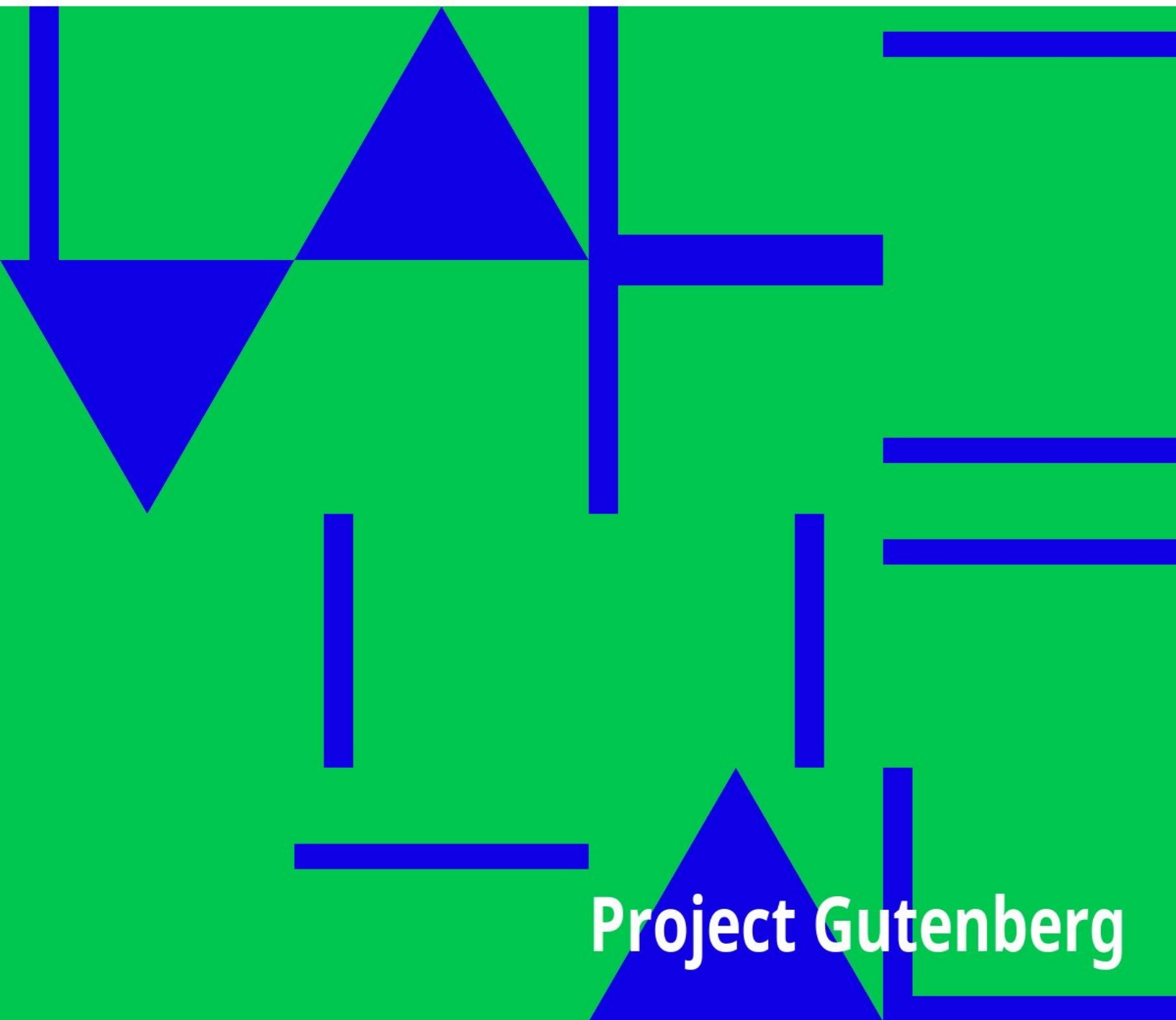


Tales of the Caliph

H. N. Crellin

An abstract geometric pattern consisting of various blue lines and triangles of different sizes and orientations, set against a solid green background. The pattern includes a large central triangle pointing downwards, several smaller triangles, and numerous horizontal and vertical line segments of varying lengths, some intersecting to form cross-like shapes.

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CALIPH ***

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TALES OF THE CALIPH

BY

H. N. CRELLIN

AUTHOR OF

'ROMANCES OF THE OLD SERAGLIO,' 'THE NAZARENES,' ETC.

A NEW EDITION

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TALES OF THE CALIPH.

That stories such as those in the "Arabian Nights," and fairy tales of every kind, should delight us all, men and women no less than boys and girls, is very natural. We find it charming to escape for a period, however brief, from all the familiar surroundings of modern life, and on opening a volume to pass at once into another region, where all is strange, and where the sceptical glances of science never intrude to banish magic and the supernatural.

Emboldened by these reflections, we may forthwith commence the narration of certain noteworthy occurrences concerning the celebrated Caliph Haroun Alraschid. He was in the habit, as every one knows, of wandering very frequently through the town after nightfall in various disguises to see for himself that justice was done, and also, it may be confessed, by no means loth to encounter such adventures as he might meet with. Many of these have been already related, but others, no whit less interesting and extraordinary, remain still untold.

Some of these adventures were very diverting and naturally pleasing, but others involved so many dangers and such hardships that it is indeed surprising that the Caliph should ever again have ventured on these nocturnal ramblings.

An adventure of the latter and more serious description happened as follows, and may be entitled:

The Caliph and the Pirates.

The Caliph, being on a tour of inspection through the various provinces of his empire, chanced on a certain occasion to be stopping at Bussora. And one evening, disguised, as was his wont, as a merchant, and, as usual, accompanied only by his faithful Grand Vizier, Giafer, he strolled through the bazaars silent

and observant. Meeting with nothing worthy of arresting his particular attention, he wandered on until he came at length to some very narrow and mean lanes near the waterside. In one of these, and when passing the door of a low caravanserai, or public-house, frequented chiefly by sailors, they noticed some men approaching, who were carrying great sacks quite full, and so heavy that each sack was carried by two men, who, on reaching the door of the caravanserai, entered. The Caliph, tired with his ramble, and curious to learn what might be in the sacks, beckoned to Giafer and followed the men into the caravanserai. The interior was so dark, being lit only by a few small oil lamps, that it was at first difficult to distinguish objects clearly. However, their eyes having become accustomed to the gloom after a few minutes, the Caliph and his Vizier, who had entered quietly and unobserved, and had seated themselves on a low sofa or divan which ran round the sides of the apartment, perceived that the company were all rough, seafaring men of a very fierce and truculent aspect. Among them one was seated, who appeared by his dress and demeanour to be the chief or captain of the band. This man, addressing those who had brought in the sacks, asked them what they had there. To which they replied, "Things from Abbas Bey." At this answer the Caliph's interest increased, inasmuch as Abbas Bey was a palace official; and because many things had lately been stolen from the palace, but although many suspected persons had been punished and dismissed, yet the thefts had not been certainly traced to any one. These great sacks contained, therefore, without doubt, all kinds of valuable property from the palace, and Abbas Bey was the traitor who had delivered it to the thieves. The anger of the Caliph, who was a man prone to the fiercest bursts of passion, could scarcely be restrained. Nevertheless, he managed to preserve silence and a calm demeanour, the more especially since he desired to learn what would next be done. He had not long to wait, for, some wine having been given to the men who brought the sacks, the captain ordered them to go at once on board, as he should set sail that very night. The Caliph hearing this, whispered to Giafer that he should go out with the men as they left with the sacks, and that he should instantly proceed to the nearest guard-house and fetch a company of soldiers, with whom he should surround the house and take all within prisoners. Giafer, doing as he was bid, left the house with the men as they came out again with the sacks, and hastened to fetch the guard as the Caliph had ordered.

Unluckily, it happened that the captain of the pirates—for such they were—being more alert and observant than his men, had noticed the presence of the two strangers, and had remarked the Caliph whisper to his companion, and the departure of the latter. Instantly divining that their proceedings had been

discovered, and that the man who went out had gone to betray them to the authorities, the captain whispered an order to the two or three who sat nearest to him, and immediately they rose, fell upon the Caliph, gagged and bound him; and all so suddenly and swiftly that he had no time to offer any kind of resistance. Then the captain, commanding his men to bring their prisoner in the midst of them, proceeded at once to their vessel, which lay at no great distance. The night was dark, and that band of well-armed, resolute men could not easily have been overpowered, even had there been any to attempt such a thing. But, in fact, they met no one on their short journey from the caravanserai to the waterside. In a few minutes, therefore, after the departure of the trusty Giafer, the Caliph found himself lying bound and helpless on board a ship, which at once set sail and carried him he knew not whither.

The next day one of the crew came and removed the cloth they had tied over his mouth to gag him, and brought him some food. Then the unhappy Caliph declared to the man who he was, and demanded that the captain should be brought before him. But the fellow only laughed, and going afterwards to the captain, said: "The merchant you have taken has lost his wits, and he proclaims himself to be the Commander of the Faithful, and says that we are but his slaves." The captain laughed heartily and said, "Nevertheless, he is stout and strong, and may be sold for a fair price when we come to the port we are bound for."

Leaving the Caliph to proceed on the voyage he had begun so unwillingly, we must return to the Grand Vizier, who, as soon as he found himself outside the caravanserai, had hastened to the nearest guard-house, and, calling the captain of the guard, had ordered him to assemble his men and accompany him immediately.

When he got back to the caravanserai he posted his men so that none of the inmates should escape, and then, entering with the captain and ten soldiers, was aghast to find the place empty. At once he hastened with his whole force to the waterside; but too late! Nothing could be seen of the pirate ship, which was already lost in the darkness.

Fortunately the Vizier, always a reticent and prudent man, had not mentioned the Caliph, and he now ordered the company to return to their guard-house, merely remarking that the robbers had for this time escaped him.

Returning to the palace, he was for some time lost in doubt as to the best course for him to pursue under the circumstances. That the Caliph should escape from the clutches of the desperate gang who had carried him off seemed little likely. And yet so many and such strange adventures had been experienced by them both, and they had found their way out of so many dangerous scrapes into which the Caliph's curiosity and daring had involved them, that no good fortune seemed impossible.

Moreover, he reflected that Haroun had at this time no son old enough to succeed him, while Ibrahim, his half-brother, and next heir according to Moslim usage, was the Vizier's declared enemy. His accession to the throne would therefore mean infallibly the destruction of the Vizier and his whole family.

He resolved, after much consideration, to take the boldest course as being really the safest, as indeed it frequently is.

Taking with him a small escort, he left Bussora at daybreak, and proceeded as fast as the horses would carry them to Bagdad. On his arrival he wrote immediately a note to Zobeideh, Haroun's favourite wife; told her that the Caliph, while engaged in one of his usual nocturnal rambles, had temporarily disappeared, and suggested, in the interest of herself and her son, that she should give out that, being indisposed, the Caliph had retired for a short time to one of his palaces in the provinces, and had confided the government meanwhile into the hands of his old and trusty Vizier. In this way, and with the connivance of Zobeideh, the astute Giafer managed to retain without question the government of the country during the absence of the Caliph.

To return to the Caliph. For three days the pirate ship pursued her course in fair weather, and without incident. On the fourth day she sighted a merchantman, to whom she gave chase. But the captain of the merchantman, seeing his danger, crowded on every stitch of canvas he possessed, and having a fair wind, and an uncommonly fast ship, he kept so far ahead that, the sun going down, the pirate lost sight of him, and he escaped.

This chase had carried the pirates far out of their course, and on the next day a great storm arose, and they were obliged to shorten sail and run before the wind. At length one huge wave which broke over the ship, having swept no less than eight of the crew overboard, the captain, who found himself short-handed, gave

orders that the prisoner should be released, that he might do his part in the endeavour to save the ship and all their lives. The ship having sprung a leak—or, indeed, more probably several, for the water poured in upon them apace—the crew, including the Caliph himself, became exhausted with continuous pumping, and the captain, therefore, descrying a coast-line, determined to run the ship boldly ashore, in the hope that some of them at least might be saved. And in fact, although the ship when she touched the beach was stove in and broken up by the force of the waves, yet the Caliph, the captain, and three of his men were washed ashore, and lay on the beach in a very faint and exhausted condition.

Here they were found by certain natives of that region, who gave them food and drink to revive them. Then, without either binding or in any way ill-treating them, they conducted them along a broad and level road which ran inland towards the capital of the country.

In about an hour's time, being all wearied and thirsty, the sun being now very fierce, they descried with great pleasure a village at no great distance, which was very pleasantly situated at the foot of a steep hill, in the shadow of which it lay, embowered in a profusion of palms and date-trees. Here the villagers were scattered in groups, feasting and merry-making, it being a festival held in honour of some local magnate, whose daughter had that day been married. The villagers received their fellow-countrymen, as also the Caliph and the pirates, with every demonstration of good-will, bringing them fresh milk to drink, and bread, made of a mixture of rye and oats, with plenty of dates, to eat.

Here the whole party rested for some hours, but when their conductors wished again to resume their journey, the three pirates flatly refused to depart, saying that they were well off where they were, and would go no further—at least for that day. It was intimated to them that the king of that country would suffer no stranger to dwell there unless he had first seen him and granted his permission. However, all was in vain; they no longer regarded the authority of their captain, and, being three men to one, he could not compel them to obey. Leaving them, therefore, the Caliph and the captain set out again, hoping before nightfall to reach the town where the king, who had already been informed of their arrival, was expecting them.

For some distance their road lay through a pleasant and well-cultivated country, dotted at intervals by hamlets and scattered cottages, which were surrounded by groves of orange-trees or clumps of dates and palms. At length, as they

advanced, the ground became broken and hilly, the road was steep, and far in the distance they saw, on a great plateau or table-land, the sparkling domes and minarets of a majestic city.

The sun was already low as they drew near to the city, and they were congratulating themselves on being able to enter the town before the darkness should be upon them, when suddenly they came to the edge of a vast and precipitous abyss, which completely severed the country they had been traversing from the heights on which the city had been built. The road they could see continued its course on the other side, but, spanning the dizzy chasm, the only bridge was the trunk of a gigantic tree, which lay stretched across it. Without hesitation or difficulty the natives of the country passed over, trusting themselves without apparent concern to walk at that tremendous height along the rough surface of the primitive bridge, which afforded so uncertain and precarious a foothold. The captain, having the nerves and nimbleness of a sailor, followed them fearlessly and safely. But for the Caliph the adventure was extremely perilous. However, seeing the others cross, with his wonted intrepidity and hardihood he ventured to follow them. But on reaching the middle of the narrow and uneven footway, and looking down into the tremendous depths below, becoming giddy he threatened to fall headlong, and only by a strong effort of the resolute will that distinguished him, and steadying himself by looking earnestly at a fixed spot in front of him, he succeeded in reaching the other side in safety.

Shortly after passing over this dangerous bridge they began to find themselves in the suburbs of the city. On either side the road there were fine houses situated in beautiful gardens, and they had not proceeded far before a guard met them, sent by Selim Sadek, the king.

Selim was very desirous to see and speak with the two brave men who unaided had crossed the tree-bridge in safety—a feat no stranger previously had succeeded in accomplishing.

When they reached the palace—which was a noble and imposing pile of buildings, situated on a steep hill, and overlooking not only the city, but extensive plains and lakes stretching away as far as the eye could see—they were shown into apartments where baths and food were prepared for them. After bathing and enjoying an excellent repast, they retired to rest, being greatly fatigued with their journey.

The Grand Chamberlain, after he had seen that the king's orders had been duly carried out, and that the strangers had been properly received and lodged, hastened to report to his master what had been done. Selim, on receiving his report, inquired what his guests were like. The Chamberlain replied, "Both of them, your Majesty, are fine, well-built men; and both are exceptionally brave, as their bearing, when they came to the bridge, amply proved; but in all other respects they are very unlike. The one is but a rough fellow, probably a sea captain, who stared about him in astonishment when he came into the halls of your palace, although they are by no means the best. We noticed, also, that he eyed the plate, although it was but silver, not only with admiration, but somewhat greedily, as though he would, if opportunity had offered, have gladly seized and gone off with it. The other stranger, on the contrary, seemed to view the magnificence of the palace with the greatest indifference, and took everything, even to the attendance of the attendants and great officers, so much as a matter of course, that I feel persuaded," said the Chamberlain, "that he must be a very great personage, perhaps even a king, in his own country."

This account of the strangers given by his Grand Chamberlain inflamed the curiosity of Selim to the highest degree, and the next morning early he seated himself on his throne in the great audience-chamber of his palace, and commanded that the two strangers should be brought before him.

When they were come he inquired who they were, and where they were going when they encountered the storm that had wrecked their vessel. To this the Caliph, who in the new robes that had been supplied them looked a man of great dignity and good breeding, replied by announcing that he was the Caliph Haroun Alraschid, and relating all that had occurred from the time he entered the caravanseraï at Bussora until the time when the pirate ship was wrecked.

When King Selim heard that the man before him was the renowned Caliph Haroun Alraschid, whose fame had spread throughout all the world, he, being a good Moslim, came down off his high throne, and, making obeisance to the Commander of the Faithful—"Sire," said he, "a happy day is this for your servant that he should be privileged to see your face or to do aught for your illustrious Majesty. And first, say by what death does it please you that this vile pirate and traitor shall die?"

The captain, who from conversations he had held with the Caliph during their journey since the wreck had become convinced of the true position and rank of

his captive, stood silent with bowed head awaiting his sentence.

King Selim having led Haroun Alraschid up the steps of the throne and seated him upon it, would himself have stood upon the steps, but the Caliph bade him come up and be seated by his side.

Then, looking towards the captain of the pirates, who had already been seized by the king's officers, he said, "Although this man has committed that which is very worthy of death, yet because God, the most Merciful, has spared him in the tempest and the wreck, I also will spare him this once; therefore give him a hundred pieces of gold that he may not be tempted by poverty further to do wrong, and let him go."

When this magnanimous sentence had been pronounced, the pirate captain laid his hand upon his beard and, bowing his head, said to the Caliph, "O Commander of the Faithful, and you, King Selim, if from this time forth I rob any more, I shall deserve mercy from neither God nor man."

Then said King Selim: "Since the Commander of the Faithful has pardoned thee, and that thou mayest not further be tempted, I enrol thee, as thou art a brave man, among the officers of my guard."

Therefore they invested him with the robes of his office and gave him a hundred pieces of gold as the Caliph had commanded, and thenceforth he became one of the bravest and most trustworthy officers of King Selim.

On the next day the Caliph inquired of the king respecting the three men who had remained behind at the village festival. But Selim informed him that they had a law in that country prohibiting any stranger from dwelling with the people of the land until the king had granted his permission. Therefore, when the men had been found by the officials of government living at that village without having first obtained leave and authority so to do, they would be led immediately to execution.

"Then," said the Caliph, "by this wholesome law your people are protected from the evil influence of villains, and in this case we are rid of three men who were not only thieves and pirates, but lazy, worthless, and mutinous fellows, who refused to obey and follow even their own captain. The action of your law has but forestalled what would have been my own sentence upon them."

The Caliph remained a whole month with King Selim, accompanying him on grand hunting expeditions, and being entertained with all the magnificent and varied pleasures the royal court could devise.

At the end of that period he had intended to have set out on his return to Bagdad. But just at that moment a messenger arrived from a neighbouring king with a very insolent message for Selim and a declaration of war. This king, whose name was Gorkol, had asked the daughter of Selim in marriage for his son. But King Selim, being a good Moslim, had refused to give his daughter in marriage to the son of a heathen, and one, moreover, who was reported to be proficient in the vilest arts of magic. Hence the declaration of war. The Caliph, being naturally of a very fierce and hasty temper, resented hotly this insult to his host. He therefore announced his intention to accompany the latter, who gathered together an army to chastise the insolent heathen.

The military display as the Caliph and the king left the capital was most imposing. The army consisted of twenty thousand men, half of whom were infantry and half cavalry. There were also elephants and camels with stores, and a great multitude of camp-followers.

For five days they marched through Selim's dominions, and on the sixth day entered the territory of King Gorkol. The frontier was marked by a range of hills, and the passage of so large a force over these was a toilsome and tedious operation. The Caliph and king had each a large tent for his own use, and a small army of officers and attendants to wait on him.

On the night of the seventh day, after a very exhausting march over difficult ground, the army encamped in a spacious valley into which they had descended just as night was approaching.

Whether the enemy managed to get at them unobserved, being stealthy and knowing every feature of the country, or whether the sentinels, being weary, slept at their post, is uncertain, but suddenly before daybreak the great army was awakened by shouts and blows to find the foe was upon them. In the darkness and the excitement of the moment all was confusion. Different parties of the royal troops starting hurriedly to arms, wildly attacked each other. The strife being furious and hand-to-hand was terrific and deadly; and when daylight appeared the enemy, pressing boldly forward to the centre of the camp, overcame all the resistance of which the thinned and disorganized army was

capable, and captured both the king and the Caliph.

The two princes were carried with every mark of indignity into the presence of the heathen monarch, who, insulting them with references to their defeat, demanded of them that they should abandon the Moslem faith and worship the idols of the gods of his people, who had, he said, given his troops the victory.

But the Caliph answered that although Allah, whose name be praised, had permitted them to be worsted in the confusion of a night attack, yet they still trusted in him, and they would never vary in the least degree from the glorious words of the Prophet: "Allah is God, and there is no God but Allah."

Hearing this, King Gorkol ordered them to be confined separately in two dungeons of his castle, there to remain until a great festival of the gods which was approaching should arrive, when he would sacrifice them both to the gods whom they had dared to despise. Locked in the gloomy vaults, and seeing no one but the jailer who once a day brought them the scanty and hard fare necessary to keep them alive till the day of vengeance should come, their position seemed altogether desperate and their fate assured.

But in the case of King Selim he had, unknown to his captors and concealed in the folds of his turban, a ruby of great size and of immense value. With this he hoped to be able to bribe his jailer and effect his escape. And in fact so well did he manage that before a week was passed he was travelling homewards in the disguise of a merchant, accompanied by the jailer, who dared not remain in his own country in possession of the ruby because, according to the custom prevailing in that kingdom, all precious stones must be surrendered to the king under penalty of death by torture. He therefore fled with Selim, disguised as his slave.

The king had made great efforts to induce the jailer to effect the release of the Caliph at the same time as himself, but as Haroun Alraschid was in charge of another jailer, it could not be managed. Selim was obliged therefore, to his great grief, to leave the Caliph to his fate; but he hurried back to his own dominions with the utmost speed, determined to at once return with another army to avenge the death of the Caliph, whose life he could not hope to arrive in time to save.

The Caliph, having about him neither jewels nor money, had no means of propitiating his jailer or abating the rigour and severity of the treatment to which

he was subjected. Once a day only, early in the morning, the jailer appeared, and, without opening the great heavy door of the dungeon, he opened one panel only, and through that opening handed to his prisoner the two small loaves, or rather, flat cakes, and the flask of water which must supply his wants till the following morning.

Five days had thus passed, and there seemed no possibility of the Caliph escaping the painful and humiliating death to which he was destined by the heathen king. The festival to be held in honour of the gods of the country was approaching, and two days hence the people, who were already becoming greatly excited, both by religious fury and also by drinking great quantities of a strong and fiery spirit which they distilled, were to be gratified by the sight of the sacrifice by horrible tortures of their unfortunate prisoners.

Just before daybreak on the sixth day, the same morning on which Selim and his jailer were effecting their escape, the Caliph awoke, and thoughts of the frightful situation in which he found himself prevented him from again falling asleep. In great distress of mind he prayed earnestly to God that strength might be given him to enable him to sustain with firmness and fortitude the pains he might be called upon to endure. After which prayer he felt calmer and more composed. Presently, being very hungry, he tried in the dim light to find a small piece of bread which he had not yet eaten. He had placed it on a narrow ledge near to the place where he slept, but in the darkness he pushed it with his hand before he had grasped it, and it fell upon the floor. Groping about to find it, his hand came suddenly upon something which felt soft and cool—an object apparently about the size and shape of a hen's egg, yet not hard like an egg-shell, but elastic and yielding readily to the pressure of the fingers. What it was the sense of touch did not enable him to guess, and as yet the light was insufficient to permit him to distinguish anything clearly. And, marvellous to relate, as the light increased, although all the objects around him became visible, yet this something which he had felt, and which he still felt to be grasped in his hand, was nevertheless not to be seen. This circumstance surprised the Caliph very much, and he sat cross-legged on the straw which had been placed in the corner of the dungeon for him to sleep on, just as he had been used to do on the splendid divan in his palace, still grasping the unknown object in his hand, and yet still unable to see what it was. After he had sat thus for some time cogitating what this might mean, the hour came round when the jailer should come and bring him his food for the day.

Now it so happened that the Caliph's jailer when bringing his food had to pass

the dungeon in which Selim had been confined. This morning as he passed he was amazed to observe that the door was unfastened, and, looking in, he perceived that the vault was empty. Fearful that his prisoner might likewise have effected his escape, he hurriedly set down the food and ran on to the dungeon containing the Caliph.

The latter was surprised to hear his jailer running rapidly along the passage, and still more surprised when the man, after looking through the panel, withdrew the huge bolts and, opening the door, came into the great gloomy vault, looking excitedly about him. Then after a few moments, apparently bewildered and terror-struck, he turned about, went out, closed the door behind him, and, without waiting to replace the bolts, walked quickly along the passage and disappeared.

The Caliph, although unable to guess to what he owed his good fortune, did not neglect to avail himself of it. Pushing open the door, and stopping to close it and bolt it behind him, he walked down the corridor without knowing where and to what it might lead him. This passage or corridor seemed at first sight to terminate with a dead wall at the end of it. But, proceeding further along it, he presently perceived a side-passage turning out of it at right angles, and this smaller passage, which was short, terminated in a flight of steps leading evidently into the castle-yard. The door at the top of the steps was partly open, and when he reached it the Caliph could hear and catch glimpses of a group of soldiers standing and chatting together not far from the doorway. He stood for some moments uncertain what he should do. If he opened the door and went out, doubtless he would immediately be seized; on the other hand, to stay where he was meant no less certain destruction, as at any moment some one might enter and find him there. He had just determined to step out boldly and risk detection, in the hope that in the bustle of the castle-yard his exit might pass unnoticed, when a gust of wind blew the door wide open, and he stood face to face, not ten paces distant, with that group of soldiers he had heard conversing.

For a moment he stood horror-struck, expecting to see them rush forward and secure him. To his extreme surprise, none of them, not even those facing him, took the slightest notice of his presence. They appeared not even to see him, but perhaps they took him for one of the innumerable retainers of the Court; at any rate, the Caliph, plucking up courage, stepped out and walked quietly away.

As he was crossing the courtyard, a great mounted warrior on a powerful black

steed came pounding along, and would apparently have ridden right over the Caliph just as though he was unaware of his existence, but Haroun drew quickly aside, and the horse shied, thereby drawing upon itself many hard blows from the fierce and haughty rider.

