and their families, in the happiest of case and the practice of righteousness, till there came to them the Destroyer of Delights and the Sunderer of Companies and they died all. And glory be to the [Ever-]Living One, who dieth not, whose is the empire of the Seen and the Unseen, who can all things and is gracious to His servants and knoweth all that pertaineth to them!

END OF VOL. VIII.