Passing out of the castle-gates, and turning eastward, as he judged, by the position of the sun, the Caliph proceeded in the direction which would enable him, he hoped, in due time, to reach his own country. He had not gone far when he met a rough country fellow who carried a long piece of wood on his shoulder, and Haroun would have been struck full in the face with it had he not stepped quickly on one side to avoid it. But the man, although he passed close by him, neither looked at nor spoke to him, and seemed altogether unconscious of his presence.

It now first dawned upon the Caliph that the strange and invisible substance which he had picked up in the dungeon, and which he still carried in his hand, possessed indeed the marvellous property of rendering him entirely invisible to other men. This accounted for the remarkable panic of his jailer, who, when he looked into, and even entered his dungeon, failed to see him; it explained why the soldiers had permitted him to leave the building unmolested, why the horseman had nearly ridden over him, and why the clown who had just passed had, without knowing it, nearly brained him with his load.

Much comforted and strengthened by the discovery of this wonderful exemption from observation which he now enjoyed, he walked on briskly, till the sun, being now high in the heavens, and the heat very great, he came to a village, and entering boldly an inn there, and passing through into an empty apartment, he lay down upon a not very soft divan he found in it, and straightway fell asleep.

The Caliph being tired with the walk and the excitement of the morning, slept so long and soundly that it was night and quite dark when he awoke. And being even then but half awake he did not realize that he was no longer in the castle-dungeon; therefore, perceiving that it was not yet light, he turned over and went to sleep again. In a few hours' time, in the midst of a dream that he was in his own palace at Bagdad and presiding at some great feast, he awoke once more, saw that it was beginning to be light, remembered where he was, and found himself exceedingly hungry. Going, therefore, very quietly into the next apartment, he found the innkeeper lying there soundly asleep, and on the table the remains of a substantial supper. At once seating himself, the Caliph was not

long in finishing the repast and assuaging the pangs of hunger.

Having all his life been used to eat and drink whatever he required, without any thought of payment, it is very likely that he might have eaten his meal and departed without the least concern or thought of the fact that he possessed at that moment nothing to pay for it. However, it so fell out that he was enabled to recompense his involuntary host very handsomely. For after he had finished eating, and before he rose from his seat, he heard a slight rustling sound outside the room, as though some one were stealthily approaching.

Now the Caliph, before lying down to rest on the previous afternoon, had taken the precaution to bestow the mysterious and wonderful charm he had picked up, in a place of safety. He had put it inside his turban, in such a way that he could feel it pressing like a soft elastic pad upon his forehead. And therefore, in virtue of his contact with that charm, he was still invisible to every other human being.

Such being the case, the thief peering into the room saw no one but the keeper of the inn, who was sleeping very soundly. Entering, therefore, with noiseless tread, his feet being bare, he approached the sleeper, and extracted very dexterously a small packet of coin which he carried secreted in his girdle. With this packet the thief glided from the room, and stopping outside but a single instant to place it inside the folds of his own turban, he walked briskly away.

The Caliph followed him closely. About a hundred yards from the door of the inn there flowed a small stream or brook, across which the only bridge was a couple of planks. Just as they arrived at this point the Caliph took off the fellow's turban, and, with a push from behind, threw him into the water. The stream was neither deep nor swift, and the thief soon picked himself up, scrambled to the other side, and then, without once looking back, took to his heels, being fully persuaded that it was the man he had just robbed who had pursued and overtaken him. The Caliph, after taking the parcel of coin out of the turban, which he then threw away, walked quietly back towards the inn, without deigning to bestow another thought on the thief whom he had thrown into the water.

Before he reached the door of the inn, he saw the innkeeper, who had awoke and discovered his loss, rush out of the house wild and bareheaded, his turban having tumbled or been knocked off in his excitement. Running past the invisible Caliph, and loudly cursing all villains and robbers, and especially that one who had just taken his money, he caught sight of the thief himself, scrambling up,

dripping wet, on to the opposite bank of the stream, and, with much vociferation, he continued in hot pursuit. The noise he made brought out, of course, all those who had been passing the night at the inn, and very naturally they all commenced at once to follow the pursuer and pursued.

The Caliph then quietly entered the deserted house, and placing the packet of money carefully in the innkeeper's turban, where he would be sure to find it on his return from the chase, he left, and taking another road, and one leading, as far as he could judge, in the direction of his own dominions, he continued his journey.

He walked along for some hours without meeting any one except a few peasants, or encountering any noteworthy incident whatsoever.

At length he became tired with his long march, and the heat of the noontide sun became so oppressive, that, espying a thick clump of trees at a short distance from the road, he gladly made his way to that pleasant shelter, lay down on a grassy bank, with a log for his pillow, and composed himself to rest and sleep.

On waking, after two or three hours of very sound and refreshing sleep, he found that owing to some change in his position his turban had fallen off. This, in itself not very serious or remarkable accident, gave him on the present occasion much apprehension and concern. For in his turban he had placed, as has been mentioned, the invisible object, whatever it might be, which had in some inexplicable manner conferred upon him also, while he was in contact with it, the condition of invisibility.

He took up the turban most carefully, he felt in it, he put it on, but nowhere could he encounter the soft, cool sensation with which he had become familiar. He groped laboriously all round the spot where he had been lying, but in vain. Whether the object had rolled away, or whether it had been carried to a distance by the breeze, or possibly had even been dissipated altogether, he could not determine. One thing only was clear and beyond conjecture—the charm was lost for ever.

Coming at last most unwillingly to that conclusion, he sat down cross-legged upon the grass as on a divan, resting his elbow upon the log which had served him for a pillow, and began to consider how he should manage to make his way back to his own dominions through that land of idolaters. He had no idea of the

distance to be traversed, but he reflected that, having no longer the aid and protection of being invisible, and being possessed of no money, his difficulties must necessarily be great. Moreover, he was not without considerable anxiety as to what might have occurred at Bagdad while he had been absent. Giafer, indeed, to whom all the details of the government of the country had practically been confided for many years, he could thoroughly trust. But Ibrahim, who would probably have succeeded to the Caliphate, was known to hate the Grand Vizier, and would not only put him to death, but might also, not improbably, have taken measures to rid himself of Zobeideh and her son. Oppressed by these gloomy thoughts the Caliph sat for a long time without moving.

At length, hearing the tramp of horses in the distance, he looked up, and was overjoyed to behold two men coming along the road, whom he at once knew by their dress to be Arab merchants. Each was on horseback, and they had with them, besides several other horses, some mules and asses laden with packages. And there was also a kind of closed carriage or palanquin, borne by some slaves, in which no doubt was conveyed a lady or female slave of great value.

Now, when the Caliph saw these men approaching, he rose up quickly and went to meet them. When he drew near, he saluted them and inquired whither they went.

To which they replied: "To Bagdad." And they inquired of him how it came to pass that he should be on foot and alone in that pagan kingdom, seeing it was evident by his dress that he was a Moslim.

Now, the Caliph had already learnt by experience that to proclaim his true rank would be only to court a suspicion of madness, therefore he replied briefly, that he too was from Bagdad and was returning thither, but that unhappily he had been taken prisoner by the idolaters, and robbed of all that he had, except only the clothes upon his back. He begged them, therefore, to lend him a horse and to take him with them to Bagdad, in which city he had plenty both of friends and funds, and where he would reward them handsomely for their kindness.

To this they answered that since he was in distress he was very welcome to come with them, and that without any claim on their part for fee or reward, the more especially as they would be glad, while travelling through that wild and lawless country, to have another strong man of their party. With that they lent him a horse, and he, nothing loth, but glad enough to get his feet off the ground and his

face turned towards home, rode cheerfully along with them.

The Caliph soon discovered that the two merchants were very intelligent men and agreeable fellow-travellers. The name of the one was Abdallah, and of the other Ahmed.

After the Caliph had been some time in their company, and their conversation had become more intimate and familiar, he ventured to inquire how they had fared on their present expedition, and in what sort of merchandize they had embarked their fortune.

"You must know," said Abdallah, who was always the chief speaker, "that both Ahmed and myself are well acquainted with several of the officers in the Palace of the Commander of the Faithful, whom Allah exalt, and also of some in the Palace of Zobeideh, his favourite wife. We always endeavour therefore, when trading in foreign countries, to buy such things as will sell well at court. The prices we get for our goods are in that way very satisfactory, although the profit we actually make is less than you might suppose, because all those officials who gain us an introduction to the palaces must have rich presents and high fees to recompense them for their trouble."

"And the Caliph, what sort of a man is he?" asked Haroun.

"He is," answered Abdallah, "a just man, and very brave, but fierce, hot-tempered, and hasty. And as he is very apt to lose his temper, those who have to do with him are very liable to lose their heads."

"But sometimes he is no doubt very much provoked," said Haroun.

"Nay," said Abdallah, "when he is in an ill-humour, he would order your head to be struck off as readily as he would order his dinner."

"I can scarcely believe that," answered Haroun. "Did you not say that he loves justice?"

"Undoubtedly," answered Abdallah, "he is anxious to have a just administration of the laws, and I have been told that in order to see for himself what goes on, he frequently walks through the city disguised as a merchant."

"And that," said Ahmed, "I consider to be by no means commendable."

"On what account?" demanded Haroun.

"Because," said Ahmed, "if on one of those excursions any accident should happen to the Commander of the Faithful, the State would lose more than ever it gained from all his rambles and inquiries."

Haroun could not but admit to himself the justice of this observation, and yet he was by no means pleased with it, as one never is with any reflection on our own conduct. Therefore, when Abdallah said, that for his part he thought the Caliph did quite right in determining to see things with his own eyes, and that a man ought not to weigh too scrupulously the dangers which might lie in the way of doing his duty, Haroun could have embraced him in the fulness of his satisfaction.

"But," said Haroun, to turn the conversation, "you have not yet told me what good or ill-fortune you have met with on this expedition, nor what ventures you are bringing back with you to Bagdad."

As Haroun said this, his eye rested upon the palanquin which was being carried by the slaves, and Abdallah, noticing his glance, and guessing that he was curious to learn something of the occupant, began as follows:

THE ARAB MERCHANT'S STORY.

"Before setting out on the expedition from which we are now returning, Ahmed and I consulted long as to the countries we should visit, and what sort of goods it would be most profitable to bring back with us. We at length agreed to journey through Egypt into the central parts of Africa, and bring from thence some of those large and rare specimens of precious stones of which we had often heard. And we did not doubt if we could secure some of these that we should be able to dispose of them to such advantage at the Court of the Caliph as at one stroke to make our fortune.

"Having agreed upon this plan we purchased and took with us such articles of merchandize as we judged would sell to the best advantage in Egypt. In fact, on arriving at Cairo, we remained some time doing a very profitable trade.

"At length, when the proper time of year came round for commencing our journey into the interior, we provided ourselves with the articles most likely to

find favour with the natives, and after two months, during which we travelled very slowly, and suffered many hardships, we reached the country of a great nation or tribe of Ethiopians, at whose chief town, Daarkol, we halted awhile, and did some trade by barter, but not much, the people possessing few things of any value to us except small quantities of gold dust.

"What we sought of them most eagerly was information concerning that tribe of whom we had heard, in whose country were found the diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and other precious stones, to obtain which was the object of our journey.

"That tribe lived, it appeared, still several hundreds of miles further up the country, but what annoyed us much more was the information that they would exchange their precious stones for nothing else than ivory, of the exact value of which they were very well acquainted.

"This altogether extinguished the hope with which we had started of making our fortunes by importing to Bagdad splendid specimens of various precious stones. For when we considered the vast expense of procuring large quantities of tusks, the difficulty of getting slaves to carry them up the country, and of feeding those slaves on so long a journey, together with the danger of being robbed of such cumbersome and valuable property by some of the many wild tribes through whose territories we must pass, we were fain to conclude that we must needs abandon that part of our enterprise.

"As we were one day sitting in a very gloomy mood discussing this matter, an African merchant with whom we had become acquainted, and who happened to be passing, saluted us; and we, having invited him to be seated with us, 'What,' he asked, 'is that which you cannot do? for as I came up I heard you pronounce these words: "No, it is not possible to do it."' "

"With that I explained to him, without mentioning particularly the country of the precious stones, that Ahmed and myself had intended to proceed still further into the interior to trade with the people, but many of them, as we were now informed, exchanged only against ivory. And it appeared to us impossible to do any profitable trade if we must convey such a heavy and valuable commodity as ivory over long distances.

"The African merchant, when he heard this, smiled, and asked, 'What would you

give now to anyone who should get you out of this difficulty?'

"I answered that, as it was a difficulty which we had often discussed, but could see no way out of, and as it threatened to make our journey into Africa comparatively unprofitable, we should be very willing to give any man who could render us effectual assistance a hundred pieces of gold for his trouble.

""No,' said he, 'you offer too little. I can myself most effectually aid you, but I must have five hundred pieces of gold.'

"We protested that we could not give so much, that we had it not, that it would ruin us; in short, all the pleas that merchants, as you knew, advance when they are chaffering with each other. But after several days, seeing that the African merchant stood quite firm and would abate nothing from his price, we agreed to give him the five hundred pieces of gold for the secret he was to discover to us, namely, of how we should provide ourselves with ivory for trading with the tribes, no matter how far up the country they might be situated.

"We having on our part produced five bags containing one hundred gold pieces in each, which we counted out to him, he produced and gave to us in return five small jars, each containing about two quarts of a seed about twice as large as a bean.

""Take these,' said he, 'with you; they are small and not heavy to carry. And when you are come near to the country of that people with whom you wish to trade, select a piece of land about two or three acres in extent, and plant these seeds singly and about ten feet apart. In about a month great tubers will be observed swelling out of the ground which by the end of the second month will have increased to hemispheres four or five feet in diameter. From each of these bulbs or tubers as a base great projections will be thrown out, which in five or six weeks will attain the size and appearance exactly of huge tusks of the finest ivory. Cutting these, and stacking them for a short time to dry, you will then be provided with what appears to be a splendid lot of tusks not far from the place where you require them. And should you experience any difficulty in transporting them, you may apply for labourers from the tribe you are about to visit, on the plea that your carriers who have brought them so far have deserted and gone back.'

"Perceiving now that our African merchant was a proficient in all the magical

arts of his country, we wished to decline his aid, and have nothing further to do with him; but he flatly refused to restore our money, and left us not without uttering some threats of vengeance upon us.

"As we had bought the seeds at so high a price, we carried them with us, without, however, intending to make use of them; for we thought that as true believers we ought to shun every product of the accursed magic of Africa.

"But after some time had elapsed, and when at the end of a long and difficult journey we approached at last the borders of that country where the people dwelt who possessed the precious stones, we halted, and determined at least to plant those seeds, and ascertain whether they would indeed grow in the wonderful way the African merchant had told us.

"Selecting, therefore, a suitable piece of ground, we planted the seeds, setting each singly about ten feet apart every way. And the ground being damp and marshy, we soon perceived the bulbs showing above ground, and they grew apace, so that in three or four weeks after their first appearance they became great semi-spherical projections, like huge round balls half embedded in the earth. Or they might be compared to very gigantic onions; and about the end of six or seven weeks after the seed was sown we had our ground covered with regular rows of them; and then from the centre of each bulb a slight projection like the tip of a small horn might be observed to rise. These grew and increased very rapidly, so that within a few weeks they had attained the imposing proportions of immense tusks.

"Cutting them and stacking them to dry, by placing ten or a dozen of them together like sheaves of corn, we found that upon the most careful inspection they did not in any respect differ in appearance from tusks of the finest ivory; while their great size and symmetry of form could seldom be equalled by what may be termed elephant ivory.

"It now became a question whether we should use them for the purpose of barter to obtain the precious stones. Our first sentiment, as I have said, was that we, as good Moslems, would have nothing to do with the productions of the infernal magic of the African. But our interest and the desire to accomplish the object of our journey by getting the precious stones finally prevailed. We argued that as we had fairly bought the seed, and had planted and prepared the vegetable tusks by our own exertions, therefore we were fairly entitled to make use of them, and

we decided to continue our journey to Behar, the country inhabited by the tribe which possessed the precious stones.

"When we arrived there we were conducted before Amavaroo, the king of Behar, to whom we presented ourselves as ivory merchants who had visited his country desiring to exchange ivory for precious stones. The king readily gave us permission to barter with his people, the more especially because we had brought with us as a present for himself two or three of the tusks, than which he had never beheld any finer. He was lost in admiration and delighted to obtain such splendid specimens; and he inquired eagerly where we had left our stock.

"Acting on the suggestion made to us by the African merchant, we said that it lay about three days' journey behind us. That we had left it there because our carriers who had brought it so far had deserted; and we prayed him, therefore, to supply us with carriers to bring it into his kingdom.

"The trouble always experienced by merchants trading in those regions in obtaining, and especially in retaining carriers, was so well known that the king was by no means surprised at our predicament, but ordered a sufficient number of his people to accompany us and transport our ivory.

"The most common mode of carriage with these people is to place the load upon the head and, balancing it there, to walk away merrily under their burthen. And it is surprising how heavy a load they will thus carry. But they could not manage to take our tusks in that fashion. They carried them on their shoulders, four men to a tusk, three near to the thick or butt end, and one near the point. In this way we brought all our ivory to Behar, and the tusks were so perfect and exceptional in size that we could obtain almost any equivalent we pleased for them. And in fact of such marvellous size and beauty were most of the gems that we got in exchange that our fortune on our return to Bagdad threatened to be fabulous, and it seemed evident that it would be necessary for us to wander over the whole world to the capital of every great king in order to find purchasers of such superb and unique specimens.

"As we had presented many of the tusks to the king and his principal chiefs we had become exceedingly popular—the happy possessors of our ivory being, no less satisfied with their bargains than we felt with ours. So that when at the end of two months we wished to depart, having bartered or given away all our stock, they would not let us go, but insisted that we should prolong our stay for another

month, during which they feasted and entertained us to the best of their ability.

"Now there was one circumstance concerning our vegetable ivory of which we were ignorant, viz., that just as it was produced quickly, so it decayed quickly. Three months had sufficed to raise it from the seed, and within three months from the time that they came to maturity, the apparent tusks begin to perish. Black spots and patches appear all over the surface, and in the course of a few weeks the entire tusk rots away and is destroyed.

"It thus happened that one morning, towards the end of our three months' sojourn at Behar, the chiefs who came as usual to our house or hut to greet us, wore no longer the pleasant and friendly aspect they were wont to do, but looked surly and fierce. And immediately seizing and binding us, they carried us before King Amavaroo, who, seated on the leopard's skin which served him for a throne, was looking as gloomy and morose as his followers.

"Then men came with the tusks they had received from us, one man following another with his purchases, and in every tusk the black spots and patches of decay were beginning to appear. To complete our ruin, when those tusks which we had presented to Amavaroo were brought into his presence, they each and all were found to be in a similar condition. Both the king and his people were very naturally furious. They took from us and out of our house all the jewels we had obtained, and gave them back to those who had exchanged them for the worthless ivory, and then, after holding a very stormy council, they conducted us with every kind of insult out of their town into the plains beyond. There, having stripped us naked, they beat us with branches of nettles and branches of prickly holly, and finally, tying our hands and feet together, they left us to be scorched by the sun during the day, and to be devoured by the wild beasts that prowled about at night. Here we lay all day in a most pitiable plight, and there undoubtedly we should have perished, had it not been for the gratitude and kindness of a slave whom, during our stay at Behar, we had many times befriended and protected, as far as lay in our power, against the tyranny of a very cruel bully, who was his master. This poor fellow stole away at sundown, came to us, freed us from our bonds, brought us some of our own clothes which he had managed to get hold of, and, going with us, became our guide on the slow and painful course of our journey northward. He brought us also a small packet of very handsome stones, which had been dropped by some one during the exciting events of the morning, and which he had seen and picked up on his way to us.

"This seemed at the time a perfect godsend. There were not many stones—about a dozen—and they not nearly so large as many of those we had received in exchange for our ivory. At the same time they were of the utmost value to us now, as we should be able to dispose of them at the first place where we might meet with Arab merchants, and we should thus provide ourselves at least with such things as were absolutely necessary for our return journey to Bagdad.

"Meanwhile, our progress was slow and our subsistence precarious, consisting chiefly of such roots, fruits, and insects, as we were able to discover. In this matter of catering the slave was much more proficient than we, and proved an invaluable aid to us.

"After many weeks of hardship and danger, we arrived at last in the neighbourhood of Daarkol, the town in which we had met the African merchant, from whom we had bought those accursed seeds. As the sun was intensely hot, and a couple of hours' walking would now bring us into the town, where we could sell some of the precious stones and relieve our most urgent necessities, we threw ourselves down under the shelter of a clump of trees and were soon fast asleep.

"It appears, although we had then no suspicion of such a thing, that the African merchant, who was a complete villain, had been diligently watching for our return. He had designed to surprise and overpower us, and take from us the precious stones we should have obtained for his fraudulent ivory, he getting thus at a stroke the fruits of the expedition without undergoing the fatigues, difficulties, and dangers it necessarily involved.

"Being informed, therefore, by one of his spies of our arrival, he stole upon us very quietly while we slept, and bringing with him a party of his slaves, he quickly overpowered us, and binding us hand and foot, he robbed us of the jewels we had, and that not without horrid imprecations because there were so few. After which he immediately departed, leaving us lying under the trees bound and helpless.

"Here we remained for more than two hours. At length, as the day wore on, and it became cooler, we perceived a party of merchants, with whom we had been very well acquainted when we were at Daarkol before, passing along the road which was distant about two or three hundred yards from the clump of trees where we lay. We shouted as loud as we could, and they, hearing the shouting,

came presently towards us. They were truly surprised and concerned to find Ahmed and myself, whom they had known formerly as respectable and well-to-do merchants, lying bound, dirty, and ragged upon the ground. They freed us, and we told them of the villainy of the African merchant, and related to them all that had befallen us, from the time he sold us the seeds, until the assault he had made upon us and the robbery he had committed that afternoon. They advised us to lay our case before Lootzee, the king of that country, who lived in the town of Daarkol; although, as regards the African merchant, who was well known as a bad character, he would no doubt by this time have taken refuge in flight.

"This advice was good; but for men so completely destitute, as we now were, to obtain an audience of the king was no easy matter. Like most monarchs, he was surrounded by courtiers and state officials, who must be bribed with considerable presents before they would exert themselves on behalf of any suitor or complainant, no matter how real his grievance, or how urgent his case might be. It is quite possible, therefore, that we might have failed to obtain an audience, had it not happened, fortunately for us, that King Lootzee was attacked just at this time by a severe form of fever to which the natives of that part of Ethiopia are peculiarly liable. Hearing of the king's illness, and knowing of a certain herb which was a sovereign remedy in that disease, we procured some of the herb and prepared an infusion of it. We then borrowed of some merchants of our acquaintance such sums as they would lend us, and sending this as a present to the Vizier or chief officer of Lootzee, we asked audience of the king that we might present to him a medicine of great efficiency in his complaint. The Vizier submitting our petition to Lootzee, he gave orders to admit the merchant from Bagdad, and in short, after taking sundry doses of the medicine, the fever left him, and he was restored to his usual health.

"This cure so much delighted him, that he made us a present of the horses, mules, and all those things which you see we have with us, and in addition he gave us a sum of money that we might be enabled to purchase something to take back to Bagdad, so that we might not, after all our toil and risk, return altogether empty-handed.

"For a long time we doubted and debated what we should buy. But hearing one day that there was in the town a Circassian woman slave of surpassing beauty, who had been captured by some marauders from a caravan while on her way to Bagdad, we determined to purchase that slave in the hope of selling her for a great price to Haroun Alraschid, the Caliph, to whom may Allah be merciful,

and for whom she was destined by those merchants who had been robbed of her."

Now when Haroun Alraschid had heard the story of Abdallah, the Arab merchant, and had learned that the occupant of the carriage or litter borne by the slaves was so lovely a creature, and, moreover, was a slave intended for himself, he would fain have seen her. In his character as a merchant he offered to buy her, and bid the great price of five thousand pieces of gold, to be paid immediately they should arrive in Bagdad. But Abdallah was resolute, and inflexible in his refusal to part with her, or let her be seen, saying that no man either had nor yet should see the face of the slave, until she should be presented in good time to the Caliph himself.

Haroun was sorely tempted to declare himself to be the Caliph, and to insist on seeing the beautiful captive, but reflecting both that it would be difficult to convince Abdallah of his rank at that time, and also being unwilling to lose the pleasure he anticipated in observing the merchant's astonishment, when he should discover his fellow-traveller to have been the Caliph, Haroun controlled his natural impatience, and that all the more readily because they were near their journey's end.

Leaving Abdallah and Ahmed with the Caliph in their company to continue their journey, we must return to Bagdad, and to the course of affairs in that city since the Caliph's disappearance.

Giafer, who had so long, as Grand Vizier, had the administration of the Empire in his hands, managed for the first month or six weeks to conduct the affairs of State as usual and with unquestioned authority.

But as week after week passed without tidings from the absent Caliph, not only did both Giafer and Zobeideh lose hope of his return, but ominous rumours began to circulate secretly among the Court and the people, regarding the cause of the Caliph's absence. As a matter of course, Ibrahim, the next heir according to Moslem usage, was especially active both in prosecuting inquiries as to the probable fate of Haroun, and also in concerting measures to effect his own accession to the throne.

Three months had elapsed since the disappearance of the Caliph, when one

morning at the Grand Vizier's usual state reception of the Ulema and Emirs of the Empire, Ibrahim, addressing Giafer, said, "Grand Vizier, three months have now passed since we have had among us the glorious and august presence of the Commander of the Faithful; tell us, therefore, where he is, and why he no longer appears to give audience and render justice to his people?"

At this speech Giafer felt that his hour was come, for he knew that the prince would not have uttered those words until he had taken measures to seize upon the throne.

Therefore he answered, "I cannot tell where the Commander of the Faithful may be at this moment, but may all his subjects remain loyal to him, and Allah be his shield and preserver, wherever he be!"

Then said Ibrahim, "O Giafer, the blood of your master is upon your hands, where have you hidden him?" Turning to the guards, who entered as he clapped his hands, he ordered them to secure the Grand Vizier, and continued: "If you do not before this time to-morrow bring back Haroun Alraschid into this hall, I shall know what to think, and as surely as I am Caliph you shall die."

So saying the prince seated himself upon the royal divan, and forthwith appointed Hafiz, a favourite of his own, to be Grand Vizier. He next ordered the new Grand Vizier to put Zobeideh, Haroun's favourite wife, and Prince Emin, her son, in prison, and declared that on the morrow, when he judged Giafer, he would also pronounce sentence on the others.

That night the new Caliph spent in feasting and revelry, but Giafer, and Zobeideh and her son, Prince Emin, likewise spent the hours in depression and grief, looking forward to death in the morning.

When the day dawned, and the new Caliph, after morning prayers, had assumed his seat on the Imperial divan, he commanded Giafer to be brought before him. Then, with a sinister smile, he demanded of the prisoner, "Where is the most illustrious Caliph Haroun Alraschid? Say, Giafer, what hast thou done with him?"

To this Giafer replied, "Haroun Alraschid, my master, is in the hand of God. But where he may be at this moment, I have told you that I do not know."

"No one can know so well as thou where he is," said Ibrahim, "for did he not go

to Bussora with thee and has never returned? Doubtless thou hast killed him, and hast hidden his body, otherwise he would be here, therefore thy life is forfeited," and with that he made a sign to the mutes, who immediately took Giafer and passed the fatal cord about his neck.

As they waited with trained docility for the usual sign from the Caliph to draw tight the silken cord and despatch their victim, a great shout was heard, and outside the palace acclamations filled the air, and cries of—"Haroun Alraschid returns! Welcome, Prince of the Faithful!"

Ibrahim hearing these words, after a few moments' hesitation, made the sign to the mutes, and Giafer's life would have ended, but on the instant an officer standing by, who owed his position to the Grand Vizier, cut through the cord with his sword. As he did so, Haroun, pale with anger and his eyes flashing, entered the door of the audience-chamber. Ibrahim, pale as ashes, sat on the throne petrified with terror. As Haroun's eyes fell upon the shrinking prince sitting on his throne, and on the form of Giafer kneeling with part of the severed cord still about his neck, the veins stood out upon his forehead, and rage rendered him speechless. He beckoned to Mesrúr, the ever faithful, who instantly pulled Ibrahim from his seat, and, taking him aside into an antechamber, forthwith struck off his head.

That Haroun reinstated Giafer as Grand Vizier, and took Zobeideh and Prince Emin out of prison, needs hardly be said. That he received Abdallah and Ahmed very graciously, and that he bought the fair captive of them at a truly royal price, is not surprising. But it is perhaps somewhat surprising that all the dangers and hardships he underwent, in consequence of his capture by the pirates, did not suffice to wean him altogether from such perilous adventures in the future.

He was of so daring and fearless a temper, however, that it made no further difference than this, that ever afterwards when he wandered about in disguise Mesrúr accompanied him as well as the Grand Vizier.

The Caliph and the Blind Fisherman.

One evening Haroun Alraschid sat in a splendid apartment of his palace in Bagdad. The evening meal was finished, and the slaves had carried away the

magnificent service of gold plate on which it had been served. The Caliph was gloomy and ill-humoured, and the officers and attendants in waiting silent, vigilant, and not unapprehensive; for when the brow of the monarch was clouded none could tell when the storm might burst forth, nor whom the lightning of his wrath might strike. Before long, however, and much to their relief, Giafer was sent for, and the Caliph, rising and signing his officers to leave him, wandered out alone into the garden of his palace.

Here Giafer on his arrival found him. He was sitting moodily listening to a concert of vocal music performed by some of the ladies of his harem, who were posted out of sight and at some little distance in a small grove. Just as Giafer entered the garden the Caliph clapped his hands and said to a slave who ran to him, "Go, tell the singers to keep silence, for I am in no humour to listen to them." Then, perceiving the Grand Vizier, he said to him, "Giafer, I have sent for thee because I am restless and pleased with nothing this evening; suggest, therefore, what I shall do."

Then Giafer replied: "Prince of the Faithful, if you are tired of your palace and of the gardens and the singing of your women, and if you care not to view the dancers"—the Caliph shook his head—"nor to listen to the tales or the poems of Abu 'Atahiyeh——"

"Not this evening, though they are good," said Haroun.

"Then what say you to our sallying forth disguised into Bagdad," continued Giafer, "that we may observe what goes forward, and perchance meet with some adventure that may amuse you?"

"That is what I will do," said Haroun, brightening up at the suggestion; "come, Giafer, let us put on the garb of merchants and go out."

In a short time Haroun and Giafer sallied forth, with the faithful Mesrúr following, also in disguise, not far behind them. They wandered through the bazaars until they had seen a great part of Bagdad; but they met with no adventure and saw nothing particularly strange or noteworthy throughout all their ramble. The Caliph, who had at first been much more cheerful, began at length to be tired with the walk, and again in a somewhat ill-humour.

Giafer, noticing this, proposed that they should take a short cut through the lower and meaner parts of the town, and so return to the palace.

As with this intent they passed the end of a narrow and steep street leading up from the river, they observed a man whose figure and condition at once arrested the Caliph's attention. He was a tall and handsome man with the upright, dignified bearing of a soldier; he had regular features, a large hooked nose, and a long black moustache now turning somewhat grey. His clothes were very old and ragged; over his left shoulder he carried a net, and in his right hand a bag evidently containing a few fish. He was obviously a fisherman just returning home from his work on the river's bank; but what particularly attracted the Caliph's attention was the fact that the man was blind. In his left hand he carried a stick with which he touched sometimes the path and sometimes the walls of the houses as he passed along, as though to assure himself of his position. And though he was thus evidently blind, yet he walked forward, not timidly or slowly, but boldly and steadily, as if he were very well acquainted with his route.

The Caliph at once approached him and entered into conversation. He asked him

whether he, being blind, caught the fish himself, or whether he was aided by some one else; whether he had good fortune and caught much, and how many fish he now had in his bag.

To these inquiries the man replied that, although blind, yet he managed to fish very well, and usually had good fortune in the number of fish that he caught, but that on this day he had been unlucky, and had only five fish in his bag. Of these he said he should sell three, and two he should cook for the supper of himself and his brother.

"And what is the occupation of your brother?" asked the Caliph.

"He, alas!" said the man, "is of no occupation; his back is injured so that he cannot move from his bed."

"And you fish for the support of both?" said Haroun.

"Of course," replied the man, with grave simplicity.

"Fisherman," said the Caliph, "I will buy your three fish, and, since I am tired, we will come, I and my friend who is with me, and you shall cook all the five fish, and we will sup together."

"Sir," said the fisherman, "my poor hovel is not fitted to receive guests; yet, if you are content to take things in the rough as you will find them, come and be welcome."

"Fisherman," said Haroun, "soldiers should be able to accommodate themselves to circumstances, and I am a soldier, as I judge that you also have been."

"Commander," said the fisherman, "I have, as you suppose, served the Caliph, whom may Allah preserve and exalt, and in his service I lost my sight."

"Comrade," said Haroun, "when we have eaten your fish, and you have rested, you shall relate to us the story of your life, which I doubt not contains many stirring and noteworthy incidents."

As he was saying this they came to a very mean cottage in the narrow street, or rather lane, through which they were passing, and the old fisherman, entering, beckoned them with a sort of dignified politeness to follow him.

In the cottage, which was lit by the smoky flame of a single small lamp, they found, lying in a corner of the room on some rags, another tall, athletic-looking man, who appeared in every respect a very twin brother of their acquaintance the fisherman, except as regards the eyes, which were black, bright, and piercing.

"Mohammed," said the fisherman, addressing his brother, "I bring with me two gentlemen I have met with; they have bought three of the five fish I have caught, and they will join us in our supper. I smell the loaves that they are baked upon the hearth, and very quickly I will prepare and cook the fish."

"Gentlemen," said he, folding an old and tattered cloak and laying it on the floor, "there is no other divan I can offer you, therefore pray be seated upon this cloak, and I will hasten to make ready your fish."

The Caliph and Giafer, having seated themselves, conversed with Mohammed, who appeared to them, from the expression of his features, to be suffering much pain.

He was unable, he told them, to rise, owing to an injury to his back, and his brother Suleiman, although blind, not only supported them both by fishing, but cooked their food and attended to all necessary household duties.

The Caliph was much touched and interested by these two fine old fellows, their pitiable plight, their uncomplaining cheerfulness under such misfortunes, and their brotherly affection.

"Suleiman," he said, "has promised after supper to relate to me your history; and I desire to hear it," he added, "not simply from motives of curiosity, but because I hope to be able to help you both and possibly to set right any wrongs or injustice from which you may have suffered."

The fish and hot cakes Haroun enjoyed more than all the sumptuous repasts which were prepared for him at his palace, novelty and fatigue giving a whet to his appetite. And these being consumed and the frugal meal finished, he reminded Suleiman of his desire to learn the particulars of his history.

Suleiman, saying that there was little to tell, but that he was quite willing to tell that little, began as follows:

THE HISTORY OF THE BLIND FISHERMAN AND HIS BROTHER.

"As poor as we now are," said Suleiman, "our father was an officer much trusted by El Hadi, the late Caliph."

At this name Haroun looked very black, for El Hadi had desired to set Haroun aside in favour of his own son Jaafer. However, the blind fisherman perceived nothing of this, but continued—

"Our father had three sons—myself, the eldest, and Mohammed, my brother here present, and by another wife, Moussa, his youngest boy, and, as often happens, his favourite. My father was but seldom in Bagdad, being almost constantly engaged abroad in one foreign war or another. Very early in life Mohammed and I accompanied him, and were entrusted with important posts under him in the armies he commanded.

"Not to weary you with a long catalogue of our battles, I tell you at once that about five years ago our father was killed in a very hotly contested fight, in which, just when our men were giving way before a furious charge of the enemy's cavalry, our father rallied them and led them in person against the foe, thereby securing victory for us, but falling himself in the very charge which secured it."

"Gallant man!" exclaimed the Caliph. "And what did El Hadi do for the sons?" Seeing that Suleiman did not answer—"Nothing!" he muttered, "and Haroun has never known of the matter."

"This battle," continued Suleiman, "having broken the power of the enemy, and the war being at an end, Mohammed and I returned to Bagdad, intending to share the property left by our father between ourselves and Moussa, our younger brother, in three parts or equal shares, as we had understood our father to desire.

"But on our return we found that Moussa, who holds the position of a Cadi, or judge, had already taken possession of the whole of the property, and he altogether refused to share it in any way with us, alleging that our father had promised to leave him all that he had.

"This assertion we knew to be false. And El Hadi having died just at that time, and the new Caliph being supposed to dislike both him and his adherents, we

applied to Ali ibn Moulk, the Governor of Bagdad, asking him to consider our case and enforce a just division of our inheritance. But Ali, though he took whatever presents we could afford to give him, did nothing, having no doubt received from Moussa still handsomer presents than it was in our power to afford.

"Seeing that our cause in no way advanced, we, who had always been used to an active life, soon got tired of waiting in idleness the good pleasure of the Governor, and therefore applied for and obtained commands in an army sent by the new Caliph against a province that had revolted.

"For three years we were employed in distant expeditions, and at length, at the end of that time, when storming a fortress held by a body of insurgents, a splinter entering one of my eyes destroyed the sight of it, and the inflammation extending from it not long after destroyed the sight of the other, rendering me totally blind; while Mohammed, poor fellow, still more unfortunate, was hurled backwards from the walls of the same fortress and injured his back so severely, that he has been unable to get about, and has suffered constant pain ever since.

"When we got back to Bagdad from this most unlucky campaign, our money being almost exhausted, I called again upon Moussa, and, relating to him what had befallen us, I asked him once more to make a fair and equitable division of the inheritance with us. But he once more refused to do so, repeated his assertion that all the property had been left to him, offered me a hundred dinars, which I angrily refused, and sent a slave to guide me, as he said, into the quarter of the town where I was then living. He evidently made a sign to the slave whom he sent with me, for I quickly perceived that he was conducting me, not towards that part of the town in which my caravanserai was situated, but along the steep streets leading down to the river. When we got on to the bank of the stream, and almost at the water's edge, he said he must return to his master, telling me to continue straight forward, and that I should find the road all clear. Greatly incensed at the perfidy of this villainous slave, I suddenly seized him and flung him into the river before me.

"I was about to retrace my steps, when a voice near to me exclaimed: 'Halloo! some one has cast himself into the river, and my nets will be destroyed.'

"'Cannot you see,' I said, 'that I threw that scoundrel into the river?'

"'Nay,' said the voice, 'I cannot see, for I am blind.'

"'Allah be merciful to us!' I cried. 'Art thou also blind?' And I told him my history as you have heard it, and why I had flung the slave into the water. By the way, what became of the fellow I know not—he was probably carried away by the stream, for I heard no more of him.

"Then I asked the blind man what it was that he had said of his nets being broken.

"He answered, 'I am a fisherman, and I doubt not but the rascal will have destroyed some of my nets, but never mind that, so long as he got his deserts.'

"'What! can a man that is blind be a fisherman?' I exclaimed.

"'Certainly,' he replied; 'I have caught fish for my living this ten years, and I will teach you to fish, if you like.'

"I thanked him, and gratefully accepted his offer."

"And thus it came to pass," said Suleiman to Haroun and Giafer, "that I became a fisherman, and by this means have been enabled to maintain both Mohammed and myself for the last two years."

The emotions experienced by the Caliph and the Grand Vizier as they listened to Suleiman's narrative were not altogether the same.

Haroun was so infuriated when he heard of the hard-hearted iniquity of the Cadi, and the taking of bribes and refusal of justice by Ali ibn Moulk, the Governor of Bagdad, that he could scarcely restrain himself from summoning Mesrúr and sending at once for their heads.

On the other hand, Giafer listened to the accusations against the Governor of Bagdad, who was a personal friend of his own, with the greatest consternation. Therefore, being anxious at any rate to gain time, Giafer, at the end of Suleiman's discourse, whispered to the Caliph, earnestly entreating him to preserve his incognito, and to suspend his decision at least for the present.

When they came out of the fisherman's cottage, having paid him for the fish, and promised to communicate with him again shortly, Giafer urged upon the Caliph

the injustice of condemning the Governor of Bagdad, without giving him the opportunity to reply to the charge brought against him by Suleiman.

"Giafer," said the Caliph, "I hear what you say, and I grant your request. Ali ibn Moulk shall have the opportunity provided for him, to clear himself from this charge in the best possible way, viz., by actually refusing to take a bribe, and by actually executing justice on Moussa the Cadi. I will myself provide him with that opportunity. But look you, the Governor of Bagdad is your friend, I know; you gave him his office, did you not? and now you are pleading his cause. Very good so far, but see that no rumour of this night's story reaches his ears, neither by a message, nor by a little bird, nor even by a dream; for if he hear of it I will take off your head also, by Allah I will, by Allah I will, by Allah I will; therefore look to yourself, my Giafer."

When the Grand Vizier heard this burst of rage, his heart sank within him. He had undoubtedly intended to convey a friendly warning to Ali, but he felt now that it would be dangerous and useless, and he was completely convinced that Ali's fate was sealed.

Early next morning the Caliph sent for the Grand Vizier, and said to him—

"Giafer, go dress yourself as you were dressed last night, take a hundred pieces of gold with you and give them to Suleiman, and tell him to repair immediately to the Governor of Bagdad, and demand from him justice in the matter of his inheritance. And mind, not one word more nor less."

Giafer touched his head in token of implicit obedience to the commands of the Caliph, and going at once, carried to Suleiman the hundred pieces of gold, and the message that he should immediately make another application to the Governor of Bagdad.

Suleiman was very unwilling to go to the Governor, saying, that to seek for justice in that quarter was but like fishing in a gutter where a man could catch nothing, but must lose his time and his bait. "However," he concluded, "since your friend sends me this money, as you say for no other purpose, I will carry it to the Governor and bestow it as he desires."

Directly after the Caliph had despatched the Grand Vizier to Suleiman, he called an officer and sent him with a message to the Governor of Bagdad, instructing the officer to observe carefully any applications which might be made to the

Governor for justice, and report the particulars on his return.

That evening Haroun again disguised himself, and went, with Giafer and Mesrúr in attendance as before, to visit Suleiman and Mohammed.

On reaching the cottage he demanded of Suleiman how he had fared in his application to the Governor.

"At first," said Suleiman, "he received me very roughly, but when I produced the gold he became more civil, and promised to see what he could do for me. As he has told me the same on each previous occasion, I do not build many hopes on that promise," said Suleiman, smiling. "But he was very urgent to find out where I had obtained the money I gave him, and when I told him that a gentleman whom I had met had lent me the money, he said—

"'It is well, get from him another hundred, and your case may be managed.'

"But, sir," said Suleiman to the Caliph, "I will take no further coin from you, for the rapacity of the Governor is like a bottomless pit that would swallow all that you have."

What Suleiman told him agreed perfectly with the report of the officer whom Haroun had sent to Ali that morning.

"Suleiman," said the Caliph, "I believe you are right; moreover, I think I can forward your suit better than by sending any more gold pieces to Ali. To-morrow morning one of my slaves will bring you a bundle of clothes: dress yourself in them, and in the evening come boldly to the house of the Governor, and bring with you the ring I now place upon your finger. When you arrive give the ring to one of the Governor's officers with this message: The bearer of this ring demands an audience of the owner of it. Meanwhile here are ten pieces of gold to relieve you of the necessity of going out fishing till I see you again."

Suleiman thanked Haroun warmly for his generosity and kindness, and the Caliph and Giafer returned to the palace.

The following morning the Caliph sent an officer to the Governor of Bagdad with a message informing him that Haroun would sup with him that evening. Delighted with such a mark of royal favour and condescension, Ali ibn Moulk prepared a most sumptuous entertainment; he had a great tent erected in the

garden of his palace, and singing women and dancing girls in readiness to amuse his august guest.

In the evening Haroun Alraschid arrived in state at the palace of the Governor, and found the gardens illuminated with thousands of small lights, and every conceivable preparation made to receive him.

Seated on a splendid divan in the great tent in the garden, the Caliph listened sometimes to the songs of a number of the best singers of Bagdad, who were stationed a short distance away and out of sight, and conversing sometimes with the Grand Vizier, the Governor of Bagdad, and other great officials who were with him in the tent. After he had been seated thus for some time, an officer of the Governor's household came into the tent and said a few words to him in an undertone.

"What is that?" demanded the Caliph. "Officer," said he, "do you not know that where I am present no message can be brought except to me?"

The officer bowed, and said at once, "A man in the uniform of an officer of the guard gave me this ring and bade me bring it in and say, 'The bearer of the ring is here, and demands an audience of the owner of it.'"

The Caliph asked for the ring; then putting it on his finger, he said, "The ring is mine, admit the man who brought it."

Amidst the silence of all, the officer returned immediately with Suleiman leaning on his arm, the tall, dignified form of the old soldier showing to great advantage in the splendid uniform in which he was now attired.

"Suleiman," said the Caliph, as he entered, "you are welcome."

"Ah," said Suleiman, "my friend, you are here; and you will speak to my lord the Governor on my behalf."

All present were so much astonished to hear this old blind officer addressing the Caliph in that frank, bold way as "my friend," that they knew not what to say.

The Caliph looked at the Governor of Bagdad, who was speechless with terror, and said fiercely, "You hear this man!"

The officer on whose arm Suleiman was leaning whispered to him hurriedly, "It is the Caliph; it is Haroun himself."

"Ah," said Suleiman, aloud, "then my cause is safe; I need say no more."

"Ali ibn Moulk," continued the Caliph, in a voice thick with passion, "Governor of Bagdad, into your hands has been committed the task of doing justice in this city. What then shall be done to him who denies justice and who takes bribes; who takes the last coin from the poor and the oppressed, and yet gives no heed to their petitions for redress? Allah pay me for it if I permit such iniquity." Then turning to Mesrúr, who stood behind him, he said, "Take him out."

Mesrúr with his assistants immediately seized Ali, and, taking him out into the garden, severed his head from his shoulders with one blow of his sword.

When the Governor of Bagdad had been taken out of the tent, the Caliph said, "Bring in now Moussa the Cadi."

Moussa, who had during the evening been arrested by order of the Caliph, and had been brought to the palace of the Governor of Bagdad, was now brought in under guard.

Haroun ordered the Cadi at once to make over formally the whole of his property to his two brothers, Suleiman and Mohammed, the Caliph adding with his usual grim humour, "As you are a man of the law, it is fit that you do justice in a legal way." And then added, addressing Mesrúr, who had just entered, "And now impale him."

Mesrúr immediately advanced towards the Cadi to take him out and execute the doom pronounced by the Caliph.

But Suleiman said, "He is my brother, the son of my father; let me pray you at least to spare his life."

Then the Caliph said, "For thy sake, Suleiman, I spare him; let him be sent to the army in the field and enrolled as a common soldier. Thus, at any rate," he added, "he may earn an honest living."

"Emir," said the Caliph to Suleiman, in conclusion, "for such is your rank henceforth, your brother Mohammed has been conveyed by my order in a litter

to your house, and there you will find him duly provided for. And I desire that you yourself attend me at the palace three times a week at least, that I may have the benefit of your conversation and counsel."

The blind fisherman, now a rich Emir and a prime favourite with the Caliph, saluted his sovereign and was silent.

The Caliph and Abdurrahman.

When seated in his palace at Bagdad, Haroun Alraschid could look across the river Tigris, down to which his garden sloped, and could watch the bustle, the arrival and departure of soldiers, courtiers, and citizens, which was incessantly taking place in the courtyard of the Grand Vizier's palace, which was situated opposite to him on the other side of the river.

Sometimes, when he was tired of the occupations and amusements offered by his own palace and gardens, he would, instead of sending for Giafer to come to him, mount his horse and proceed to pay an informal visit to the Grand Vizier.

On one of these occasions, when Haroun was seated in the audience-chamber of the Grand Vizier's palace, he said, "I have more than once, when on my way to visit you here, remarked a certain small house and garden situated near the river, and the walls being low I have while riding past observed an old man sitting in the garden, whose appearance has attracted my attention. He is a fine tall man, with a long white beard and a handsome benevolent cast of countenance, but what has chiefly struck me is the look of calm and serene cheerfulness and contentment which he always wears, although he is old, and, judging by the place he lives in, by no means rich. He interests me, I feel curious to hear the story of his life, which I do not doubt would contain many strange and noteworthy incidents, therefore bring him this afternoon with you to my palace that I may question him and satisfy my curiosity concerning him."

Giafer of course promised to obey the royal command, and accordingly on the same afternoon when proceeding to the Caliph's palace he called at the little house which had been indicated to him and asked to see the owner. The slave who opened the door was greatly surprised and not a little frightened when he recognized the officer on horseback with his numerous attendants, who inquired

for his master, as no less a personage than the Grand Vizier himself.

Giafer dismounted, and being shown at once into the little garden, discovered sitting there placidly enough the venerable form of the old man of whom the Caliph had spoken.

"Sir," said Giafer, "our master, the Caliph, has ordered me to bring you with me to-day to the palace, as he wishes to speak with you. I have therefore brought with me a led horse, so that if it should not be too fatiguing for you to mount you may ride with me to the palace."

"My lord," said the old man, who was quite unembarrassed, and who was strong, and stooped but little in spite of his years, "I accept, with many thanks, your kind offer of a horse, and will accompany you at once to wait upon the Prince of the Faithful, since he so wills it."

The mounting was somewhat difficult, but when once seated on horseback, the old man rode so well and with such an aspect of ease and natural dignity, that he pleased his escort and astonished his neighbours, who watched his departure, much marvelling for what purpose he had been sent for to the palace.

On his arrival he was received very graciously by the Caliph, who told him that he had frequently observed him sitting in his little garden, and desired that he would relate the particulars of his life and fortune.

"Sire," said the old man, "I have but little to tell your Majesty, and scarcely anything that deserves your notice; but at your command I will with pleasure narrate the few noteworthy incidents of my life, and that as briefly and faithfully as possible."

ABDURRAHMAN'S STORY.

"My name," said the old man, "is Abdurrahman, and fourscore and three years ago I was born in this city, not very far from the spot where I now dwell. My father, who was a merchant, and fairly prosperous, furnished me, when I was twenty years of age, with a stock of goods with which to commence to trade, and, as young merchants are wont to do, I departed to try my fortune in foreign countries.

"The first country I visited was Persia, and arriving at Shiraz, the capital, I remained for many months engaged in selling, at the best profit I could obtain for them, the goods I had brought with me from Bagdad.

"At length, having disposed of almost all my stock, I began to consider what kind of merchandize it would be most advisable that I should buy to take back with me, and trade with on my return.

"But as I sat one day in the shop of a jeweller of my acquaintance in the bazaar, a circumstance occurred which at once put to flight all ideas of an early return to my native land.

"A young lady entered, whose fine apparel and elegant bearing immediately attracted my attention. Two slaves waited on her, and stopped outside the shop while she entered.

"Why I should have been especially attracted by this young lady I should probably have found it difficult at that moment to explain. But my eyes were no longer under my control, and I thought surely no one ever moved more gracefully. I was young then, and a young man's imagination, like a high-mettled steed, soon runs away with him. Yet, being young, and probably in those days not altogether ill-looking, it is not unlikely that the lady was, on her side, not at all displeased to observe my very evident admiration; and taking pity upon me, or rather, I should say, determined instantly to complete her conquest, she contrived, as though by accident, to remove her veil for one moment, exposing thus to my astonished gaze a countenance of the most surpassing beauty.

"After purchasing sundry articles from my friend the jeweller, and giving them to her slaves to carry home for her, she left the shop, not without bestowing upon me a parting glance, which penetrated my heart and filled me with the most delicious and indescribable excitement.

"As soon as she was gone I inquired eagerly of my friend who this dazzling young beauty was, and whereabouts she lived.

"'She is,' he said, 'the daughter of Mazoudi Khan, a very rich man, who lives in a fine house not far from the palace of the Shah himself. I should advise you,' he added, 'to forget as soon as possible that you have ever seen her, for you know the proverb, "He who lifts his eyes too high, is apt to fall and break his neck."'

"The advice was no doubt good, but as well might a man in a fever be advised to keep cool. As well might a man parched with thirst be advised to shun water and to think no more of it. I had seen her face, the face of the first beautiful woman it had ever been my lot to behold. I was twenty-one years of age, and my prudent acquaintance advised me to forget her!

"My lord, you may guess how I lay awake all that night, and how I returned as early next day as I decently could to the shop of my friend, in the ardent, if rash, hope of again meeting the object that now constantly engrossed me.

"The young lady, who was nowise disposed to avoid me or break my heart, came to the shop still earlier than on the previous day, and, while examining some jewels, she listened, without any sign of disapproval, to the few but passionate words of admiration and love which I ventured to address to her.

"'Sir,' she answered, 'if I should say that I feel displeased at what you tell me, it would not be true; but, alas! it is useless for you thus to address me. My father is about to marry me to a friend of his, who is very rich and nearly as old as himself.'

"With that the lovely creature shed tears, and presently choosing some jewels, she went away, leaving me full of grief and distracted with anger and jealousy.

"After this I met her again several times in the same place, and, to my utmost consternation, learned at length that her marriage with Mirza Aga, her father's old friend, would take place in a fortnight.

"At first I implored her in my desperation to fly with me from Persia, and accompany me to my home at Bagdad. But with much good sense she pointed out that this was impossible; that we should both infallibly be caught before we could get three parasangs away from Shiraz, and be brought back to certain death.

"I was altogether at a loss what to do, but finally I bought a large, old-fashioned house, situated in a very retired and lonely position in the suburbs of the city, and determined, if possible, to persuade my charmer to retire with me to that retreat, where I doubted not we might remain undiscovered until the fury of her father should abate.

"The house I bought was surrounded by a very high wall, and had a large

quadrangle within laid out as a garden, with fruit-trees and fountains of clear water. I furnished the place handsomely, and bought several slaves to attend upon us. But, alas! I could find no opportunity to take the lady thither, she being always accompanied by at least two of her father's slaves, who jealously guarded her.

"The day fixed for her marriage with the ancient bridegroom having arrived, I loitered about ready to follow and observe the bridal procession, being in a state of mingled rage and despair not easy to describe.

"Now among the Persians it is the custom when the wedding-day arrives that the friends of the bride shall escort her from her home towards the house of her husband, while he, on his part, comes with his friends to meet her. As soon as he sees his bride he throws an orange or other fruit at her, and rides off again towards his house, and whosoever catches him before he arrives there, is entitled to his horse and clothes or a ransom in lieu of them.

"The distance which the bridegroom thus advances to meet his bride, varies in each case according to circumstances.

"The lady Perizadeh, being the daughter of so influential a man as Mazoudi Khan, it was arranged that Mirza Aga, who was her inferior in rank, should advance two-thirds of the distance that had to be traversed.

"It thus happened that when the two cavalcades encountered each other, and the bridegroom, according to custom, threw the orange and rode off, he had some considerable distance to ride. As your Majesty is aware, the Persians are to be reckoned among the best horsemen in the world; but Mirza Aga was no longer young; and whether it were owing to that, or whether his horse was in fault, I know not, but before he had ridden far, with all the members of the two parties pursuing him at the top of their speed, his horse suddenly stumbled, and he was thrown upon his head and killed on the spot.

"During the scene of confusion which followed, while all were crowding round the fallen man, to render help or to endeavour to ascertain the nature and extent of his injuries, the bride was left for the moment alone and unguarded. Seizing the opportunity, I sprang up behind her on her horse, and turning at once down a side street, was in a few seconds out of sight, and reached in safety the house I had bought, and which I had, as I have said, prepared for our reception.

"As soon as the bride was missed—which, owing to the excitement and confusion, did not occur immediately—it was of course assumed that she had, when frightened by the accident, turned round and ridden back again to her father's house. Mazoudi Khan therefore went home at once to see and console her; but when he found that she had not returned, he despatched his whole retinue in different directions, to scour the country in search of the robbers who had, as he supposed, carried off his daughter.

"Even when his followers came back unsuccessful, he still expected shortly to recover his child, as he entertained no doubt that the bandits would find means before long to communicate with him respecting her ransom.

"Meanwhile, we lived with the utmost privacy in the house I had purchased, never going outside the walls, or doing anything whatever to attract attention to us.

"In this way a whole year passed by. A son was born to us, and I named him Diraz. And the lovely Perizadeh and myself continued as enamoured of each other, and as happy in each other's society, as we had been at first.

"About a twelvemonth after the day—ever memorable to me—on which I had effected the capture of the destined bride of the unfortunate Mirza Aga, I happened to hear that Mazoudi Khan was seriously ill, the loss of his daughter, whom he tenderly loved, having depressed his spirits to an alarming degree.

"After much debate we determined that Perizadeh, taking her baby with her, should go to her father and implore his forgiveness for both of us. I sent her, clad as handsomely as I could afford, with a slave to carry the baby, and two other slaves to attend upon her; and I waited the result of the interview between her and her father with no little anxiety.

"I knew that a proud and wealthy man like Mazoudi Khan would have rejected, with much disdain, a young and unknown merchant like myself, had I demanded his daughter in marriage; but I hoped now, that the sight of his child whom he mourned as lost, and of his grandchild—towards whom a grandfather's heart is always especially open—would soften him, and cause him to relent. In this I was not disappointed.

"He sent for me, forgave me, welcomed me as his son-in-law, and appointed us a house near to his own.

"And not long afterwards he obtained for me an official post at the Persian Court, where I remained happy and contented for the space of twenty years.

"By that time, both my father-in-law and my lovely Perizadeh had died, and my son Diraz, now grown a fine young man, was entered as a gholam, that is, one of the royal body-guard.

"Ten years more passed by uneventfully, and I looked forward confidently hoping to see my son appointed to the government of a province, or some other position of dignity and emolument. But, alas! just when this seemed most certain, an indiscretion, an act of madness on the part of my unhappy son, brought ruin on us both.

"Among the women at that time in the harem of his Majesty the Shah, was a very beautiful slave, who had been captured during a war which had been waged against an infidel nation, whose territory extends beyond the northern frontier of the Shah's dominions.

"This slave, beautiful as the full moon, Diraz, rash and presumptuous youth that he was, managed to catch sight of, and immediately he became desperately, recklessly enamoured of her.

"Forgetting the duty we owed to our master the Shah, and taking advantage of his official position as gholam shahee, which enabled and authorized him to travel by post at speed, pressing horses as he went, he managed to steal the beautiful slave, and got such a start before her loss and his absence were discovered, that he was not overtaken, but escaped with her out of the kingdom.

"When the Shah heard of the matter, he very naturally was furious——"

"Very naturally, indeed," said the Caliph, with a grim smile.

"Well, very naturally also," continued Abdurrahman, "his Majesty sent for me, upbraided me for having such a son, and ordering all that I had to be confiscated, commanded me to leave his kingdom forthwith, and find and bring back my son and his slave.

"In great grief I retraced my steps mechanically to my house, but a gholam, bearing the royal edict, had arrived there before me, and my own slave repulsed me from my own door.

"I set out, therefore, at once on my journey northwards, travelling not like my son had done, by relays of the swiftest horses that could be forced into the service, but slowly and wearily on foot. It took me many weeks to accomplish the distance he had traversed in a few days; but not to inflict upon you the tedious incidents of my journey, I will only say that I arrived at length in that region to which I believed my son had carried the beautiful slave. Not without considerable risk, on account of the hatred felt by all the people of that infidel nation, against true believers, I succeeded in reaching the capital, where I soon learnt on inquiry, that a gholam of the Shah of Persia had arrived recently, bringing with him a lady of extreme beauty, who was, it appeared, the daughter of the king of that country.

"The king had received his daughter, and my son also for her sake, with every demonstration of joy and satisfaction. And the young people, married, and very happy, were now living in the royal palace.

"I managed soon to let my son know of my arrival, and he came at once to the khan where I was staying, and welcomed me with much affectionate delight; all the more because since his departure from Shiraz he had begun too late to consider the vengeance with which the incensed Shah might only too probably visit me in consequence of his misdoing.

"He conducted me forthwith to the palace, and introduced me to my daughter-in-law, the beautiful slave with whom he had eloped; and also to his father-in-law, the king of that country, who received me very graciously, and bestowed upon me, in recompense for the loss I had sustained, a fine house and a thousand purses of gold.

"The country in which we now were was a mountainous one, and very bleak and cold in the winter; and my son Diraz had not been there six months before he took so violent a chill that he died after a few days' illness.

"About a month later the princess, my daughter-in-law, gave birth to a female child. Nothing now was so dear to me as my little granddaughter, and when, five years afterwards, both my daughter-in-law and the king her father were carried off by a fever which was very prevalent and fatal in that country, I determined to return with my grandchild to my native city, there to spend my remaining years in peace.

"We journeyed very slowly, stopping for months together in many of the cities on our way. At length we arrived safely in Bagdad, and settled down in the little house and garden by the river, where I live in peace and contentment with my granddaughter as my only companion; she is my treasure and the brightness of my house."

"The young lady," said the Caliph, "must by this time be old enough to be married: if I find her a husband will you provide her a dower?"

"Sire," said Abdurrahman, "when I die, and I am now old, what little I have will be hers, but till then her only dower consists of two small jars of ointment."

"What jars are those?" asked the Caliph; "and where did you get them?"

"The jars," answered Abdurrahman, "were entrusted to me by my daughter-in-law just before her death."

"'Preserve them carefully,' she said, 'and unopened, for the ointment they contain is most precious, and of a rare and even magical efficacy. When my little girl is old enough for marriage offer them for sale, but take not less than a thousand pieces of gold for the one jar, and not less than ten thousand pieces for the other. If no one can be found willing to pay that price for them do not part with them, keep them rather, and direct that they be buried with you.'

"I have never yet," continued the old man, "offered the jars of ointment for sale, and truly it seems so improbable that any one will ever be inclined to pay so preposterous a price for them, that doubtless they will be interred with me as the princess, my daughter-in-law, requested."

"By Allah, not so!" said the Caliph; "I will buy them myself. And your granddaughter, who I take it on your word is a very charming young lady, I give with her dower of eleven thousand pieces of gold to the son of Giafer."

The Grand Vizier and Abdurrahman bowed and touched their foreheads in token of entire submission to the will of the Prince of the Faithful.

The Caliph then dismissed them with the injunction to make preparations for solemnizing the marriage as soon as possible.

The Caliph and the First Jar of Ointment.

FIRST ADVENTURE:

THE CALIPH AND THE EMIR.

A few days after the marriage of Abdurrahman's daughter with the son of the Grand Vizier, the Caliph ordered his treasurer to bring him the two jars of ointment which he had bought of Abdurrahman.

When he saw them they were so very small that he could not avoid an exclamation of surprise.

"By Allah," said Haroun, "but the old man has had a good price!"

Although the jars were both very small, yet they were not of the same size, one being half as large again as the other.

"And," said Giafer, "I must inform your Majesty that the larger jar is that which cost a thousand pieces of gold, and the smaller ten thousand pieces."

"Hand them to me," said the Caliph, "that I may see them more closely."

Then holding the jars in his hands, he read the inscription on the larger jar: "The Ointment Marvellous. This jar to be opened by no one but the purchaser thereof, who will be informed by a writing contained in the jar of the uses and wonderful properties of the ointment." On the smaller jar were the words, "Most Marvellous Ointment," and following those words an inscription precisely similar to that on the larger jar: "This jar to be opened by no one but the purchaser thereof, who will be informed by a writing contained in the jar of the uses and wonderful properties of the ointment."

When he had read the inscriptions on the jars, the Caliph handed back the smaller jar to the Grand Vizier, and ordered him to return it to the treasurer to be carefully preserved until he should require it.

Then opening the larger jar, he took out a writing he found immediately inside. This was folded, and upon the outside was written, "To be read by the purchaser of the ointment only."

The Caliph therefore opened it and read these words: "Whosoever thou art who hast bought this small jar of ointment for the price of one thousand pieces of gold, being as yet ignorant of the power and virtues of the ointment, rejoice, for thy faith and liberality are not wasted. Whensoever thou shalt anoint thine eyes with the ointment in this jar, for the space of three hours afterwards thou shalt see through all solid substances that lie fifty feet in front of thee as though, instead of being opaque and dense as stone or brick, they were clear and translucent as a diamond of the first water. But of this power tell no man anything, lest thou lose it."

When the Caliph had read these words, he sat some time silent. The Grand Vizier standing beside him was curious to learn the secret of the ointment, and wondered at the long silence of his master.

At length the Caliph rose, and placed the jar of ointment with his own hands in a cabinet which he locked, and of which he himself kept the key.

Giafer, whose curiosity was fully aroused by the taciturnity of Haroun on this occasion, could not help asking, "Is your Majesty satisfied or disappointed with your purchase of the ointment?"

"It remains to be proved," said the Caliph, smiling, "whether the ointment is as valuable as is asserted. When the proper opportunity presents itself, I will test it. Meanwhile, Grand Vizier, the proverb is never to be forgotten, 'The inquisitive are ever in danger.'"

After this Giafer perceived that it would be wiser to say no more.

They then conversed some time on various public questions and State affairs, and at length, when dismissing Giafer, the Caliph said, "Do not fail to come at the usual hour this evening that we may wander disguised through Bagdad, as I have already arranged to do."

Giafer arrived at the palace punctually at the hour appointed by the Caliph, and, disguised in the habits of merchants, Haroun and his Vizier sallied forth according to their wont, accompanied only by Mesrúr, who followed them at a short distance.

Before leaving the palace, Haroun Alraschid, retiring for a few moments from his attendants, had applied to his eyes some of the ointment out of the jar he had

placed in his cabinet.

On reaching the streets and looking about him, he discovered to his great joy and contentment that the efficacy of the ointment had been nowise exaggerated by what was stated in the writing which he had found within the jar.

Wherever they went he could see, instead of the mere blank outer walls, the interior of the dwellings, and the inhabitants of every house employed in any avocation that they might happen at that moment to be engaged in. In one room he would see three or four men seated together, the evening meal being finished, and discussing quietly the occupations of the day or the prospects of the future. In another room the women of the family would be visible to him, with their faces uncovered; thought of horror and insult for the men could they but have guessed it! Here, some were eating sweetmeats, sipping sherbet and gossiping. There, others were engaged adding to their charms by staining their eyelids, dyeing their hair, or other adornments of the toilet which it is not lawful for men to imagine, much less to behold.

The Caliph walked along this evening looking first on this side, then on that, and appeared so much interested with all he saw that he seemed altogether oblivious of Giafer's existence, and spoke to him never a word.

Giafer found the walk rather dull. And the more dull he found it the more surprised he was at the unusual patience exhibited by the Commander of the Faithful, who uttered no impatient exclamations, but whose countenance bore an expression of satisfaction and interest far enough removed from any kind of irritability or ill-humour.

They had wandered in this way for a long time through many of the least-frequented and least-interesting thoroughfares of the city, the Grand Vizier scarcely knowing whether he were more bored by the walk or astonished at the evident satisfaction of his master, when suddenly the Caliph stood still, leaning against the wall of a house and staring intently at the blank wall of the house immediately opposite.

After they had stood thus for some minutes, the Caliph looking fixedly and with evidently increasing interest and excitement at the dead wall opposite, Giafer became seriously alarmed, fearing that his master had either lost his wits or was going to have a fit. He was, in fact, so much frightened by the extraordinary

behaviour of the Caliph, which had continued all the evening, that he continued to stand beside him and watch him, himself motionless and speechless.

All at once the Caliph, still gazing intently before him, grasped Giafer by the arm and whispered to him as though others were present—

"Go, take Mesrúr with you; go round that house, down the turning yonder, and arrest them as they come out of the gate."

For a moment Giafer, who seriously believed that the Caliph had become demented, hesitated. But the habit of obedience prevailed, and putting his hand to his head, the usual sign of implicit devotion to the royal will, he beckoned Mesrúr, whose figure at a little distance from them was the only living object visible in the street, and they disappeared together down the narrow turning which the Caliph had indicated.

We must now explain what it was that caused the Caliph to remain so long gazing at the house before the outer wall of which he was standing.

As he came along the street he saw in the garden of the house, which lay immediately behind the high wall in front of him, a sight very different from any of those which had hitherto been disclosed to him.

Lying on the grass beneath a wide spreading tree in the middle of the garden was the apparently lifeless form of a very beautiful young lady. Her clothes were of the finest materials, and her neck, arms, and ankles were adorned with magnificent jewellery, composed of gold, diamonds, pearls, and other precious stones. Standing beside her, and looking down upon her with a disturbed and angry countenance, was an old man, richly dressed, and evidently the master of the house, whose face, now distorted with passion, must at all times have worn a fierce and malevolent expression. After thus standing and watching her for a few minutes the old man, stooping down, took hold of her hand, as though to ascertain that she were really dead; and when, as he released it, the arm fell heavily again to the earth, he again stood contemplating for some minutes the youthful and lovely figure at his feet. Presently he clapped his hands, and some slaves appearing, he gave them some brief directions, on receiving which they went again into the house, returning shortly with a great empty sack or bag. In this they placed gently and carefully enough the body of the young lady, and lifting the sack, carried it between them towards a side gate opening into a

narrow lane that ran down by one side of the walled enclosure which formed the garden of the mansion.

The Caliph saw the old man point with his finger to this side gate, evidently bidding them carry forth their burden at that entrance.

It was at this moment that he had grasped the arm of the Grand Vizier, and had whispered to him the order to proceed at once with Mesrúr and arrest the men he should find coming along the lane.

Giafer, as we have seen, after a brief hesitation went back to where Mesrúr was standing, and acquainting him rapidly with the Caliph's order, they crossed the street and entered the lane as they had been commanded.

They had not proceeded many steps down the lane before they met the slaves bearing the great sack.

Giafer and Mesrúr drawing their swords, demanded sternly what they had there, and whither they were going.

The slaves, when they saw two men with drawn swords barring the way, put down their burden quickly and would have fled, but Mesrúr exclaimed—

"Stop, for I will cut down the first man among you that dares stir hand or foot."

Then one of the slaves answered and said, "Sirs, we are carrying this package by order of our master, therefore please to let us pass."

But Giafer said, "Slaves, who is your master? And what have you in this sack, and whither do you carry it? I command you, in the name of the Prince of the Faithful, to answer these questions truly."

"Sir," said the slave who had spoken already, "our master is the Emir Bargash ibn Beynin, who lives in this house at the side of which we are standing, and he will, if he chooses, tell you what is in the sack and whither it is going, but we dare not say anything."

The Grand Vizier might probably have returned a very rough answer to this speech, or even have cut down the slave who uttered it, but at that moment the Caliph himself entered the lane, accompanied by a guard of soldiers, who

happened to be patrolling the city in that direction, and whom the Caliph had summoned to his assistance.

Directing some of the soldiers to escort the slaves and their burthen to the palace, he ordered the officer of the guard with the rest of his men to enter the house of the Emir, and to conduct him also at once to the palace. He furthermore strictly charged the officer to permit the master of the house to hold no communication whatever with any of its inmates before leaving, and as soon as possible to send a guard to seize and hold possession of the place until the Caliph's pleasure should be known concerning it. After giving these orders Haroun Alraschid returned with Giafer to the palace.

When he had changed his clothes and assumed his seat on the imperial divan, he commanded the Emir to be brought in before him. Then, addressing him, he said with a stern expression—

"This evening my officers have stopped and arrested a party of slaves belonging to your household, who were carrying in a sack the body of a young lady. They say that they carried it from your house by your command. Explain to me, therefore, who the lady is, and what your slaves were ordered to do with her."

The Emir Bargash ibn Beynin, having prostrated himself before the throne of the Caliph, replied—

"Prince of the Faithful, I hasten according to your command to declare to you the whole truth concerning the young lady whose body my slaves were carrying in the sack. That young lady was my niece. She was Persian by birth, my nephew having married her while staying in that country, and brought her back with him about a year ago, when he returned to his native land. For the last three or four months they have been staying with me in my house in this city. I must here inform your Majesty, though I say it with sorrow and regret, that my nephew, who is a man of violent passions, ever treated his young wife with scandalous severity and harshness. Often, but in vain, I have remonstrated with him as to his conduct. At length, this evening, when going into my garden, I found my niece lying there lifeless. Everywhere I sought my nephew, but could not find him. I was convinced that he had in some way been the cause of his wife's death, and that he had fled to escape the consequences of his barbarous act. But, being myself not a little apprehensive of the danger which might threaten myself if the dead body were discovered in my house, I confess that I ordered my slaves to

remove it and place it in the river."

The Caliph listened with much attention to the account given him by the Emir. After the latter had finished his narration, Haroun Alraschid dismissed him with the injunction immediately to make diligent search for his nephew, and to arrest him and bring him at once to the palace as soon as he could find him.

The Caliph being now very tired retired to rest.

Meanwhile the body of the young lady, which had been carried to the palace, was taken to the women's apartments, the ladies of the harem being all of them devoured with curiosity to see the fair unknown. When the body had been taken out of the sack in which it had been placed, all were astonished at the extreme beauty of the stranger, and the richness and value of her dress and ornaments. At length one of the ladies who were gathered together around her declared, after looking at her attentively and placing her hand over her heart, that she was convinced that life was not yet extinct. Resorting to all the remedies of use in cases of prolonged fainting fits, consciousness was at last restored, and, after partaking of some slight nourishment, the lovely patient fell into a natural sleep, during which she was watched with sympathizing eyes by several eager volunteers.

Early next morning, as soon as the Caliph had risen and was dressed, one of the Chamberlains of the palace acquainted him with the recovery of the young lady, and that she was now so much better that she was sitting and conversing with the other ladies in the harem.

The Caliph immediately sent the Chamberlain to announce that his Majesty was about to pay them a visit. When the Caliph entered the apartment where she was, the young lady, with all the ladies of the harem who were sitting with her, rose to receive the Commander of the Faithful, and prostrated themselves before him.

Bidding them rise, and placing the young lady on the divan near to him, he inquired after her health; and when she answered that she was much better, and nearly recovered from her illness of the previous evening, he told her to relate to him the occasion of the serious and almost fatal fainting fit into which she had fallen.

"Sire," said the young lady, with tears in her eyes, "all my trouble, and the fact that I am now here, arises from the vile conduct of a relative, from whom I had

every reason to expect very different treatment.

"My father was a wealthy merchant, living at Teheran, and I his only daughter. He gave me the name of Abadeh, and spared no expense to render his house and garden—where I lived until I was sixteen years of age—as bright and charming as it is possible for any young girl to desire.

"Nothing I wished for was denied me; and when one day, while on my way to the bath, I saw Suliman, the nephew of the Emir Bargash ibn Beynin of Bagdad, who was visiting Teheran, and could neither rest nor be happy because I was continually thinking of him, my dear father no sooner had learned the cause of my disquiet than he arranged a marriage between us, giving Suliman such a handsome dower with me as made him think himself a very fortunate young man."

Haroun Alraschid, who was a very polite man among ladies, here interposed the remark that Suliman had much cause to consider himself fortunate, irrespective of the dower.

Abadeh, blushing at the Caliph's compliment, continued—

"For a whole year we lived very happily together, when, on the death of my dear father, my husband, no longer having any inducement to remain in Persia, determined to return to his native country.

"After a journey marked by no noteworthy incident, we arrived at length in Bagdad. Hiring a house next to that occupied by my husband's uncle, the Emir Bargash ibn Beynin, we have resided there now nearly a year, in the greatest contentment and happiness, and constantly visited by the Emir, who has always professed to be extremely pleased with our society.

"Yesterday evening, however, he sent one of his female slaves to bid me come at once to his house, as Suliman was suddenly taken ill.

"I was just dressed to receive my dear husband, whose return I every moment expected. I hurried down therefore from my chamber just as I was, forgetting even in my excitement to throw my yashmak over me, and crossing the narrow yard between our houses, I entered the Emir's garden.

"He met me in the midst of the garden, and in answer to my eager inquiry for my

husband, he said: 'You cannot see him, it is too late; he is dead.'

"'Impossible!' I cried; 'it cannot be, take me to him at once. Let me at least try what can be done for him.'

"Then this Emir—this wicked, this infamous man—took me in his arms, in spite of my struggles, and kissed me and said: 'Think no more of Suliman, who is gone, and whom you will not see again. Now you belong to me—I love you, I have loved you for months, and never more shall we part.'

"As he said these things, and I perceived his villainy, which I had never even suspected until that moment, and thought how he had possibly murdered his nephew, of whom he had pretended to be so fond, I fainted off in the arms of the perfidious wretch, who, finding that I continued so long insensible, no doubt concluded that I was dead. Indeed, I remember nothing more until I found myself here in the palace, and most kindly tended and watched. What has become of my dear husband I know not; but oh, sir!" said she, falling down before the Caliph, "find him, find him for me again if it be possible, and punish the Emir as he deserves!"

"Rise," said the Caliph, "rise, beautiful lady, and be comforted. If Suliman be alive he shall be restored to you. And whether he be alive or dead the doom of the Emir is certain."

So saying, he at once went out of the harem, and summoning Giafer, he said: "Send at once and fetch the Emir Bargash ibn Beynin. And let some officers go also and bring hither, if they can find him, Suliman, the nephew of the Emir, who lived in the next house to him."

An hour afterwards the officers returned, and reported that they could find neither the Emir nor, his nephew. The former, taking some of his slaves with him, had left his home about an hour before the arrival of the officers sent to arrest him, and no one knew whither he had gone. While as for his nephew, Suliman, he had left home on the previous day, and had not since been heard of.

When this account was brought to the Caliph, he was furious.

"Go," said he, to the Grand Vizier, "destroy the house of that vile scoundrel, the Emir Bargash ibn Beynin; leave of it not one stick or stone upon another. And bring me both the Emir and his nephew—dead or alive I will have them. Two

days I give you to seek them, and if you fail to find them, by Allah, your head shall not remain above your shoulders."

Giafer trembled at the rage of his master, and went forth out of the palace knowing no more where to look for the Emir and his nephew than did the Caliph himself.

At first he said to himself, "I may as well go home to my own house and set my affairs in order, for in two days I must die, for how can I find in this great kingdom the two men I am in search of? I might as well seek in a sand-heap two particular grains of sand."

However, as he rode along very slowly and moodily, it suddenly occurred to him—"It is at least my duty to do at once that part of the Caliph's order which is feasible." Therefore, sending for the proper workmen, he proceeded immediately to the Emir's house, and superintended its entire demolition.

After some hours' work the house was pulled down, and there remained only some small portion of a very thick wall, which separated the house from some out-buildings. While proceeding with the destruction of this, the workmen came upon a doorway or opening, which had but recently been bricked up, the cement being still damp; and when they had removed this, they discovered a small cell or chamber situated in the thickness of the wall, in which was seated a living man.

He, being brought to the Grand Vizier, declared that he was Suliman, the nephew of the Emir, and said that his uncle—for what cause he knew not—had barbarously caused him to be seized and buried alive where they had found him. He begged that he might be allowed at once to return to his own house, where his wife would be anxiously expecting him.

The Grand Vizier, overjoyed to have thus secured one at least of those whom he had been commanded to apprehend, would not lose sight of him for one moment, but carried him forthwith to the palace.

The Caliph was considerably mollified by the production of Suliman, in whose fate the narrative of Abadeh had so much interested him. He listened with rising indignation to the account Suliman gave of the behaviour of his uncle towards him, and once more ordering the Grand Vizier to find and arrest the Emir, he commanded the Grand Chamberlain to conduct Suliman to the apartment

occupied by Abadeh.

That faithful wife was sitting disconsolate, scarcely daring to hope again to behold her husband, when the Grand Chamberlain, coming softly to the door, ushered in Suliman himself.

We will not attempt to intrude upon the transports of this happy pair in again rejoining each other. At length Suliman learnt from the lips of his wife the motive and object of his inhuman and treacherous uncle, in causing him to be immured in that fatal cell, from which he had been so marvellously released.

But while Suliman and Abadeh were thus discussing the conduct and perfidy of the Emir, the unhappy Grand Vizier had to resume the difficult and hazardous task of discovering his hiding-place. Two circumstances served to encourage him, and to make the execution of the Caliph's order seem somewhat less difficult than it had at first sight appeared. The first circumstance was the wonderful way in which Suliman had been delivered, as it were, into his hands, in the most strange and altogether unexpected manner; and the second circumstance was the fact of the Emir having taken certain slaves away with him. He had no doubt taken away those slaves who had been employed to immure his unfortunate nephew, and with the object of leaving no one who could throw any light on the fate of his victim. Why he had fled was not so clear, but probably some whisper of the resuscitation of his niece at the palace had come to his ears.

Cogitating these things the Grand Vizier returned to his palace, and immediately gave orders that the public criers should make proclamation in every part of the city, that a reward would be given to any one giving information leading to the capture of the Emir Bargash ibn Beynin, namely, two thousand pieces of gold if he were taken alive, and one thousand pieces on the recovery of his body if he were dead.

The next morning, soon after the Grand Vizier had risen, one of his officers came to him and said, "There is a man whom we found very early this morning at the Gate, who desires to speak with your Highness."

The Grand Vizier, divining at once that it might be one of the slaves of the Emir, said, "Bring him in."

When the man was brought in, he prostrated himself before the Grand

Vizier, and said—

"I can tell your Highness where the Emir Bargash ibn Beynin has gone, but promise me first that no harm shall be done me."

"Cursed slave!" cried the Grand Vizier, in the utmost excitement, "inform me instantly where that villain your master is to be found, or by the life of the Caliph I will have you impaled upon the spot."

"My lord," answered the slave, terrified by the impetuosity and threats of the Grand Vizier, "have patience and hear me. Yesterday morning my master took me and three other slaves of his, and going to a khan in a remote part of the city he ordered us to lie down and sleep, or at any rate keep quiet till he called us. During the day he assumed the garb of a merchant, and we heard him arrange with some other merchants, whom he met at the khan, to leave with them very early this morning in a caravan, which sets out with the intention of proceeding towards Persia. Yesterday evening I heard the crier proclaim the reward that you offer for the capture of my master, and therefore during the night I made my escape, and came here. But again I implore you——"

"No more," said the Grand Vizier, interrupting him; "if the Emir escapes your life shall answer it, but if he is captured you shall have the reward, and free pardon for your crimes, be they what they may."

Then calling an officer he ordered him to take a score of horsemen, mounted on the swiftest steeds to be found in his stables, and bring back the master of this slave, and the other slaves that were with him.

The officer bowed and immediately departed, taking with him the slave, in order to be able more certainly to identify the man wanted by the Grand Vizier.

It was not long before the small and well-mounted body of cavalry overtook the caravan, which necessarily travelled very slowly. As soon as the Emir observed them approaching he guessed that they had been sent to apprehend him, and putting spurs to his horse, he attempted to seek safety in flight. The cavalry came on like the wind, the few foremost horsemen passed the caravan safely, but the others getting mixed up with the camels and asses, composing the train of the caravan, who straggled in all directions, being frightened by the noise of the pursuers, a scene of inextricable confusion for some time ensued.

Meanwhile the Emir, who was mounted on a powerful horse, which was fresh, while those of the soldiers were already considerably blown, kept the lead easily, and appeared to have every chance of distancing his pursuers altogether, and effecting his escape, when the Vizier's officer, reining in his horse, discharged an arrow, aimed so accurately that the Emir's horse was wounded. This changed the relative conditions, and before long the Emir, finding that his horse was disabled and could do no more, dismounted, and putting his back against a tree, drew his sword, and prepared to offer stubborn resistance. All his efforts were however in vain; being overpowered by numbers, he was seized and disarmed, but not before he had managed to inflict severe wounds upon two of his assailants.

Having bound him, they returned slowly to the spot where they had left the caravan. This was being gradually restored to order, and the officer collecting his men and securing the slaves and goods belonging to the Emir, left the caravan to proceed again on its way, and hastened back with his prisoner to Bagdad.

Directly the Grand Vizier was informed by a soldier, who was sent on in advance of the party, of the capture of the Emir, he went out at once to meet him, and conducted him straightway to the palace of the Caliph.

At the moment of the Grand Vizier's arrival, Haroun Alraschid was seated on his throne in the splendid chamber of audience, holding a public reception of the Imaums, Viziers, Emirs, Governors of Provinces, and other great functionaries of

his kingdom.

When the Grand Vizier announced to the Caliph that the Emir Bargash ibn Beynin was a prisoner, and awaited under guard the commands of his Majesty, Haroun Alraschid, looking round the audience-chamber with a stern expression of countenance, said, "Let the Emir be conducted into our presence."

And when the Emir, preceded by the Marshal of the Palace and guarded by ten soldiers, entered the magnificent apartment, and stood before his sovereign in the midst of that illustrious assemblage, the Caliph thus addressed him:

"Emir! three times over you have forfeited the life whose opportunities you have abused and the station whose fair name and dignity you have disgraced. You have coveted and attempted to take the wife of your neighbour, and that neighbour a near relative of your own, whom you were bound in honour to cherish and protect. You have attempted to take the life of your nephew, and that in the most atrocious and cold-blooded way. And, finally, you have lied to me, and attempted to deceive your sovereign and the Head of your Faith. Now, therefore, in the face of this assembly I pronounce upon you my sentence. Your honours and your goods are forfeited, and I bestow them upon Suliman, your nephew, against whom you have acted so basely. For yourself, three times shall you ride through Bagdad with your face to the tail of the camel, while the criers make this announcement, 'Behold the reward of an assassin,' and after the third journey they shall smite off your head."

The Caliph then gave Mesrúr the usual sign to remove the prisoner.

After being paraded three times through the streets of Bagdad in the manner the Caliph had ordained, the executioner struck off his head, and thus perished that vile and infamous miscreant, the Emir Bargash ibn Beynin.

The Caliph and the First Jar of Ointment

SECOND ADVENTURE:

THE CALIPH AND ABOU HASSAN.

One evening not long after the execution of the Emir, Haroun Alraschid, when about to indulge in one of his nocturnal rambles, determined again to make trial of the marvellous properties of his magical ointment. Before sallying forth, therefore, with Giafer, always his faithful companion in these adventures, he retired privately to his cabinet and anointed his eyes with a small portion of the contents of the little jar.

Once more on passing through the streets of his capital the interior of the houses and the occupations and amusements of his subjects were revealed to him. In some houses he saw feasting and merriment, in some mourning and death. In the dwellings of the rich there was to be seen fine clothes and jewellery, in the hovels of the poor squalor and rags. And so constantly varied and animated were the scenes which by virtue of the ointment he was enabled to observe, that he walked on for more than an hour without experiencing either fatigue or weariness.

At length, as he was passing a certain mean-looking house in one of the less important thoroughfares, his attention was attracted to a scene which caused him to stop before the house; and, resting in the obscurity of a great recessed doorway on the opposite side of the way, to observe with much interest what took place in the room before him.

It was a large room, and but dimly lighted by a single oil lamp placed upon the table. A great number of packages were lying in a confused heap on one side of the room; and on a raised divan near to the table and facing the door of the apartment sat an old man of no very inviting appearance. About his head he wore an old turban, not very clean and put on in a careless and slovenly manner. His eyes were shielded and concealed by a large green shade, as though the light even of the one oil lamp were too strong for him. His clothes were plain, but much better than his head-gear; his form seemed slight and wiry, and Haroun noticed that his hands, which were small and plump, were adorned with several very handsome and valuable rings.

Between this large room occupied by the figure just described and the door in the wall of the house was a small ante-room or lobby, in which was seated on the bare floor a little ill-looking hump-backed slave, whom the Caliph, whose memory for faces was remarkable, immediately recognized as a mute who had been under the orders of Mesrúr, and who, in consequence, it was supposed, of some punishment inflicted upon him, had fled from the palace some months

previously. The sight of this slave caused Haroun to be additionally curious to learn what might be the business of his present master. The occupation of the mute was obvious. He sat in the lobby at the door of the house ready to open it for any one who might wish to enter.

The Caliph had but few moments to wait before the figure of a man carrying a small bundle crept stealthily up the street and stood at the door. Pressing what looked like the head of a large bolt on the surface of the door, a piece of wood on the inside was slightly raised. On this sign the mute rose, and opening the door just sufficiently wide to allow the man to enter, he closed it quickly, and immediately led the way into the large room where the old man sat by the lamp. The new-comer placed his bundle on the table, and having opened and displayed its contents, which consisted of some jewellery and some pieces of fine cloth, he packed it up again and deposited it with the other packages upon the floor.

The old man, who had sat quite motionless, and whose lips did not once move, proceeded to count out certain coins on to the table; these the other took, also apparently in silence, and forthwith departed, leaving the house and passing down the street in the same stealthy and furtive manner in which he had arrived.

The Caliph and Giafer remained some time concealed thus in the black shadow of the doorway where they were standing; Giafer being half asleep, and supposing his master to be resting where they were simply because he was tired. The Caliph, however, was watching the proceedings of the old man and his slave. One after another half a dozen visitors arrived, were admitted on giving the same signal, showed the contents of their several bundles, deposited them on the same heap, were paid in silence by the old man, and thereupon went their way.

There was no departure from the uniformity of this procedure, excepting that when any one arrived and gave the signal while another was still occupied with the old man, the mute took no notice whatever of the signal, and in every case the man wishing to enter seemed at once to understand why his signal remained unanswered, and waited patiently until the door was opened for the other to depart.

The Caliph, who had at first been somewhat puzzled by the strangely conducted traffic which he here observed, had guessed before long that the actual business of this disreputable old merchant was that of purchasing from the thieves, which

always infest a large town, whatever plunder they might have to dispose of.

There was no haggling as to price. The terms on which the transaction was based were evidently very simple. The thief displayed his wares; the old man paid him what he chose, and clearly the thief, whose market for his ill-gotten goods was likely to be very limited, was satisfied to accept what the buyer chose to award.

The Caliph was not ill-pleased to have discovered the nefarious trade which was being here carried on, and determined to have the house closely watched in future, in the hope of thus noting and securing a great number of the most expert and artful thieves in Bagdad.

As he moved out of the obscurity of the doorway revolving these things in his mind, a ragged and decrepit beggar, who had just dragged himself with slow and weary steps to this spot, begged an alms in the professional whine common to his class. The Caliph gave him a small piece of silver, and then watched him as he crossed the road and entered a dilapidated and wretched hovel, which stood close by the outer wall of the house of the dealer in stolen goods.

The inside of the hovel consisted of one small room, containing no furniture of any kind but a litter of rags in one corner, which evidently served the old beggar as a bed.

The old man, when he had entered and lighted his lamp, pushed some of these rags aside with trembling hands, and raising a piece of the dirty and half-rotten flooring, he produced a stout and rather heavy hag. Out of this he took in succession several smaller hags, each evidently full of money; and having pleased himself with handling and gloating over his treasure, he added the coin which the Caliph had just given him, together with several others, the produce of that day's exertion, to the contents of one of the bags, and then carefully replaced the whole in its hiding-place, and covering the board again with the rags, lay down to sleep.

Three hours had now elapsed since the Caliph had anointed his eyes with the magical ointment, and the increased power of vision it conferred upon him began rapidly to vanish. Therefore he turned to go back to the palace, laughing within himself as he thought, "Thieves, beggars, and misers, a goodly company have I become acquainted with to-night!"

The streets were now silent and deserted, and all honest people were already in

bed and asleep. But he had not proceeded far before he came to a door which was partly open, and through which he could see across a courtyard a great house brightly lighted, and could hear the voices of the guests within very merrily laughing and conversing. Moreover, a very delicious aroma of cooking assailed his nostrils, and reminded him that he was both hungry and tired. Bidding Giafer knock at the door, he told the slave who appeared to go to his master and say that two merchants, strangers in the town, and who had lost their way, craved to be partakers of his hospitality.

Returning shortly, the slave conducted them across the courtyard, and ushered them into a room handsomely furnished and brilliantly lighted, in which ten young men were seated, all very merry and evidently enjoying a plentiful supper, which they washed down with good wine.

One of the ten, evidently the host, a young man with finely formed features and black eyes, bright and piercing, addressed the Caliph and Giafer as they entered.

"Merchants and strangers," said he, "you are welcome to our party. Be seated, I pray you, and by your diligence in eating and drinking, endeavour to make up for the time you have lost."

Then the company having saluted them, and they having saluted the company, by placing their hands across the breast and bowing the head in the customary manner, the Caliph and Grand Vizier sat down, and the slaves who waited continued from time to time to bring them plenty both to eat and to drink.

When the slave who attended on the Caliph had set a handsome goblet of silver before him and had filled it with wine, the Caliph raised the goblet, and said—

"We thank you, gentlemen, and you, sir, especially, who are master of this house, for the welcome you have given us, and your kindness in admitting us to be partakers of your feast. And we beg that you will continue that merry conversation in which we heard you engaged when we ventured to interrupt you and to intrude on your agreeable society."

"Gentlemen," said the host, whose name was Abou Hassan, "you must know that during several evenings on which the present pleasant company have previously assembled, we have entertained each other by a relation of such parts of the history of each of us as the narrators have judged might prove interesting. Just before you entered the eighth of our party had finished an account of his

experiences, which gave rise to the merry discussion which you heard. There now remain but two of us, Murad Essed and myself, who owe our stories to the company, and I will, therefore, by your leave, at once invite Murad to begin."

THE STORY OF MURAD ESSED, THE UNFORTUNATE MERCHANT.

The young man addressed as Murad, and who wore a frank and jovial expression of countenance, began as follows:

"It gives me much pleasure to relate to this good company those vicissitudes and misfortunes which have earned for me the designation of 'The Unfortunate Merchant,' because we shall then be favoured with an account of the history of our host, who has lately been known as 'The Fortunate Merchant.' His good fortune and his great wealth are indeed surprising, and are no more due to the inheritance bequeathed to him by his ancestors than my poverty is owing to what was bequeathed to me by mine. So far is that from being the case, that on the death of my father, who was one of the leading merchants of Bagdad, I found myself the possessor of an immense fortune. It was so large and I was so young and inexperienced that I imagined that it could never be exhausted. I bought a grand house, with fine rooms and wide gardens. Ah! my dear Abou Hassan, this very house where we now are was the house. I fitted it with all kinds of handsome and luxurious furniture. I bought slaves to wait on me, and in my harem; ah! gentlemen, in our dreams we picture nothing better. The Caliph himself might have envied me.

"Well, gentlemen, for two years I lived like a Sultan. I denied myself nothing, and never gave one thought to the expense. At length, one day after completing the sale of a large quantity of merchandize, which had been stored in his warehouses by my father, I was induced to consider the state of my affairs, and I found that in these two years I had expended the half of my fortune.

"This caused me to reflect seriously on my situation and mode of life. At this rate, what with women, wine, and gambling, I should soon have nothing left.

"I determined to reform. I sold a number of my slaves; I reduced my establishment; I became very economical; I gave my little wine parties, as some of you may remember, only once a week instead of every evening.

"But, besides effecting these little alterations, what I principally did was this: I divided my remaining fortune into two equal parts. With the one half I proposed to embark in trade, while I retained the other half to live upon and to provide against accidents.

"Well, the money I devoted to trade I invested in such sorts of merchandize as I judged to be most suitable, and shipping them in a vessel bound for Egypt, I sent with them a letter to an old friend of my father, a merchant living there, asking him to dispose of the goods to the best advantage, and forward to me in return, by the same vessel, such kinds of produce as he thought would prove most saleable in Bagdad.

"Six months passed and I had no tidings of my venture. A year elapsed, and still I heard nothing of it. But, in fine, and not to weary you, having written by another vessel to inquire of my friend, I learnt at length that my goods had arrived safely and had been sold to realize a considerable profit, and that other goods had been shipped to me in return, but the vessel bringing them has never more been heard of, and whether she foundered or was captured by pirates I know not.

"Thus I had spent and lost three-quarters of the fortune left to me by my father, and the remaining fourth was rapidly diminishing under the pressure of current expenses.

"It was at this time, when walking along one day very moodily and in ill-humour, lamenting my extravagance and losses, and cogitating how I might with the small remainder of my capital retrieve my position, that I was accosted by a Seyed Hajji.

"'Sir,' said he, 'I have for many months past often observed you as you walked this way, and during all that time your countenance has been unclouded and merry, but the past few days a great change has come over you, and you walk with downcast eyes, melancholy and preoccupied. If you will tell me what is the trouble that has befallen you, perhaps it may be in my power to render you some assistance.'

"'Holy pilgrim,' said I, laughing, for I was amused by the man's impertinent curiosity respecting my affairs, 'the trouble that has befallen me is very serious, being no other than the loss of the greater part of my fortune. If you can show

me the way of so employing the remainder as to regain what is lost, you are indeed the prince of Hajjis, and such an one as a man can expect to meet with but seldom.'

"My son,' said he, 'I pardon your incredulity, which is very natural. But you should reflect that youth knows less than age; and moreover, that a man like myself who has three times made the pilgrimage to the Holy Cities and to the Tomb of the Prophet, may have learnt some secrets which are hidden from those who have remained at home, and who have spent their time in dissipation and drinking.'

"Holy pilgrim,' I answered, somewhat abashed, 'what you say is very true. Therefore, if you know of any magic or charm by which a man who is nearly ruined may retrieve his fortune, I pray you to disclose it.'

"Gently, my son,' said the Hajji, 'the impulsiveness of youth hurries you too fast. I can tell you no more here in the open bazaar; but come to my house and you shall hear of a way of getting gold which will fairly astonish you.'

"I went, therefore, with the old man, and after passing through the worst part of the town, and along many narrow and dirty lanes, we came at length to a mean and ruinous hovel, into which the Hajji entered.

"When I looked round and saw the extreme poverty of the place, I could not help observing to my companion, that for one possessed of a marvellous method of getting gold, this lodging appeared somewhat unsuitable.

"Do not,' said he, 'jump hastily to conclusions. Listen patiently to what I have to tell you, and this and much else will be explained.'

"Then taking a small flask from a shelf, he held it up before me, and exclaimed, 'Behold the magic water of wealth, by means of which palaces and slaves, and fair ladies, and all that man longs for may be obtained!'

"Then, in a more sober tone, he continued, 'Look, my son, the virtue of the water contained in this flask is such that any metal steeped in it is quickly converted into gold. Of this,' he said, 'I will give you speedy proof.' And so saying, he took a small piece of lead about two ounces in weight, and holding the flask which contained only a small quantity of liquid, at an angle, he slipped the lead in carefully, and setting the flask in a corner and covering it with a cloth to, exclude

the light, he left it thus for about ten minutes, to allow the liquid to permeate the mass, and effect the marvellous transformation.

"Then uncovering the flask, he showed that the liquid had entirely disappeared, and in place of the lump of lead was a lump of pure gold of equal magnitude.

"I was, of course, greatly delighted with this easy process of converting lead into gold, and I demanded eagerly of the Hajji how much of this liquid he possessed, and what he demanded for it.

"'My son,' said he, smiling, 'you are truly very simple. If I had plenty of this magic water, why should I live in the poor place in which you find me? Or why, if I had it, should I part with it for less than its weight in gold—which, indeed, is less than the worth of it? No; I have never had more than what was contained in this one small flask, and the last drop of that I have, as you see, now made use of. But although I have no more of the water, I have a secret of almost equal value. I know where the water came from, and whence it may be obtained. It springs from the bowels of the earth, in a sterile and uninhabited country more than a hundred days' journey from Bagdad. To get there will be both difficult and costly, as one must pass through the territory of a race of Infidels whom one must bribe freely in order to ensure one's safety. The question is, Dare you attempt it, and will you furnish the money for the enterprise?'

"I reflected some time on this proposition, and, finally, seeing no better way of recruiting my shattered fortune, I determined to accompany the Hajji to the country of the fountain of the water of gold.

"In order to raise the funds necessary for this expedition, I sold all that I had; the remainder of my merchandize, my slaves, my furniture, and my house. By this means I obtained a sum amounting to four thousand pieces of gold; and, taking with us only a few camels laden with water-skins to hold the magic water, and two slaves bought by the Hajji, we set out on our journey.

"For three days we pursued our way without incident, and on the evening of the third day after partaking of a good meal and some wine we had brought with us, which the Hajji, owing to his sacred character, would not touch, I laid down under some trees near which our horses and camels were picketed, and slept very soundly. So long did I sleep that when I awoke the sun was high in the heaven. The day was very hot, and the place was very quiet; for looking round I could

see nothing of my Seyed Hajji, of the slaves, the horses, or the camels. All had disappeared, and with them had gone my money also.

"Thus, by the will of Allah, was I reduced to the utmost poverty.

"I made my way back to Bagdad slowly and suffering much hardship. But, thanks to the goodness of Allah, and to my friend Abou Hassan and some others, I lack neither good fellowship nor good living, and although I am styled the unfortunate merchant, I contrive to laugh and be merry in spite of fate, and shall listen with pleasure and without envy to the very different career of Abou Hassan, the fortunate merchant, and our munificent host."

THE STORY OF ABOU HASSAN, THE FORTUNATE MERCHANT.

When Murad Essed had finished speaking all eyes were fixed upon Abou Hassan, who said: "We have all listened with interest to the story of our friend Murad Essed, showing how a rich man may become poor; I have now in my turn to show you, by a relation of my own experience, how a poor man may become rich.

"But in telling you my history, I should weary you if I were to recall all the particulars of my early struggles. It will be sufficient to say that of all that I now possess I inherited nothing, and that only seven years ago I was as badly off as Murad Essed is at present. About that time I became acquainted with an old merchant who imparted to me the secret of the success I have since then obtained. This secret, you will be perhaps somewhat disappointed to learn, consists neither in a charm nor in any kind of magical art or sorcery. It is comprised simply in a particular mode of dealing, and one, in fact, completely opposed to that which is in general use.

"You know that it is the common habit of merchants when they buy anything to offer much less for it, and when they sell anything to ask more for it than the price which they think it is worth. And only after a long time spent in haggling and bargaining, they conclude their business.

"But by the advice of my old friend, the merchant, I adopted, and have constantly adhered to, a totally different plan. When I buy anything I name what I consider to be a fair price for it; the seller either accepts my offer at once and

without discussion, or refuses. No man ever refuses the price I offer more than once, because it is my rule never to deal again with a man who has once refused to deal at my price. In like manner, when I sell anything, I fix the price I will accept and rather destroy the goods than part with them for any other price than that I have put upon them.

"This is the whole secret of my success. My story is, you see, a very brief one; the origin of my fortune appears very simple when I discover it to you; but that the plan, simple as it may seem, has its merits, you may convince yourselves by looking round you."

About Hassan, as he said this, waved his hand, indicating the handsome room in which they were sitting, and beyond it, seen through the gilded arches at the end of the apartment, the garden outside, where the moon, which had now risen, was illuminating with its enchanting light the trees, whose branches were heavy with various fruits, the fountains splashing into their marble basins, and, finally, in the distance, a group of girls of marvellous beauty who had just entered the garden dancing and singing.

"Behold," said he, rising, "the nymphs of paradise beckon us from the banquet and the wine bowl to other pleasures."

But the Caliph, when About Hassan and his other guests had risen from the banqueting-hall to go into the garden, sat lost in reverie.

As About Hassan had waved his hand to direct the attention of his guests to the splendid results of his new system of trading and his magnificent surroundings it flashed upon the mind of the Caliph that he had seen that hand before. The shapely fingers, and the rings containing many precious stones of unusual size and beauty, recalled to him irresistibly the hands of the old man with his face shielded by the huge green shade over his eyes, whom he had been watching earlier in the evening.

So About Hassan, the Fortunate Merchant, the young and sparkling host of this gay party, was identical with the villainous purchaser of stolen goods, whose base pursuits the ointment had revealed to him. The new plan of naming one price and taking no other had been practised only with those who feared justice and practised robbery.

The Caliph, absorbed in these thoughts, observed nothing that was going on

about him until Abou Hassan approached him, and, addressing him, personally requested him to rise and accompany himself and his friends into the garden.

Then the Caliph, rising and thanking Abou Hassan for his hospitality, declared that now the moon was up he must pursue his journey, and, taking leave together with Giafer, he left the house of the Fortunate Merchant and returned immediately to the palace.

The next evening, being desirous to continue his observation of the prosperous though illicit trade of the Fortunate Merchant, the Caliph stationed himself as before with Giafer in the dark recess of the arched gateway opposite the room to which the thieves resorted.

At first the room was empty. A number of parcels still lay strewn upon the floor; the table was there, and the lamp stood upon it, burning with a small and dim flame that lighted the place badly, but the mysterious and silent figure with his slovenly turban, great green shade over the eyes, and with the small hands and bejewelled fingers, was absent. The Caliph could see the misshapen mute lying in the ante-room perfectly motionless and taking not the slightest notice of the usual signal given two or three times by men who came furtively to the door desiring to enter.

At length, just as the Caliph was beginning to speculate whether the man could possibly have become suspicious and have effected his escape, Abou Hassan came quickly along the street, hastening evidently to the house where he was to assume his disguise and enter on his business. As he arrived almost exactly opposite to the spot where Haroun and Giafer were standing in the obscurity of the great gateway, there approached from the right or opposite direction that same old beggar and miser who had accosted the Caliph on the previous evening. On perceiving some one before him he began immediately to solicit alms in the whining tone common to his class.

"An old man," he said, "a very old man, my lord, ragged, hungry, without shelter."

Abou Hassan, as he heard the voice, exclaimed—

"What! is it thou, my father? How often have I entreated thee to accept a provision for thine age which I can so well spare?"

"Speak no more of it, my son," said the old man with vehemence and in quite another tone of voice to that he had employed before. "I knew thee not, or would have asked nothing of thee, and will accept nothing from thee. From the hands of him whose lips are stained with wine, who has spurned the precepts of the Prophet and forgotten the lessons of his youth, I will accept no favour, and will give to him no blessing."

"Go, then, old precisian!" exclaimed Abou Hassan, fiercely; "cling to disgrace, and practise beggary; and yet, remember, one word can change your state, banish poverty, and summon plenty."

The old man proceeded on his way, muttering inaudibly, and Abou Hassan stood watching his retreating figure.

After a few moments of apparent indecision he followed the old man. When the latter entered the miserable hovel in which the Caliph had observed him on the previous evening, Abou Hassan, after a short pause, pushed open the door and entered also.

Haroun, who was curious to learn what passed between the beggar and his son, followed Abou Hassan along the street, and with Giafer and Mesrúr entered the house immediately after him.

The old man, who was rather deaf, had not heard his son enter. And when the Caliph and his two companions followed noiselessly and stood in the deep shadow of the entry, they saw the old man kneeling on the floor, and holding in his trembling hands the bag containing his little hoard, to which he was adding some small coins received that day. Abou Hassan stood looking down upon him with an expression of contemptuous amusement.

After gazing silently for a few moments at the kneeling figure he exclaimed, "So, so, the beggar therefore plays the miser also! You spurn my offers, and, refusing gold and ease and leisure, hug that poor bag of worthless copper in this filthy den."

So saying, he kicked contemptuously the bag which the old man, terrified at the apparition of his son, still held in his hand, and its contents were thrown upon the floor.

At this the old man gave a loud yell, and calling out "Thieves, thieves, they are

robbing me! they are robbing me!" began to scramble about after the scattered coins.

About Hassan, springing upon him and whispering fiercely, "Villain! wretch! who is robbing thee? Wouldst thou bring the neighbours upon me?" pulled out a dagger, and would in his fury have stabbed his father had not the Caliph at that instant made a sign to Mesrúr, who seized his arm and held him fast. But About Hassan, who was a young and very vigorous man, struggled violently, and, managing for one moment to free his right arm, he stabbed himself to the heart.

Thus perished the Fortunate Merchant, closing, as so many do, a life of crime by a death of violence.

The next day the Caliph ordered About Hassan's house and all that he had possessed to be confiscated. The house and gardens, which were exceedingly magnificent, he retained for his own occasional use, while the immense quantities of valuable goods stored in the warehouses belonging to About Hassan he ordered to be sold, and the proceeds to be distributed, one half to the mosques of the city, and the other half to the poor.

Upon the old beggar and miser, who steadfastly refused to take any part of his son's great wealth, the Caliph conferred a small pension, sufficient to provide for the few wants of one so long accustomed to a life of hardship. Indeed, so strong is the force of habit, that at his death, a few years later, he was found to have saved a considerable portion even of this small annuity.

The Caliph and the Second Jar of Ointment

Finding that but little of the ointment was left in the first and larger of the two jars which he had purchased of Abdurrahman, Haroun Alraschid put it away in his cabinet, determining to use no more of it until some occasion of pressing need should arise. And sending for his treasurer he commanded him to produce the second and smaller of the two jars, that he might open it and ascertain the virtue possessed by the ointment in that jar.

As in the case of the former jar, he found immediately within the second jar when he opened it a narrow strip of parchment, on which was written:

"Hail to thee, purchaser of this ointment most marvellous and magical! Rub but a little of it behind each of thine ears and thou shalt forthwith understand the language of all birds and beasts, even as Solomon, the great king and the wisest of men, understood them. Nevertheless, at the first word of human speech that thou utterest after thou hast applied the ointment the power of understanding the speech of birds and of beasts shall depart from thee. For so it is decreed by the maker of the ointment according to the nature of the magical art in conformity with which it is compounded."

When the Caliph had read these words and reflected how small a quantity of ointment the little jar contained, and how precarious was the power it conferred, liable as it was to be extinguished at any moment by a hasty word, he determined to refrain from testing it until a suitable occasion should present itself. Placing it therefore in a small chest or coffer, he entrusted it to a certain slave, whom he ordered to carry it carefully and be in attendance with it at all times, so that whenever the opportunity of making trial of its virtue should arrive the ointment might be at hand and in readiness.

About this time it happened that Zobeideh, Haroun's favourite wife, had prepared a magnificent entertainment at the splendid palace which the Caliph had erected for her. And, as it happened, the next evening after Haroun had opened the second jar of ointment, he attended Zobeideh's entertainment. As he entered the gardens of the palace he perceived Zobeideh seated on a raised seat or throne in the middle of the garden, with groups of her women in their most gorgeous apparel surrounding her. They all rose and went forward to meet the Caliph as he entered, while others, scattered in parties about the grounds, made a concert of vocal and instrumental music for his diversion. As he seated himself on the throne with Zobeideh by his side the scene was very charming. The arcades enclosing the gardens with their marble and gilded columns were festooned with many coloured lights, lanterns hung in the trees, illuminating the gardens and the lofty fountains, which broke into ten thousand sparkling jewels and fell splashing into the wide marble basins at their base.

After sitting for some time watching this brilliant scene the Caliph rose and wandered slowly through the grounds, until at length he came to a grove of trees, so artfully enclosed by gilded lattice work concealed by climbing plants that it formed an aviary vast in size and filled with birds of every kind and hue. In this delightful retreat a natural concert greeted him of feathered songsters darting to and fro and singing lustily.

Two little silktails perched upon a neighbouring branch particularly attracted his attention. He had seated himself on a mossy bank in a retired nook, close by the spot chosen by the chatterers for their lively and very animated conversation. Being curious to know what they were talking of, and convinced that the present offered as favourable an opportunity for listening to bird-talk as any he was likely to meet with, the Caliph ordered the slave who carried it to bring him at once the little jar of ointment, and applying some behind each ear as the writing contained in the jar had directed, he prepared to maintain a strict silence and listen attentively. As soon as he had applied the ointment he found that he understood the conversation of his little neighbours as clearly as though they had been expressing themselves in the purest Arabic.

"What!" said the one bird to the other, "is it possible that you can be so deluded and mistaken? Desire to be a man! I am truly surprised and shocked at so absurd and degrading a notion. If now you had expressed a wish to be one of the nobler animals, a lion or a tiger, for instance, I might have excused you. But a man! Only consider how low in the scale of creation the creature is! Not only is he confined to the earth like other animals, and unable to range as we do through the air, but consider how miserable a slave he is, how he has to toil from morning to night to supply his mere necessities. No wonder his throat gives forth only harsh and unmeaning sounds, instead of the nobler roar of the lion or the bright and cheering song notes of us birds! Moreover, the unfortunate creature is evidently cursed by Allah, being alone among all creatures left naked and defenceless. The beasts have warm and beautiful coats of fur provided for them, and they find their food without work or toil. While as for ourselves, we find insects and grubs and worms all delicious eating, and that without stint or trouble; and as regards the covering of our bodies, I think without vanity these lovely feathers are not only as warm as the fur of animals, but much prettier and more becoming."

Saying this, the silktail looked back over her glossy and radiant plumage with such a self-satisfied glance as made the Caliph smile.

"Whereas," she continued, "that unfortunate creature, man, being left by bountiful Nature naked and cold, has to cover himself as best he may with a sorry patchwork of shreds and tatters such as he can contrive to procure either from vegetable fibres, the tissue of silkworms, or the furs or feathers he is driven to secure by force or stratagem either from beasts or from ourselves. In almost every particular the wretched creature is a mere drudge, slaving continually for

others and getting nothing by his toil for himself. Who planted this charming grove, who waters and tends it? Man. And who enjoys the use and benefit of it? Surely ourselves. Who made the pretty lattice-work that encloses it?"

"And shuts us in," said the other.

"And shuts the falcon and the vulture out," continued the first speaker; "why, our poor friend and servant, man. And do you desire to share that servitude?"

"My dear mother," replied the other bird, "I admit that what you say of man is for the most part very true; in many things he appears to act with great stupidity. For instance, he has planted this pleasant grove and supplies it with water, and has fenced it in very carefully, and for no purpose apparently or any use that it is to him. He comes now and then and looks at his work without uttering a sound, as mute as a fish and not half so active and joyous. And yet, though he is a melancholy drudge enough, he effects great things. By his very weakness and his naturally defenceless condition he has been rendered so cunning and so full of contrivances that he manages to subdue even those free and noble animals, the lion, the tiger, and the leopard, and to capture and destroy even such mighty birds of prey as the vulture and the eagle. See, too, what huge and surprising nests he is able to fashion, such as that hard by this very grove."

"My child," said the mother bird, "you confuse the ruler of these animals with those over whom he rules. The one has indeed a fine nest and an easy life, but the others are lodged very differently, and labour from morning till night."

"I confess," said the younger bird, "that it was rather of the prince than of his subjects that I was thinking when I wished to be a man. Only consider how enviable a position he enjoys, with so many beings under his command, and with so many fine gardens to live and take his pleasure in."

"And with so charming and faithful a wife to prepare entertainments for him," said the older bird, sarcastically. "I wonder how the prince you foolishly envy would have looked if he had seen her only yesterday evening as we did with another man at her feet?"

"Allah! is it true?" thundered out Haroun Alraschid, in a terrible rage.

The sudden movement and exclamation frightened the little birds, who flew swiftly away. A matter of the less consequence, as the Caliph had by speaking

destroyed the spell, and could have understood no more of the dialogue even had it continued. But he was in fact far too angry and excited at the moment to notice this or anything else.

Clapping his hands to summon his slaves and attendants, he commanded the palace of Zobeideh to be instantly surrounded, and all who might be found therein at once to be made prisoners. This hasty measure produced, as might have been expected, no results. No one was arrested but those belonging to Zobeideh's household, and all, as a matter of course, professed entire ignorance of the entrance at any time whatever of any man within the sacred precincts of Zobeideh's palace.

Haroun, in the first transports of his rage, contemplated ordering every man in Bagdad between fifteen and fifty years of age to be executed. But the Grand Vizier having hinted that some difficulty might be experienced in executing so wholesale an order, and, moreover, that the actual culprit might very probably even in that case manage to effect his escape, the Caliph decided to cause Zobeideh to be brought before him that he might interrogate her himself.

When that unhappy princess entered, and, throwing herself at his feet, asked him in what way she had offended or aggrieved his Majesty, Haroun reproached her bitterly.

"Woman," said he, "have I not loaded you with favours, and bestowed upon you with unstinting hand all that your imagination could fancy or your heart desire? Ungrateful, like all your race; faithless, like all your sex; you have fawned upon me to my face, and betrayed me behind my back. Say, is it not so?"

"My lord," she answered, "whoever has told you aught to my discredit has foully lied. I have ever been faithful to your Majesty, and happy is the man, be he prince or slave, who has a wife no less faithful than I have been."

"Accursed woman!" retorted Haroun, fiercely, "notwithstanding this confident tone on your part, I know you to be guilty; therefore tell me at once who was that man whom you dared to receive in your garden yesterday, or, by Allah! into the Tigris in a sack you shall go as though you were but the meanest of my slaves."

Zobeideh, perceiving from these words that concealment was impossible, and well knowing from the fiery temper of the Caliph that he was quite capable of executing his threat to the letter, replied as follows:

"Since the Commander of the Faithful has discovered, I know not how, that I gave audience to a man yesterday in the garden of my palace, I will confess to the Commander of the Faithful, to whom all things are revealed, the name of the man whom I saw. It was Hunoman, my foster-brother. He is the son of my nurse, and we were brought up together as young children, and loved each other as children love, the sister the brother, and the brother the sister. At seven years of age, his father having died, an uncle took him to India. Only two days since he returned, and, learning this from the old nurse, his mother, I became desirous to see once more the little playfellow of my childhood, to behold the man I had always thought of as a brother, and hear from his own lips an account of the countries and peoples he had visited, the dangers he had encountered, and the manner in which he had contrived to escape from them. I heard that he had brought some rare and valuable presents for me. I determined that he should present them in person. In this I did wrong, but, in the name of the most merciful God, I appeal to the Caliph for mercy, both for my foster-brother, who consented to see me only after much persuasion and with the utmost unwillingness, and also for myself, who am guilty of no other sin than the indulgence of curiosity, which is a sin that so magnanimous a king as your Majesty will be able to pardon in a woman."

Haroun, who thought that Zobeideh was now telling the truth, and who was in truth by no means displeased to find his suspicions concerning her conduct to be unfounded, asked with great calmness—

"What said you is the name of this man?"

"His name," said Zobeideh, "is Hunoman."

"And where is he to be found? for I must see him."

"He is staying at present with his mother, Sivere, my nurse, to whom I have given a small house near the river side."

The Caliph clapped his hands, and to the officer who entered he said—

"Go at once and bring Sivere, a woman belonging to the household of the Lady Zobeideh, and her son, who is called Hunoman, and who is at present staying with her."

The officer saluted and went out, saying to himself as he went, "The Lady

Zobeideh he terms her. Her affairs go well. She is a clever woman and knows how to humour the Caliph. Soon she will be again the prime favourite, and more powerful than ever."

When the officer returned with Hunoman and his mother, the latter was conducted to an apartment in that part of the palace which was set apart for the women, while Hunoman himself was at once brought into the presence of the Caliph.

Haroun, looking sternly at Hunoman, who was a stout man of middle height, and not unprepossessing appearance, said—

"I have been informed of your temerity in entering a certain garden, into which you must have known very well that it was fatal to you to enter. But, before passing such a sentence upon you as you must feel that you deserve, I desire to hear the particulars of your career, and what you may have to urge in your defence."

Hunoman prostrated himself before the Commander of the Faithful and replied as follows:

THE STORY OF HUNOMAN.

"Oh, Prince of the Faithful, whose life may Allah prolong, the story of the life of your slave, who is incapable of even thinking of aught that should touch the honour of your Majesty, is very full of dangers and escapes.

"At the age of seven years I was taken by my uncle, Amanoolla, to the country of the Emperor of the Indies, from which I have but just returned.

"My uncle was a worker in gold and silver, and so expert at his craft that he never lacked work, and was enabled, not only to support his family with ease, but to save money. He had a son named Omeda, and as we grew up, Amanoolla taught us both the art of fashioning all kinds of ornaments in the precious metals. But beside his son Omeda, my uncle had also a daughter, Bebee, who was one of the most beautiful girls man can possibly imagine. From the time we were all children together I had entertained the hope or dream of one day making her my wife. Therefore, when I was already seventeen years of age and a good workman, I ventured to ask my uncle to give me Bebee, my cousin, for my wife.

But my uncle was very wroth, and said—

"My daughter, who is fourteen, and more beautiful than any young girl for fifty miles round, may expect to be the wife of a rajah or even of a sovereign prince, and not of a young workman without ten pieces of silver.'

"With that, Amanoolla, fearing to have me any longer so near his daughter, bade me begone and earn my living by my craft in some other part of the country.

"I departed, therefore, and leaving with sorrow my uncle and Omeda, and especially the neighbourhood of the charming Bebee, I travelled until I came to a town twenty days' journey from them, and there I remained working at my trade, very taciturn, very lonely, and unable to forget my disappointment.

"In the town in which I had settled there lived a wealthy Rajah, Gholab Khan, for whom I often made various ornaments both of gold and of silver.

"Thus it came to pass that Sojah, his principal wife, saw me through a lattice window on several occasions when I carried the ornaments I had made to the palace of the Rajah. And, unhappily, she took a most violent fancy to me.

"One day, as I sat at my work, a female slave entered, and said—

"Hunoman, happy man that you are, listen to me. My mistress, who is no other than Sojah, the wife of Gholab Khan himself, has seen you and likes you. She has sent me, therefore, to say, to-morrow morning about the time of morning prayer two slaves will come to you bringing with them a large basket with hangings for one of the rooms in the palace. Get into the basket and fear nothing, for the slaves will bring you to me.'

"When the messenger from Sojah had gone I could do no more work that day for thinking of the adventure which awaited me on the morrow. I went out and wandered about the town until late, but even when at last I lay down for a long time I could get no sleep. However, when it became light I at last fell asleep, and so heavily that it was late when I woke.

"I was scarcely dressed, and it was nearly time to expect the slaves of Sojah with the big basket, when two slaves sent by the Rajah himself appeared, and saying their master wanted me, hurried me off to the palace. I was greatly frightened from apprehension that the Rajah had by some means discovered his wife's

intention and was taking summary measures to defeat it. To my great relief, instead of being taken before the Rajah or ordered forthwith to execution, I was shown into a small room in which I sometimes worked, and told immediately to complete some repairs for some of the ladies of the household.

"At the time I congratulated myself that matters were no worse, but they were bad enough for me as the sequel proved. For when Sojah's two slaves got to the palace and informed their mistress that they had called for me as arranged, but that they could not find me, she became as furious as a tigress baulked of her prey. She did not doubt that I had slighted her and kept out of the way on purpose to avoid her messengers. She determined to be revenged.

"A few days afterwards, therefore, her two slaves with the large basket suddenly appeared at my shop, and seizing me, they instantly gagged me, bound me, threw me into the basket, and carried me off to their mistress.

"The two slaves knocked at a little door leading to a small garden attached to the harem of the Rajah's palace; and taking the basket into a secluded part of the garden they set it down, and lifting me out they laid me gagged and bound as I was upon the grass. They then retired; and Sojah, who had been watching all they did through a lattice, now came to me, and began to upbraid me as I lay gagged and helpless on the ground.

"'Wretch,' she said, 'who hast dared to slight a woman who deigned to condescend to take notice of so mean a thing as thou art, unworthy of the form of a man; I will instantly deprive thee of it! So saying, she took a handful of dust and, pronouncing over it the words: 'Kahoothie Kaventho,' she threw it upon me, exclaiming, 'Quit the shape of man and take that of a horse!'

"Immediately I was changed into the animal she mentioned, and calling her slaves, she commanded them to take me at once to the stable and there to secure me. And this cruel and vindictive woman, not content with having deprived me of human form and converted me into a four-footed dumb creature, would frequently come into the stable where I was, and after ordering her slaves to secure me firmly would beat me savagely, uttering all the time torrents of vituperation and abuse.

"For some months I had to endure all the miseries which the malignant humour of Sojah could inflict upon me. At length, seizing the first opportunity which

offered for making my escape, I managed to throw the slave who was riding me, and fled with the speed of the wind. After galloping for many coss, I became completely exhausted, and lay down in an open field near the roadside to rest.

"I had not lain there many minutes, and was still panting and blown, when I saw a party of rough-looking men advancing. Two of them were mounted, and these rushing upon me before I could rise and make off, they easily secured me and took me along with them. The two mounted men having sold me to one of those on foot, soon afterwards left us, and I proceeded in company with the others, carrying my new master on my back.

"I soon discovered that the men who had seized me, and who took me home with them to their village, formed part of a gang belonging to a religious sect known in some parts of the country by the name of Thugs or deceivers, and in other parts of the country by the name of Phansigars or stranglers. I had thus an opportunity, such as no man in human form could have, of observing their idolatrous religion and revolting practices. These wretches worship a patron goddess, the deity of destruction, called Kalee. Their trade from father to son for generations is murder and robbery, and they believe that their goddess, to whom they offer part of their plunder, surrenders into their hands every one of their unhappy victims.

"I had not long been with them before a day was appointed for the celebration of one of their religious, or rather superstitious, rites. This was the consecration of the holy pickaxe, the implement always used by these men for burying those whom they have slain. A fakir, versed in all the learning of the Thugs, was seated, when the auspicious day arrived, with his face turned to the west, and placed the pickaxe in a brass dish which was set before him. In this he proceeded to wash the axe, with four solemn and several washings. First, in water; secondly, in a mixture of sugar and water; thirdly, in sour milk; and fourthly, in spirit. These four ablutions being finished, the fakir replaced in the brass dish the pickaxe together with a cocoa-nut, some cloves, white sandal-wood, and sugar. Then kindling a fire of dried cow-dung and mango-wood, the fakir taking the pickaxe, and holding it in both hands, passed it seven times through the fire.

"The pickaxe, being now duly consecrated, was taken by Jowahir, my master, who, holding it by the point, said, 'Thugs, shall I strike?' then as they said, 'Strike, Jemadar!' he struck the cocoa-nut with the butt end of the pickaxe and broke the nut in pieces. This was hailed by all as a propitious omen from the

great Bhowanee or goddess, and a part of the nut having been burnt in the fire, portions of the rest of it were given to all the men present, and the rite was at an end.

"The pickaxe having thus been prepared, it only remained to make use of it; and accordingly, on the following day in the morning, Jowahir as their leader, holding the pickaxe to his breast by the left hand, and a brass jug filled with water in his right hand, moved slowly in the direction indicated by the fakir, to a field outside the village, and there standing with his gang assembled about him, he lifted his eyes toward heaven, and said: 'Great Goddess, universal mother! if this our meditated expedition be fitting in thy sight, vouchsafe us help, and the signs of thy approbation.' All present repeated this prayer after Jowahir, and then waited for the omens or auspices.

"Within a quarter of an hour the omen on the left hand, which must be first heard, and which they term Pilhaoo, was vouchsafed to them. An ass brayed, which they took to be a very good omen. And when very soon afterwards another ass brayed upon the right hand, furnishing them with Thibao, or the omen on the right hand, their satisfaction was very great, for they said openly that after omens so favourable success was absolutely assured.

"Jowahir now put down the jug containing water upon the ground, and sitting down beside it remained in that posture, and with his face turned in the direction in which they were to proceed, for the space of seven hours, during which time the others made all things ready for the journey.

"When at length they started Jowahir mounted on my back, and I being the only horse they had, the rest of the party walked.

"For two days they proceeded on their journey without meeting any travellers; and on the second day, therefore, they detached two of the gang, Bular and Khosala, to act as their Bykureea or spies, to endeavour to discover any parties of travellers who might be staying at the serais or inns, or traversing the roads in that neighbourhood.

"In the afternoon the spies returned, and reported that in a serai not far off they had found a party of three travellers who were resting, and proposed to start the next morning at daybreak to proceed on their journey along the highroad to the north.

"Upon receiving this intelligence, Jowahir himself and Oozerah, another of the band, went forward to the serai to act the part of Sothas or inveiglers, and try and persuade the travellers to leave the high-road and take some other road leading through the jungle, and more suited to the Thugs' atrocious designs.

"When we arrived at the serai Jowahir saluted the travellers, one of whom was an old man, while the other two were men in the prime of life.

"Jowahir, after conversing some time upon indifferent subjects, said, that he was journeying northwards, and that he had intended to have proceeded along the direct road to Oulinpore, the next large town; but that he had been told by some merchants who had just come southwards by that road, that provisions were so dear and water so scarce, that he had determined to make a slight detour to avoid that part of the road. The three merchants, who had themselves intended to proceed by the direct road to Oulinpore, were naturally interested in Jowahir's decision, and began to discuss warmly the merits of the two routes.

"As they were talking the rest of the gang made their appearance, and acted as though entire strangers to Jowahir and Oozerah as well as the others. The two younger travellers agreed with Jowahir that it would be wiser to avoid the direct road to Oulinpore; but the old man was for keeping to that road as they had intended to do. When the rest of the gang arrived, they were informed of the question in dispute, and they at first supported the old man's view energetically, and declared that they were resolved like him to keep to the direct road.

"At length, however, after much talking they affected to give in and to become convinced by Jowahir's representations and arguments. Seeing them all now united against him, the old man could hold out no longer, and submitted his judgment to that of the others. It was late before this agreement was arrived at, and all lay down to rest, promising to start together at daybreak next morning.

"Very early indeed, and long before daybreak, Jowahir roused the whole party, and persuading them that being tired they had overslept themselves, and that the day was just about to break, he got them at once on the way.

"He confessed after a while that he must have been in error, and that it was really earlier than he had supposed. 'No matter,' said he, 'we shall have made all the better progress by the time the sun has risen.'

"In fact, before the sun was hot upon them, they had got far into the jungle, and

were at a great distance from any other human beings.

"At length, when they approached the half-dried-up bed of a stream through which they must ford, Jowahir proposed that they should first sit down by the margin and rest and eat before proceeding further. This proposal was readily agreed to by all. But by the side of each of the three hapless and unsuspecting travellers, there sat down in apparent amity and good fellowship two members of the gang, one of whom was really the Ghumgeea or holder of hands, while the other was the Phansigar or strangler.

"Suddenly, and without affording the poor wretches a moment's warning, on a sign from Jowahir, the holder of hands seized on the man with whom he was amicably conversing, and the strangler, passing the roomal round his neck with the speed of lightning, strangled him in an instant."

"What," asked the Caliph, "is a roomal?"

"It is," replied Hunoman, "simply a strip of cloth. Although the stranglers are termed Phansigars, from phansee, a noose of cord, yet in practice they scarcely ever use a cord, which if it were found upon them would at once betray and convict them; they employ instead, to effect their murderous purpose, the roomal, a strip of cloth which appears innocent and harmless enough—it might be a turban or a waist cloth—but which in their expert and practised hands is equally effectual.

"After killing the travellers, stripping them, and burying the bodies, the murderers and thieves divided the few coins and other property found upon them. But when making this division in certain proportions according to their usage, these strange monsters did not neglect to set apart a small sum as an offering to Kalee their goddess; and when, after this and several other murders, all characterized by similar features of treachery and baseness, they returned to their village, they proceeded at once to celebrate Tapoonee, or a solemn rite of their most vile idolatry.

"A cloth was spread upon a clean spot of ground. Upon this cloth was placed the consecrated pickaxe and a piece of silver as an offering to the goddess. On the cloth Jowahir took his place, and seated with him also on the cloth were seven Phansigars or stranglers, no Ghumgeea, or any member of the gang of a grade inferior to an actual and experienced strangler, being admitted to sit on the cloth.

"Jowahir then took some goor or sugar, which had been purchased with that part of the plunder set apart for the goddess, and placed it reverently in a hole in the ground. Having so done, he clasped his hands devoutly and prayed as follows: 'Great Goddess, we pray thee to grant us plunder, as thou hast to our fathers before us, and fulfil our desires.'

"All repeated this prayer, and a portion of the goor or sacred sugar having been given to each of those who sat on the cloth, Jowahir gave the signal for strangling, as though a murder were about to be committed, upon which they eat in solemn silence the portions of goor they had received, washing it down with a draught of water. Thus ended the Tapoonee or sacred feast.

"I will not weary and disgust your Majesty by relating all the series of monotonous crimes or superstitious observances which I saw during the two years I remained with these people.

"When that period had elapsed, and while engaged in prosecuting the third expedition which they had undertaken since I had been with them, a circumstance occurred which resulted in freeing me from my miserable and degraded condition, and restoring me to the form and dignity of a human being.

"One day, a day ever memorable to me, the spies returned and announced to Jowahir the Jemadar and our gang of bandits, that they had met advancing along the road towards our present encampment a party of travellers whose appearance promised a rich booty. These travellers consisted of a Rajah, whose name they had ascertained to be Gholab Khan, who was on a journey accompanied by his wife and about a dozen servants.

"This news, which powerfully affected me, was the occasion of a vast deal of discussion and recrimination among the band of Thugs. Some were for awaiting the arrival of the Rajah, and requesting to be allowed to travel in his company for the sake of protection, after which the first favourable opportunity might be taken to murder the whole party and seize all the money and rich clothes and stores they would be sure to have with them. As far as numbers were concerned, this enterprise was quite feasible, for the gang of Jowahir Jemadar, or our gang, as I may term it, had met with and joined the gang of Ramphul Jemadar, and together they counted nearly thirty men.

"But the two Jemadars differed entirely as to the course to be pursued. While

Ramphul advocated joining and murdering the Rajah and his party, Jowahir, on the other hand, contended that as it was absolutely forbidden by the principles of their religion to kill a woman, therefore, the wife of the Rajah being with him, the party ought to be permitted to escape.

"'If once,' he said, 'Phansigars, abandoning their immemorial traditions, took to killing women, or disregarding omens, what good luck could they expect, or how could they escape capture and destruction?'

"The dispute waxed hot, and continued until the spies announced the near approach of the Rajah and his party, on which they hurriedly agreed as a compromise that they should join if possible the Rajah's party, and afterwards either slay or spare them as might be by further discussion determined.

"Having despatched about half their men in advance, that their numbers might not appear too formidable and perhaps alarm the travellers, the two Jemadars waited, in their assumed character of peaceful and timid merchants, the arrival of Gholab Khan.

"On seeing him they saluted him respectfully, and, professing great uneasiness concerning the lonely and little-frequented character of that part of the country which lay immediately before them, they begged as a great favour to be allowed to join his party.

"To this request Gholab Khan very readily acceded, and the united party proceeded amicably together, the Rajah and the two Jemadars riding and conversing with each other, while the rest of the Thugs accompanied and made themselves very agreeable to the Rajah's followers. The latter were armed, whereas the peaceful and inoffensive-looking Thugs carried no weapon, but had with them only the innocent roomal, which they knew how to wield when the moment should arrive with such swift and fatal dexterity.

"Now when Sojah, the Rajah's wife, peeping from her palanquin, saw me, she instantly recognized me, and telling her husband that she had taken a great fancy to the merchant's horse, because it so much resembled one she had lost two years previously, she begged him to buy it for her.

"The Rajah, always anxious to oblige his wife, who had great influence over him, began at once to negotiate with Jowahir. And the latter, who wished to keep on good terms with his destined victim, was persuaded very easily to exchange

me for another horse offered him by the Rajah and ten pieces of silver. I thus passed once more into the possession of the cruel and vindictive Sojah.

"This filled me with despair, and I looked forward with dread to a repetition of the barbarous treatment I had before endured at her hands. But time had apparently softened her resentment, and changed her feelings towards me. Perhaps she thought that the misery I had undergone during more than two years would render me more complaisant and ready to yield to her desires; at any rate, she received me with joy and treated me with kindness, and, taking an opportunity that same evening to come alone to the place where I was picketed with the other horses, she stooped down, and taking a handful of dust she threw it over me, pronouncing the same magical formula as before, and then bade me leave that form of a horse and resume my own proper shape as a man.

"Immediately the transformation took place. But, well knowing that the Rajah and his whole party were doomed to almost inevitable destruction by the large gang of Thugs in whose company they then were, I perceived that my only chance of escape lay in turning the magical art of this vile woman against herself. Therefore, no sooner had I resumed my natural shape, and stood before her once more in the form of a man, than I bowed low as though to salute her with the greatest deference, and suddenly seizing a handful of dust I threw it over her, pronounced the magical words: 'Kahoothie Kaventho,' and said, before she could recover from her surprise, 'Quit the shape of woman of which you are unworthy and take that of a mare.' What the nature of the charm might be, or by the aid of what demon the change took place, I know not; at any rate the incantation was effectual, and as I pronounced the words, Sojah disappeared and a beautiful mare stood before me.

"Without the loss of a moment I saddled and bridled her, and rode off, at first slowly and quietly, but afterwards as fast as possible along the road we had just come, and in the opposite direction to that which was to be taken early next morning by the Rajah and my late master, Jowahir.

"I had been riding for more than an hour, and was still proceeding very rapidly, when my mare suddenly stumbled and threw me over her head on to the ground. I fell heavily and must have remained a long time unconscious, for when I came to myself I found myself lying on a soft rug in a small apartment in which two other men were sitting. These men, as I afterwards discovered, were priests of one of the heathen religions of that country, and the house in which I now lay was close to the temple containing the idol or image of the god whom they worshipped. The name of the older of these priests was Soobulda, and that of the younger, Esuree; and although idolaters, they saved my life, and showed me as long as I was with them no little kindness.

"They had found me lying senseless on the road, and had carried me to their house which was close by, and on my recovering consciousness they invited me to stay for some days until I should desire to resume my journey. I accepted their invitation all the more gladly because I had no money and knew not where to go.

"But what chiefly troubled me, as it would have done your Majesty or any true believer, was to see these men prostrate themselves before the wooden image which was their idol.

"One night, therefore, while Soobulda and Esuree slept, I went into the temple and threw down the idol.

"Next morning early, Soobulda came to me and said, 'A great calamity has befallen us, for the god is wroth, and his image is cast down and lies upon the floor of the temple.'

"Then I answered, comforting Soobulda, and said, 'It is no matter, only take the image and put it in its place again, and all will be well.'

"Three times I threw down the image, and three times Soobulda came in the morning, and told me what had been done. The third time Soobulda and Esuree came both of them together, and accused me of having thrown it down.

"Then I said: 'Why, what sort of a feeble creature must this god of yours be, if these three times I can cast down his image, and he remain unable to prevent me or to punish me?'

"After that I told them of Allah, the true God, and of Mohammed, the Prophet of

God. And the two priests believed, and left the idol lying on the ground where I had thrown it down.

"Fearing to remain any longer in that part of the country, Soobulda and Esuree left their house a few days afterwards, and agreed to go with me to visit my Uncle Amanooolla, whom I had not seen for a long time, and whose daughter Bebee I had not forgotten.

"We travelled slowly, stopping from time to time at various towns on our way, in some of which I got work at my craft, and thus earned money to help us to continue our journey.

"All this time I told Soobulda and Esuree much concerning the Moslem faith, and they assumed the garb and practised the ablutions, and recited the prayers of true believers."

"In that, by Allah, you did right," exclaimed the Caliph, "and I grant you your life for so doing."

Hunoman bowed and continued:

"At one town where we stayed, it happened that when the morning came on which we had arranged to depart, I had still some work by me which I had not finished, and I agreed therefore with Soobulda and Esuree, that they should start first and proceed leisurely, and that I would hasten after them and overtake them at their first halting-place.

"This was done, and when soon after midday I came up with them, I found, that having enjoyed a meal and two hours' rest, they were just preparing to resume their journey. At the little serai or inn where they were, they had met with ten other travellers, and the whole party were now about to set out together.

"Hastily eating some food I had brought with me, I started with the others, and falling into conversation with our fellow-travellers, we formed a very sociable gathering.

"But during the afternoon, and when we had been some time in company, I happened to overhear one of our fellow-travellers say a few words in a low tone to another, which I instantly recognized as being of the peculiar dialect used by the Phansigars. We were in the hands of a party of Thugs, and escape seemed

impossible.

"I looked round at my friends, desiring to warn them of our desperate situation; but even that was not feasible, for each was surrounded by two or three of the strangers, so that I could say nothing to them which would not be overheard.

"However, it mattered little, for even had they known of our danger what could be done? Three men against ten desperate ruffians would have no chance, and on the least indication of suspicion on our part they would, I knew, attack and kill us at once, at all hazards. The only hope remaining for us seemed to me to be that we should meet some other party of travellers, whose protection we might claim. Of this, however, there would appear to be but very faint hope indeed.

"Our road passed through a jungle, wild and desolate, where we might perhaps disturb a tiger, but could hardly expect to come upon a man. The air was hot and sultry, it seemed to me more oppressive than I had ever before experienced. Everything around us was still, and as we trod along the sandy road even our footsteps made scarcely a sound that could be heard.

"Soobulda and Esuree chatted pleasantly with their companions, suspecting nothing. As for me, I had become silent and thoughtful, and prayed inwardly to Allah to deliver us from this danger.

"At length one of those who walked with me, and whom I took to be the leader of the band, proposed that as I had had no rest and seemed to be tired, we should halt and rest by the side of a small stream we were then passing. I perceived at once that we had arrived at the bele, or place of execution. The Phansigars always send a man on to choose the bele carefully beforehand. No place could be more suited to their purpose. It was lonely as a desert; so remote from every human track or habitation that no shriek of a victim could be heard by any one, and the loose sand by the margin of the stream would yield readily to the sacred pickaxe when the roomal had done its fatal work.

"We sat down, and beside each of us three sat three others, two of whom were the holders of hands, while the third was the Bhurtote or strangler, as I knew only too well.

"The leader strolled carelessly to and fro, preparing to give the signal. Already I seemed to feel the pressure of the strip of cloth about my neck, to anticipate the short and ineffectual struggles of the unfortunate victims, to feel the kicks of

those wretches on my back, and then in a few moments all would be over.

"At this critical moment, just as the leader paused in his walk and opened his lips to pronounce the words which would have been the signal to his followers, and would have sealed our doom—he sneezed. I saw a look of mingled rage and disgust pass round the party. One of the most stringent and disabling of all omens had occurred. No Thug would despatch his victim after such a manifestation of the wrath of the great Bhowanee. Our lives would be spared, held sacred indeed for this time, by these ruthless murderers.

"Very shortly afterwards, the gang, on some pretext of having to take another road, separated from us, and we pursued our way without further incident to the dwelling of my Uncle Amanoolla.

"Arrived there, I found that my Cousin Bebee had been married some time since to a rich merchant in the neighbourhood. My uncle received me gladly, and made my two friends, Soobulda and Esuree, welcome for my sake, and for the sake of the true faith of Islam which they had adopted. He had prospered greatly since I left him, and had acquired much wealth, so that at his death, which happened about six months after my return, he left me a considerable sum with which to commence to trade.

"I had, however, a great desire to revisit the land of my birth; I bought, therefore, many things which would be esteemed rare and valuable in Bagdad, where about a week ago I arrived safely.

"Of the command I received through my mother from Zobeideh, to appear before her and relate my adventures, I have already informed your Majesty, and have now only to await the sentence which the Commander of the Faithful may see fit to pronounce upon me."

"I have already," said Haroun, "granted you your life because you have led two men to embrace the true faith of Islam. But moreover, since I am not used to send away those I pardon with empty hands, I appoint you Governor of my province of Egypt. Giafer shall immediately prepare the patent of investiture, and you are to start at once."

Hunoman thanked the Commander of the Faithful for his munificence, and promised instant obedience to this and every order he should receive.

Thus the Caliph pardoned and rewarded Hunoman, the foster-brother of his favourite wife, Zobeideh; but perhaps he was not unwilling to separate them as far as Bagdad is from Cairo.

The Caliph and the Slave Merchants

The consequences which had resulted from the first and only trial which he had made of the magical and marvellous properties of the ointment contained in the second jar had been so little pleasing to the Caliph, and had so nearly caused the death of his favourite wife Zobeideh, that he had no inclination to test it further at present. He placed it, therefore, in his cabinet, together with the other jar, until some occasion should arise on which he might desire to make use of them. Yet, although he was prejudiced against making further trial of the ointments, he continued to undertake from time to time his occasional nocturnal rambles in company with Giafer.

One evening, after they had wandered for a long time in their usual disguise as merchants through the streets and bazaars of the city, they turned into a large caravanseraï, and sat down to rest themselves. There was a great number of merchants collected within the hospitable walls of the caravanseraï, and close by the Caliph and Giafer sat two men, with whom they were destined to become better acquainted.

Not long after the Caliph and his companion had entered and seated themselves, one of these two men by a glance drew the attention of his friend to the newcomers, and they began very shortly a dispute, which appeared to wax very warm indeed, respecting the merits of two female slaves which they possessed, and as to the pre-eminence of whose rival attractions they were quite unable to agree. They vociferated and gesticulated and appeared to get so angry with each other, that in their mutual fury they seemed ready to tear each other to pieces.

At length the Caliph interposed with a good-humoured smile, and said—

"Gentlemen, if you will pardon a stranger for interfering in your dispute, I would suggest that the best and most effectual mode of deciding as to the relative merits and value of your two slaves would be to call in some disinterested man as umpire between you. Now I and my friend are merchants, not only very well

qualified to judge of the beauty and accomplishments of your slaves, but also quite ready to offer you a good price for them, because, as we have the entrance to the palace of the Caliph, the Grand Vizier, and other great personages, we are in a position to bring them to the very best market, and obtain a higher price for them than any one else."

The two merchants who had acted their parts in the pretended quarrel with no other object than to elicit some such proposal, now willingly accepted it.

"Come with us then," they exclaimed, "and your verdict shall decide our dispute. The slave for whom you are willing to bid the highest price, she shall be judged to be incontestably the better."

On this the two merchants rose, and conducting the Caliph and Giafer through many narrow streets and lanes in a part of the town they did not remember to have been in before, they stopped at length before a great gateway, on the door of which they gave three peculiar knocks. The door was opened by a huge black African slave, who grinned horribly as he saw his masters and the two strangers, and who, having admitted them, carefully closed and fastened the door behind them.

They were ushered at first into a large room, having a wide and handsome divan, on which the merchants begged them to be seated. Another African slave, as large, black, and, if possible, even more hideous than the first, brought them refreshments and sweetmeats, together with silver goblets, into which he poured very good wine.

After they had sat some time in this room, the Caliph proposed that they should proceed to inspect and pass judgment on the two beautiful female slaves. The slave merchants therefore conducted the Caliph and Giafer to a smaller apartment elegantly fitted up, where, on a divan of the richest materials and most exquisite workmanship, was seated an Indian slave of the rarest beauty.

The Caliph, who was ever an enthusiastic admirer of lovely women, stood for some moments lost in astonishment and delight.

"Surely," said he, at length, "you have nothing more beautiful that you can show us. I must have this slave, and will give you ten thousand pieces of gold for her."

"If you are pleased with this slave," said one of the merchants, without noticing

the Caliph's offer, "what will you say of the other?"

Then leading the way from the room of the beautiful Indian, which was splendidly upholstered with hangings and furniture in crimson and gold, he led the way through a short passage to another room, where all the fittings were of silver and dark blue. In this room, instead of the black-haired and dark-eyed Indian, sat a Persian beauty, whose hair was light and fine as new spun silk, and whose lustrous blue eyes and absolutely perfect form defy description.

The Caliph stood entranced at the sight. At length he exclaimed—

"From what country does that lovely creature come? Is she really a woman, or is she not rather a fairy whom some enchantment has brought among us?"

"If," said the slave merchant, "you bid me ten thousand pieces of gold for the slave in the other room, how much will you offer for this?"

"I will give you," said the Caliph, "forty thousand dinars, and not think her dear at that price."

"Asmut," said the merchant to his companion, "did I not tell you that my slave girl was better than yours? And behold this honest merchant offers four times as much for her as for your Indian."

"It is easy enough," retorted the other, "for some fellow you pick up in the bazaar, and who has not probably a thousand dinars in the world, to talk of ten thousand for this slave, and forty thousand for that. It will be time to defer to his opinion, I think, when we see the thousands he talks of so glibly."

"Without doubt," said the first speaker, "this honourable merchant would not offer a price, however large, for the slaves, unless he were able to find the money. If he has not so much he can probably borrow a part of it. Therefore, let both of these merchants lodge here with us to-night, and to-morrow they may either fetch or send for the gold, and the bargain may be concluded."

But the Caliph exclaimed with his usual impetuosity—

"By Allah, there shall be no to-morrow in the matter. I will send for the money at once, and the slaves shall be mine."

To this Asmut replied, "By your leave, not so fast. We desired, indeed, that you should set a price on each of the slaves that we might decide our dispute as to which of them is the better. But I by no means intended or bound myself to accept any sum you might mention for the slaves, whom I am in no hurry to dispose of."

"Very well," said the Caliph, who was quite unused to the chaffering of merchants, although he had assumed the garb of one, "if the price I have named does not content you, name your own price, for, in short, the slaves I will have."

Asmut, after a few moments' consideration as to the highest sum he could ask without going beyond what it seemed possible to obtain from this very frank and eager buyer, said—

"The prices you have named, although no doubt large, are, in my opinion, so much below the real value of two beauties of such surpassing excellence, that I must insist on twice as much as you have offered, namely, twenty thousand dinars for the one and eighty thousand for the other."

The Caliph laughed and said, "Verily you are not a merchant for naught, and you do not underestimate the worth of your own wares. Nevertheless, I will give you your price."

The slave merchants could make no objection to this prompt agreement to their terms; on the contrary, it suited their plans very well. Yet, in order to appear indifferent and little anxious to conclude the business with any undue haste and precipitancy, Asmut said—

"To-morrow, however, will be early enough to produce the money. It is now dark and grows late, and besides, whom can you send?"

"I have a man whom I can send," said the Caliph, "for my servant will have followed us here, and I will despatch him at once for the money."

And in fact Giafer, going to the gate, beckoned to Mesrúr, who had followed them as usual, and who was waiting for them outside, and not far from the house he had seen them enter.

The Caliph, taking out his tablets, wrote a few words to his treasurer, bidding him send at once by Mesrúr, and in the hands of two slaves, the sum of one

hundred thousand dinars. This note he delivered to Mesrúr, who saluted his master and immediately departed on his errand.

The Caliph and Giafer then seated themselves on the divan in the large apartment into which they had been shown on first entering the house, and, together with the slave merchants, passed the time in conversing and discussing again the unique beauty of the two ladies whom the Caliph was to purchase.

When Mesrúr returned, bringing with him two slaves carrying the hundred thousand dinars in fifty bags, there being two thousand dinars in a bag, they were shown at once into the large room where the merchants and the Caliph were sitting.

As the slaves deposited the bags on the floor the slave merchants, as also the Caliph and Giafer, rose and stood by them, Asmut so placing the lamp as that they could all see him count the money as they stood together.

He proposed to count the money in one of the bags, and that he should then proceed to weigh the other bags against that which had been counted. While all were watching him as he poured out and counted the money with much noise and many loud exclamations from both merchants as to the lightness of some of the coins, neither the Caliph, Giafer, Mesrúr, nor either of the slaves, perceived that behind them, barefoot and noiseless as camels, a number of huge and powerful black slaves had entered the room.

Suddenly Asmut, seizing the empty bag and dashing it on the floor, exclaimed, "I will count no more!"

This being the signal, no sooner had he uttered the words than the slaves seized the Caliph and his companions, threw them down, and before they could either struggle or cry out had securely bound and gagged them.

"A good haul for one night's fishing," said Asmut, coolly; "a hundred thousand dinars and five men, who will doubtless sell very well after taking a voyage, that is not so bad."

Then ordering some of the slaves to be ready to take the prisoners down to the river as soon as the dawn should appear, Asmut and his partner personally superintended the removal from the room of the bags of gold.

Very early in the morning, as soon as it began to be light, a party of the black slaves who had bound the Caliph and his followers came to them, and unbinding their legs escorted them down to the river, where a ship belonging to the slave merchants lay ready to receive them.

Their prospects of escape out of the clutches of the slave merchants who had robbed and kidnapped them seemed slight indeed. Giafer and the faithful Mesrúr being included in the capture, seriously diminished the chance of any effectual measures for their relief being promptly undertaken, and a fatal period of delay was rendered all the more probable in consequence of the Caliph's well-known fondness for seeking adventures in disguise. When the morning should come, and it was perceived that they had not returned to the palace, it was only too likely to be assumed that they were still engaged in the prosecution of some adventure in which the Caliph would not desire to be interrupted. Filled with these painful reflections, the Caliph, together with Giafer, Mesrúr, and the two slaves, accompanied the black slaves who formed their guard, and proceeded towards the river.

They had nearly reached the bank of the stream, and their case seemed altogether hopeless, when suddenly they met advancing towards them from the river a man habited as a merchant, and in personal appearance curiously resembling the Caliph himself. He was accompanied by two companions, and seeing several men bound and gagged being marched along under charge of the black slaves, he stopped and demanded in a firm and authoritative tone who they were and whence they were going.

At the sight of this man the blacks appeared to be seized with a sudden panic; the Caliph heard them say to each other hurriedly and with terrified looks, "It is the son of a Slave[1] himself." And immediately they turned about and fled at their utmost speed.

The stranger and his two companions at once released the prisoners, and inquired how it came to pass that they found them thus bound and gagged.

The Caliph answered him: "Sir, we have suffered this indignity and violence at the hands of two rascally and deceitful slave merchants. I will presently relate to you all the details of our adventure, but permit me first to despatch my servant on a piece of very urgent business."

Then turning to Mesrúr he took him aside, and said, "Go instantly, seize the two slave merchants and execute them at once; send the slaves and plunder you find in their house to the palace, and raze their house to the ground."

Mesrúr departed at once to the nearest guardhouse to procure help to carry out the orders of the Commander of the Faithful. And it need scarcely be said that he had never received a command from his Majesty which he executed with so much alacrity and good-will.

After having despatched Mesrúr on this errand, the Caliph turned to the merchant and his companions, and said—

"It is now time, gentlemen, that I should thank you for your intervention on our behalf, and that I should explain to you how it came to pass that we found ourselves in the plight from which you released us."

Beginning, then, by saying that he and his friend had entered a certain caravanserai to rest themselves, and had there met the slave merchants, he related all that had befallen them, but said nothing to indicate his true rank as Caliph and Commander of the Faithful.

After Haroun had thus explained to the merchant, who both in dress and features so much resembled himself, the history of his own position, he asked him whether he could in any way account for the sudden panic which had seized upon the slaves directly he had appeared and addressed them.

The merchant, who resembled Haroun Alraschid, not only in personal appearance, but in a certain frank and bold bearing, laughed and said—

"My name is Sidi ibn Thalabi, and I am, as my dress bespeaks me, a merchant. But having the good fortune to be both in stature and features not only like yourself, which strange to say I certainly am, but also, which is more to the point, like our Caliph, God be his shield, I have been tempted in one thing to imitate his illustrious example. The Prince of the Faithful is in the habit, as I dare say you may have heard, of seeking adventures and seeing life in the disguise of a merchant. People, who would feel constrained in the presence of their sovereign, speak and act naturally in the presence of a simple merchant, the equal of themselves. This pleases the Caliph, and affords him the gratification and amusement of observing men as they are. As Prince of the Faithful he sees them only as they pretend to be. Well, I have the same fancy, only in the contrary

direction. I know how men act when they accept me as their equal, I play at being their Prince and then watch their behaviour. Taking advantage of the Caliph's well-known fondness for masquerading as a merchant and of my personal likeness to him, it is very easy to allow the impression to get about that I am he. This accounts for the precipitate flight of the slaves. Having seen me no doubt on sundry occasions in my barge upon the Tigris, and having been told by some of those busy-bodies who affect to know every one and everything that I was the Caliph in disguise, they no sooner saw me just now and heard me demand who you were than they ran away, dreading the punishment they so richly deserve."

"It appears to me," said Haroun, "that the amusement in which you indulge is a somewhat dangerous one. The Caliph is, I am told, of a fierce and rather hasty temper; should he learn by chance of your pranks, it might cost you your head. However, that is your affair. For myself, I am indebted to your temerity for my liberty and probably for my life, therefore I have certainly no cause to quarrel with it. I shall be delighted to form one of your company in any further adventures you may undertake, and meanwhile should hear with pleasure an account of any that may have already befallen you."

To this Sidi ibn Thalabi replied, "I shall gladly conduct you to my boat on the Tigris, whither I was going when I had the good fortune to meet with you. And when we are seated there at our ease and have partaken of some food, of which you must stand greatly in need after your night's lodging with the slave merchants, I will tell you how it happened that I obtained the reputation of being the Prince of the Faithful, and some incidents that have occurred in consequence. But first," he continued, "let me introduce my friend and companion, who is indeed no other than my brother-in-law Abraha, but whom the people who take me to be the Caliph insist upon regarding as the Grand Vizier."

"Yussuf," said Haroun, addressing Giafer by that name in order to further their disguise and continue what gave promise of proving a very entertaining misunderstanding, "I am sure you will salute with due respect the person of this Grand Vizier, who is, I doubt not, as good a man or even a better than Giafer himself."

"Friend Hamad," replied Giafer, speaking to Haroun in the style and by the name they had previously agreed upon, "I salute with pleasure both our new acquaintances, and am ready to believe that Abraha is no less worthy to be really

Grand Vizier than Sidi ibn Thalabi is to be really Caliph."

Haroun perceived both from the manner and the answer of Giafer that the sham Grand Vizier was a joke not quite to his liking. This amused Haroun not a little, and he employed the time as they walked towards the river in further light and playful discourse upon the topic.

Addressing Abraha, he said, "You must be pleased, sir, to excuse any roughness or want of good manners and politeness on the part of my friend Yussuf; he is perhaps a little bit jealous of the good fortune of one who has been regarded as the Grand Vizier."

Abraha, who was a rather dull and stolid personage, accepted these mock apologies with such imperturbable gravity and sincerity that Haroun was delighted with him.

Saluting Haroun very solemnly, the sham Grand Vizier said, "Sir, I beg that you will give yourself no concern respecting the language or demeanour of your friend Yussuf. I dare say he is a good plain man, however unused to the company of high personages, and in any case I am able to make allowances for any whiff of passing ill-humour or jealousy."

During this conversation between Haroun and Abraha, Giafer and Sidi ibn Thalabi had fallen a little way behind and were walking and talking together. A little way behind these came the two slaves whom Mesrúr had brought to the slave merchants with him to carry the gold pieces.

When the party arrived at the bank of the Tigris, Haroun, stepping aside, beckoned the slaves to him and despatched them to the palace with a note addressed to the Grand Chamberlain.

In this note he informed that functionary that he should not return to the palace for some hours, and commanded him to send the two slaves at once, under guard and without allowing them to speak to any one, to a town fifty days' journey from Bagdad, he having no mind to entrust the secret of his last night's adventure to the indiscreet tongues of the slaves who had participated in it. Having thus got rid of the slaves, Haroun and Giafer accompanied their new acquaintances, Abraha and Sidi ibn Thalabi, on board the ship or pleasure barge belonging to the latter.

After they had been seated for some time, and had appeased their hunger by partaking of a very substantial breakfast, Haroun said to Sidi ibn Thalabi—

"I must now remind you of your promise to tell me something of your recent experience."

Upon which Sidi ibn Thalabi spoke as follows:

THE NARRATIVE OF SIDI IBN THALABI.

"I must first tell you, friend Hamad," he began, for Haroun and Giafer were known to him only by their assumed names of Hamad and Yussuf—"I must first tell you how it came about that I was induced to personate our sovereign lord, Haroun Alraschid, whom may Allah preserve, and from whose ears may the story of my presumption be hidden for ever."

"I should say," said Haroun, "that he is never likely to hear of it, unless you communicate it to him yourself."

"In that case I should be safe enough," said Sidi ibn Thalabi. "However, to resume, what put the idea into my head in the first instance was this. I was one day coming down to the river to spend the day on board my boat, when I called at the shop or stall of a fruit merchant in the bazaar to buy some fruit. I sat down in his shop while I selected what I required and bargained as to the price. I was surprised, in the first place, to find that instead of asking five or six times the value of the fruit and abating his demand by degrees, as is commonly the custom, the merchant, who treated me with extreme deference, begged me to choose whatever fruit I pleased and pay him for it as much as I might consider it to be worth."

"'What,' said I, 'do you leave the price to be fixed by me? Suppose I give you but half the value of it?'

"'Sir,' answered the man, 'Allah forbid that your slave should venture to put aside the veil in which you choose at this moment to envelop yourself. Nevertheless, I am very sensible of the honour you have done me in entering my shop and conversing familiarly with me, and truly the shop and all it contains are altogether at your service.'

"For whom do you take me, or mistake me,' said I, 'that you treat me to so many compliments and good offers?'

"Sir,' he replied, 'I have seen his Majesty the Caliph, whom may Allah protect, ride by so often, both when he is going to and returning from the Mosque, that it would be very strange if I could fail to recognize his features, no matter what disguise he may choose to assume. However, I will say no more, a merchant and no more than a merchant you are if you will it so. To what place does it please you that I should send you the fruit?'

"I denied again that I was the Commander of the Faithful, no matter how much my features might resemble his; but perceiving that the man retained his own opinion of my identity and received my disclaimers only out of politeness, I thought it not worth while to argue the question with him further, but desired him to send the fruit to me, Sidi ibn Thalabi, on board this boat. At the same time, I must confess that I so far yielded to the weakness of being flattered by being taken for the Caliph in disguise that I gave the fruit merchant two dinars for fruit which was not worth one quarter of that sum.

"On receiving the money, which he did with much humbleness and many profound salutations, the merchant said—

"Sidi ibn Thalabi, as so you desire to be called, I give you many thanks for your liberality, and I pray you not to be offended with me if I seize the present opportunity to beg a favour of you.'

"If,' said I, 'it is in my power to do what you wish, I assure you that, far from taking offence, I shall oblige you gladly.'

"Your kind words,' said the merchant, 'fill me with joy, because my request is entirely within your power to grant. I have an only son, let him come to you and employ him in any office for which you may judge him to be fit.'

"On condition,' I answered, 'that you bear in mind that I am simply Sidi ibn Thalabi and no one else, I am ready to see and employ your son if you so desire.'

"The fruit merchant vowed that no word of either himself or his son should betray the belief that I was any other than what I represented myself, namely, Sidi ibn Thalabi, a retired merchant taking his ease in his boat upon the Tigris. On this understanding the young man came to me, and finding him to be a very

agreeable and well-educated young fellow, I have employed him in the office of my secretary.

"Being possessed of property at Bussora and other towns, I am often absent from Bagdad, and only occasionally take my pleasure here on my boat just as the humour seizes me. Whether misled by these absences, or whether accepting his father's opinion without question, I know not, but I soon discovered that, not only did my new secretary believe me to be the Caliph, but that he had spread this rumour of me among a great number of the river-side population. Perhaps he discovered that he himself was in consequence held in greater esteem, Allah alone knows—at any rate he hesitated not to spread the false report concerning me.

"It thus came to pass that, not only was I often received in any company in which I chanced to find myself with an amount of respect and deference to which I was really by no means entitled, but people who were strangers to me asked me to social gatherings and feasts under the mistaken notion that they were thereby securing themselves personal intercourse with the dreaded and illustrious Haroun Alraschid himself.

"As often as possible I refused these invitations, but could not avoid now and then coming into a mixed society, where I soon perceived that my fame had preceded me. On those occasions, should any dispute arise, it was not uncommon for my authority to be confidently appealed to, and my verdict to be implicitly accepted. This very naturally brought me more than once into a position of considerable difficulty. For, on the one hand, no disclaimer on my part would avail to convince those who appealed to me that I was not really the Caliph; and, on the other hand, I well knew myself to be quite powerless either to enforce my decision or to punish those who were clearly guilty, and both deserving and expecting to be sentenced.

"An incident that occurred only two days since will illustrate what I have been saying. I was on my way to the river accompanied by Abraha only, when passing through a street in the lower part of the town we came upon a crowd of people shouting and gesticulating and making a great hubbub. In the centre of the crowd there was one man who was dragging another along violently and crying out constantly, 'Come before the Cadi, you villain! come before the Cadi, you villain!' All the others, as is usual in such cases, were crying out some one thing, some another.

"When the crowd perceived us the hubbub was redoubled, and all we could gather from the confused noise was that they were appealing to me to arbitrate between them. I made a sign, therefore, that they should be silent, and there being at a short distance from the spot where we met the crowd a small open space with a fountain in the middle of it, I led the way thither, and seating myself on the steps of the fountain, the two men stood before me, and the crowd gathered round to hear what was said and witness what would take place, the people never doubting but that when I should have examined the case I should pronounce judgment on the offender.

"When I asked the man who had hold of the other, and who was evidently the complainant, to state what was the matter, he exclaimed very vehemently—

""This man, this rascally barber, whom your Greatness sees here before you, has murdered my brother. He a barber! He is a plunderer! he is an assassin! Do justice upon him, therefore, and condemn the ignorant wretch to the punishment he so richly deserves.'

""Not so fast, not so fast,' said I; 'tell me more calmly, and with particulars, in what way has this barber murdered your brother?'

""Your Greatness,' said the man, 'it was in this wise. My brother had been working in the heat of the sun, and the sun had doubtless inflamed his blood so that he became stupefied and unconscious. I went, therefore, for a barber that he should come and bleed my brother, and restore his senses to him. Now as ill-luck would have it the first barber I lighted upon was this pestilent fellow. When I found him he was engaged in shaving a customer, and because that customer was a good one he would not leave him to attend to my brother, but first finished his shaving and then came with me. Having first delayed so long, when at last he was come he bled my brother not once but three times, and two hours afterwards my brother died. I say, therefore, truly that he has killed my brother, and deserves to be termed butcher rather than barber.'

"Having listened to this complaint, I said, addressing the barber, 'You hear what this man alleges; let me hear, therefore, what reply you can make and how you will defend yourself from the charge which has been brought against you.'

"The barber, who like most of his class did not lack assurance and had words at command, was not slow to answer.

"Sir," said he, 'the accusation which this man brings against me, and his assertion that I am ignorant and do not understand the duties of my office, are both of them groundless and absurd. I have not been a barber for fifteen years without knowing very well how to let blood as well as how to shave; and if this man's brother is dead, it is in spite of what I did for him, and not in consequence of it. As to what is alleged of my delay, I deny it altogether. I did but give three or four strokes of my razor, which was all that was needed to finish the operation of shaving in which I was engaged when this man called for me, and it is only his furious impatience that has magnified a few seconds into a serious delay. As to the bleeding, I did indeed take from him six ounces of blood; in one cup I received two ounces, in a second cup two ounces, and in a third cup two ounces. But that quantity was by no means too much. Moreover, that which was received into the first cup coagulated in twelve minutes, that which was received into the second cup in twenty-two minutes, while that which was in the third cup was not completely coagulated in thirty-five minutes; now what does that prove?'

"It proves," said the other, 'that you are, as I have told you already, a bungler and murderer, for is not my brother dead of your bleeding, and you deserve to lose your head?'

"Sir," said the barber to me, 'this man simply raves, as you will have observed. Every baker and tailor knows more in his own conceit of bleeding than a barber of fifteen years' experience like myself. They are able to pass judgment as to the question of too much or too little without hesitation and with the utmost exactness. It is a story as old as King Ad—the more ignorant they are the more sure they be. Presently they will discover that men should never be let blood at all, forgetting that we bleed our horses also,[2] and find it does them good. And, for myself, I know after fifteen years' experience how much to take both from the healthy and from the sick.'

"Accursed barber," interrupted the other, fiercely, 'I believe verily that thou canst neither bleed without killing nor shave without cutting.'

"As for my bleeding," retorted the barber, in a rage, 'I have bled many score without accident or ill-result, excepting only your brother, who was a drunkard and as good as dead before ever I saw him; while as for my being able to shave without cutting, I will have you to know that there lives no creature on this earth, from an ape to the illustrious Caliph himself, whom may Allah preserve and exalt, that I will not shave without giving him so much as a scratch.'

"That," said I, willing to end the dispute between the two men, "is a very bold challenge on the part of the barber. The Caliph indeed can be scarcely got to submit himself to the test, but we will get an ape, and if this honest man shaves him, as he says he can, without inflicting a scratch, I will adjudge him to be a very proficient barber and an adept in each branch of his trade, both bleeding and shaving."

"The people, who are easily led and amused, received my decision with delight. They cried out, 'An ape! an ape!' All were desirous to see how the creature would submit himself to the operation of being shaved. Even the man who had lost his brother could not altogether refrain from a grin of satisfaction at the thought of the troublesome task the barber had before him."

Haroun Alraschid smiled and stroked his beard, saying, "Sidi ibn Thalabi, that was a happy inspiration, and extricated you cleverly from what threatened to become for you a rather embarrassing position."

Sidi ibn Thalabi acknowledged this compliment to his sagacity by a low bow, and continued—

"For the people to find an ape on which the barber could exhibit his skill was no easy matter, none knew where such an animal could be procured. However, I was able myself to get them out of this difficulty very speedily. A merchant of my acquaintance had I knew many strange birds and beasts which had been brought to him at sundry times by the various ships and caravans which conveyed his merchandize. To him I applied, stating what I required, and was able to purchase a little ape who appeared very suitable for our purpose.

"This little animal was really very young, as its constant and restless activity sufficiently proved, but it had the appearance of a small aged African, with deeply wrinkled forehead and cheeks and a sparse beard of short white hairs. When this creature was placed in the hands of the barber, its behaviour gave promise of affording us all the entertainment we could desire.

"It was the duty of the barber to perform the various functions of his office in the customary manner. He had first to wash the head and face, and then to proceed to shave just as in the case of any one else. For this purpose the barber produced a metal basin, which he filled with water from the fountain; and the ape having been accommodated with a seat on a low bench in the middle of the open space

round which the people were assembled, the barber set down the basin beside him. For a few moments the little creature sat regarding the basin with an expression of great gravity and wisdom, but just as the barber, having dipped a piece of cloth in the water, was wringing it out preparatory to commencing the operation of washing, the ape suddenly seized upon the basin with both hands and turned it upside down, apparently with childish curiosity to examine the other side.

"The effect of this movement was to pour all the contents of the basin over the ape's own legs, which disconcerted him very much, and the barber stooping down to pick up the basin which the ape had dropped, the little creature nimbly sprang upon his shoulders, and with its wet legs round the barber's neck he employed himself in taking off the man's turban, which he first placed on his own head and then immediately afterwards snatching it off again he threw it on the ground.

"At these antics the crowd of course laughed loudly, but the barber, who was a man of much good temper and self-control, simply took the ape off his shoulders, and having seated him again as at first, he proceeded to pick up and replace his turban, and refill the basin.

"Putting the water this time out of reach of the ape, the barber dipped his cloth into the basin and proceeded to wash the head and face of his unwilling and in every sense ugly customer. But directly the ape felt the wet cloth touch his skin he snatched it instantly from the hands of the barber and commenced tearing it in pieces. And before the barber could attempt to rescue even the fragments of his washing cloth the mischievous little creature slipped quickly off the bench on which he had been seated, and running rapidly on all fours among the crowd, suddenly jumped upon the back of a small boy who had been hitherto enjoying the fun and laughing very heartily at the antics of the monkey. This last prank, however, frightened the small boy very much, and he ran about wildly, with the ape seated on his shoulders, screaming loudly. As the monkey held on bravely, with each hand grasping firmly a handful of the boy's hair, the little fellow had some excuse for making an outcry. The barber, however, very soon recaptured his troublesome charge, and reseated him on the bench to undergo the usual barbarous routine of washing and shaving.

"Meanwhile the crowd beside laughing had, of course, encouraged the barber to pursue his task by many questions and exclamations, such as, 'Why don't you

make haste to shave the gentleman?' 'Take care you don't cut his precious chin!' 'Barber, is your hand steady?' and so forth.

"In answer to all these jeers the barber only smiled and said, 'Patience, the little gentleman is somewhat scared by your noise and ugly faces, but he will sit quietly enough presently.'

"And marvellous to behold, when the barber had replaced him again the third time on the bench, the ape sat still, as solemn as the Cadi himself, and allowed himself to be both washed and shaved, moving no more than though he were dead and stuffed.

"This astonished the crowd very much and they applauded loudly, till the man who had at first accused the barber of murdering his brother cried out that it was sorcery, and that this accursed barber must be in fact a foul magician, since he could not only kill good Moslims, but shave misshapen apes. On this the fickle crowd were moved against the barber, and would have fallen upon him and done him an injury had I not interfered on his behalf.

"'Stop,' said I, 'I will inquire of the barber, and he shall confess to me by what means he has caused the ape to sit still and permit himself to be shaved. If he has employed magic he shall be dealt with accordingly, but if not, why should he be punished on the accusation of one who hates him and may be envious of his skill?'

"Speaking thus to the crowd I calmed them, then bringing the barber along with us we hastened at once to the river and came on board my barge.

"When we had safely arrived here, after giving the barber something to eat and drink, I pressed him to tell me how he had contrived to render the monkey suddenly so quiet and docile, a feat which had appeared as surprising and as inexplicable to me as to the others.

"'Sir,' said the barber, 'I have during my life travelled through many distant countries and taken part in many strange adventures, but I confess that among all the singular and marvellous things I have seen or have collected, nothing is more strange nor more valuable than that by means of which I have been enabled to exhibit to you the spectacle which you have witnessed this morning.'

"I pressed him once more to tell me what this rare and precious thing might be

and how he became possessed of it. Upon which the barber, saluting me as his protector and deliverer, who had saved him from the fury of the crowd, consented readily to impart his secret to me, and spoke as follows:—

THE BARBER'S STORY.

"It is now about three months since I was called early one morning to bleed a man who was reported to be insensible. Now, notwithstanding all that that fellow asserted in his rage this morning, I am a barber and the son of a barber, and understand my craft very thoroughly. Therefore, taking with me whatever I might be likely to require to let the man blood and restore him to consciousness, I started at once.

"On arriving at the house, which was a very poor one, to which I had been summoned, I found the patient an old white-bearded man, and also a physician whom I knew very well, and who practised in that part of the town.

"He had sent for me to bleed the man, but he was evidently puzzled extremely by many features of the case the like of which he had never before encountered. The patient was indeed unconscious, yet he exhibited few or none of the symptoms generally characteristic of that state. He was not lying down, but sitting up. His face wore the expression not of one dead or dying, but of a man transfixed with rage and horror. His eyes wide open were staring upon us with an expression of impotent rage, as though he were witnessing some outrage which he was powerless to prevent. His mouth was opened as though uttering a cry, but no cry came out of his mouth. He did not breathe heavily, he did not appear to breathe at all. He had the appearance of a man who in the midst of some violent emotion had suddenly been turned into stone, or rather into some plastic material possessing very peculiar properties. For we found that, while every limb yielded readily to pressure and could be placed easily in any posture we pleased, it did not on being released fall to the ground, but maintained the attitude in which it had been placed as though it were modelled in wax or carved in stone.

"All this was so surprising that I suppose I ought not to have been surprised, as certainly I was, when I found that no blood flowed when I attempted to bleed him. The man seemed to be decidedly not dead—and yet decidedly not alive. We could make nothing of him. And after a while the physician being called away to attend to some one else, left me to watch this strange case, and act as I should

see fit.

"For a long time I sat and vigilantly observed the striking figure before me, in appearance so full of life and passion, in reality so completely inert.

"As you may suppose, I was not alone. The small room was crowded with the neighbours of the old man, who had long known him, and among whom he was reported to be a miser, who though living in apparent poverty was really very rich. I could see that many did not confine their inquisitive glances to the old man himself, but looked eagerly about them to discover if possible in some corner of the mean apartment that store of hidden wealth which they had persuaded themselves that it contained. After a time these visitors departed one after the other, perceiving neither any alteration in the condition of the old man nor any signs of his reputed riches.

"When they had all left, I still sat looking attentively at him, lost in astonishment and marvelling what would be the end of so singular and unheard-of a trance. Without the least warning, so suddenly that I was not a little startled, the full stream of life seemed to return upon him in an instant. It had been arrested as suddenly and for many hours—and now in a moment, before one could swallow one's spittle, it resumed its course as though the interruption had never taken place. To the mouth half opened all this time utterance was at length restored, and suddenly as I sat watching him he cried with a loud voice—

""Seize them! They have it! Ah, wretches! the curse of Allah be upon ye! To rob an old man! a poor man! Yes, they are gone, the robbers, the villains! My savings, my savings! The small savings of a long life. Ah! the cursed villains, the cursed villains! seize them, seize them!"

"Thus the old fellow raved on, beating his breast, tearing his hair and his beard, and speedily recalling by his cries and lamentations all his neighbours who remained within hearing. Getting some of these to assist me, again I attempted to bleed him, and this time successfully. This quieted him, and presently we laid him down much calmer, though apparently extremely exhausted.

"We could learn nothing more from him than that three men had entered his room on the previous evening and had robbed him of all that he possessed; but what became of them, or how he had fallen into the state of trance in which he had been discovered, he could not explain.

"I had now given up much more time than I could afford, and seeing no chance of getting paid under the circumstances, and there being nothing further I could do for the unfortunate old creature, I left him in the hands of his neighbours and took my departure.

"I had not gone far when I observed lying on the ground a small camel's-hair brush of very peculiar appearance. It was flat, in breadth about the width of two fingers, and the hairs of the brush as long as a man's little finger. I picked it up, wondering for what purpose it could be used, and thinking it might possibly prove of service on some future occasion, I carried it home with me.

"Several days passed, and I had forgotten not only the little brush that I had picked up, but even the episode of the old man and his strange trance, when one afternoon a man presented himself to be shaved, who, after some desultory discourse on passing topics, mentioned that he had heard of my attendance on the old miser, and inquired as to the condition in which I had found him, and all the particulars of the affair.

"When I had related to him the whole of the circumstances—excepting only the finding of the little brush as I came away, an incident so trifling that I no longer remembered it—he inquired, with some eagerness, I thought, whether I had found anything in the old man's room. I had picked up the brush not in the room, but outside the house, and the very fact that I had done so having for the moment escaped my recollection, I answered at once—"No, I found nothing; and, in truth, it seemed to me that some people had probably forestalled me, and left nothing for me or any one else to find." The man laughed at this, as though it were a very good joke. At that instant, the finding of the little brush occurred to my mind, and I determined now in my turn to ascertain, if possible, whether it were that he was in search of.

"I asked him, therefore, whether he had heard of any valuable being missed from the old man's room, as he had questioned me about it.

""Not exactly that," he said. "A good deal of valuable property might have been taken, he supposed," and again he laughed, "from the old man's room, but he was not concerned about that."

""No," thought I, "for you probably know where to find it."

""What I wish to recover," continued the man, "is not an article of value at all,

only a little brush that a friend of mine dropped in the confusion, and which he is very anxious to get again, because it belonged to his father and his grandfather before him."

""I fear," answered I, "that you will not find it in the old man's room, because I looked about the place, and I noticed a good many other keen eyes doing the same, and nothing of any kind was to be seen."

""No, there is no brush there now," said he; "you may be sure I have ascertained that for myself before applying to you. If you did not see it, I fear it is lost beyond recovery, and I would pay handsomely for it too, if I could find it."

""Why," said I, "as to that, you need make but little fuss over the loss of a little brush; a single dinar will buy you five score of them."

""True," said he, "but the little brush I am in search of was of a special make, such as men in these days know not how to fashion."

""After all," said I, "it is but a matter of shape and fancy, for there can be no great difference in value between two brushes of the same size."

""However that may be," said the man, "if by talking with your customers you can discover this little brush, and procure it for me, I will give you a good price for it."

""What do you call a good price?" I inquired.

""I will give you," he said, "ten dinars for it."

""He looked at me very hard, to observe what effect this offer would produce, for no doubt, in spite of my denial, he suspected that I had picked up the brush. But I reflected that the brush must have some very special value, or he would not so readily have offered ten dinars for it. If I held back, by and by he would offer twenty.

""I therefore answered quietly—"It is a large sum for a small brush, if I should hear of it I will let you know."

""In a week or ten days I will come again," he said, "perhaps by that time you may be able to find it."

""He probably named a week or ten days in order not to appear too eager, and also to give me time to pretend to have succeeded in my search.

""A week passed and a fortnight, and still he did not return. Indeed he never came back, and whether he was captured by the police—for I have no doubt he was one of the thieves who had robbed the old miser—or whether he and his gang had been obliged on account of some other crime to fly from Bagdad, I do not know; one thing only is certain, I have never seen him again.

""Nearly three months had elapsed, and I had almost ceased to expect the reappearance of the man, and even to regret that I did not accept his offer of ten dinars for the brush at the time he made it, when one afternoon, a few days ago, a man came to me suffering from a growth or wen on the back of his neck, close to the spinal cord. He desired that I should paint this with a certain remedy or lotion I have for such tumours. Finding the lotion, which I had not used for some time, but not the brush with which I was accustomed to apply it, I took hold of the little brush which I had picked up, and made use of that. The hairs of this brush were so much longer than those in my old brush, that I had not proceeded far before I happened accidentally to pass the wet brush across the spine. Immediately the man became fixed in the attitude in which he happened to be as I was operating upon him. His features retained the expression precisely which they wore at the moment the wet brush had touched the spine, and, in short, the man was in a trance exactly similar to that in which I had found the old miser three months before.

""I had discovered the virtues of the brush. At first I was a good deal frightened, not knowing how long the trance might continue. However, after the lapse of twelve hours, the man recovered consciousness again, and the complete use of all his faculties just as suddenly as the old miser had done three months previously.

""I persuaded the man that he had fallen asleep during the operation of anointing his tumour, and that I had housed him for the night out of kindness. For this he thanked me sincerely, allowed me to bleed him for the good of his health, and to wash and shave him, and paying me handsomely for all I had done for him, departed with much satisfaction.

""This morning, therefore, when I happened to give utterance to that rash boast of being able to shave successfully any living thing—a boast you so cleverly turned

against me—I determined to make good my words by virtue of the camel's-hair brush."

"And what," asked Haroun of Sidi ibn Thalabi, "what has become of the brush? did you not buy it of the barber?"

"I endeavoured to do so," answered he, "but the barber declared that unless the Caliph himself seated upon his throne should demand it, he would never part with it on any terms to any man."

"I think, friend Sidi ibn Thalabi," said Haroun, "that the barber is right. But now that I have heard the story of the barber, which is a very strange story, and has interested me greatly, I must for the present leave you, and return to my house where my people will be anxiously awaiting me. I hope, however, to have the pleasure very shortly of receiving you in my own house, and till then I bid you farewell."

[1] The Caliph was commonly so designated by the vulgar.

[2] A common Arab practice.

The Caliph and Sidi ibn Thalabi

THE BANQUET.

On the next morning after Haroun Alraschid had given the customary audiences to his Viziers and the great officers of his kingdom, he ordered Mesrúr to send and fetch Kaseem, the barber whose story Sidi ibn Thalabi had related to him.

Kaseem, on being introduced into the audience-chamber, and seeing the Caliph in his royal robes seated upon the throne, made no doubt but that he was in truth the same man as that Sidi ibn Thalabi who had rescued him from the mob, and to whom he had spoken on board the boat.

When, therefore, Haroun said to him, "Kaseem, I have been told that you have a

certain small brush of potent virtue. Give it to me."

Kaseem answered, smiling, "Your Majesty is, I know, very well informed indeed as to all the circumstances concerning that brush, and I am very happy, not only from loyalty, but also from gratitude to one Sidi ibn Thalabi, whom may Allah bless and reward, to be able to present to your Majesty a thing which you desire to possess."

Saying this, he offered the little brush, which Haroun took with his own hands.

Then the Caliph, turning to the Grand Vizier, said:

"I appoint Kaseem to be the Court Barber; see that he has robes and utensils given him suited to his office, and pay him every month a fee of one hundred dinars."

The Caliph, having ordered further an immediate present of a thousand dinars to be given to Kaseem, sent him away very well satisfied.

Haroun next commanded Giafer to prepare in the splendid house and garden which had belonged to Abou Hassan, the Fortunate Merchant, a great banquet and entertainment to be given that evening, and to which Sidi ibn Thalabi and his brother-in-law, Abraha, were to be invited by Hamad and Yussuf, the names assumed by himself and Giafer. All those who were invited to meet Sidi ibn Thalabi were informed that it was Haroun's pleasure to give this entertainment in the assumed character of a merchant, and that he would be known and was to be addressed as Hamad, and Giafer as Yussuf.

Among the guests were Murad Essed, the Unfortunate Merchant whom Haroun had met, and whose story he had heard in this very house.

Murad Essed, like Sidi ibn Thalabi and Abraha, knew Haroun only in his assumed character as a merchant. There were, however, other guests who were very well acquainted with both the Caliph and the Grand Vizier. There was, for instance, the singer and composer, Ishak ibn Ibrahim el Mosili, a great favourite of Haroun's; and the blind poet, Abu 'Atahiyeh, with several others.

The splendid saloon, with its open arcade on one side, looking out over the charming central garden, held on this evening a very merry party. Never since the time of its late owner, Abou Hassan, the Fortunate

Merchant, had it beheld a scene so gay.

The banquet was varied and well served, the wines of the rarest vintages, and the hours passed speedily and pleasantly enough, enlivened by a constant succession of tales and songs.

Murad Essed was the first that was called upon by Haroun as the host to relate a story to the company.

"Murad Essed," said Haroun, "there are, I think, none here present beside you, myself, and my friend Yussuf, who are acquainted with the story of Abou Hassan, the Fortunate Merchant, the former owner of this house. Will you, therefore, oblige us by relating it to us?"

When Murad Essed had, in response to this invitation, related the story of the Fortunate Merchant and his tragical fate, Haroun addressed himself to Abu 'Atahiyeh, and said: "Abu 'Atahiyeh, do you now compose a few verses, and Ishak ibn Ibrahim el Mosili shall sing them."

Abu 'Atahiyeh, who was sitting next to Ishak, having dictated some lines, and Ishak having written them down, the latter sang them to a favourite air of Haroun's, being accompanied on the lute by Isaac, the most famous of all the players on that instrument.

The lines were these:

"O, LOVELY STARS!"

"O lovely stars! O lovely stars! O lovely stars in the sky!
Your eyes are bright, your eyes are bright, and yet you are
wondrous shy!

You none are men, you none are men, but every one a she;
And but at night, and but at night, your beauty we men may see!

The staring gaze, the staring gaze, of insolent Day you shun;
In veils of light, in veils of light, hid from the face of the Sun.

The swarthy Night, the swarthy Night, he alone may be your spouse;
His harem wide, his harem wide, no other lover allows.

The Caliph's self, the Caliph's self, has no bevy one half so fair;
Nor lodged so well, nor lodged so well, as ye in your palace of air!"

"Bravo, bravo! well worded and well sung, by Allah!" cried Haroun, as Ishak ibn Ibrahim el Mosili concluded the verses. Then taking two splendid golden goblets which stood before him, he commanded them to be filled with wine, and presented one to Abu 'Atahiyeh, and the other to Ishak ibn Ibrahim el Mosili.

"Take each of you," said the generous Caliph, "the goblet that I send you; it is yours. And, by Allah and the beard of the Prophet! if I could but find twenty such poets and singers, most willingly would I find twenty such goblets for them."

The other guests were no less pleased than the host himself with the verses of Abu 'Atahiyeh, and the singing of Ishak ibn Ibrahim el Mosili.

Presently the Caliph, addressing Abu 'Atahiyeh, said: "You have made us some verses, now tell us a tale, for I know that your store of tales is without end."

THE STORY OF MUBAREK,

AS TOLD BY ABU 'ATAHIYEH.

"There once lived a young man whose name was Mubarek. He was the only son of a rich merchant at Bagdad, commonly known as Bereydah abou Mubarek.

"To the great grief of his father, Mubarek, when he was twenty-three years of age, developed such a longing to travel and visit those foreign countries of which he had so often heard from other merchants—his father's friends—that nothing could persuade him to remain quietly in Bagdad. Bereydah abou Mubarek, having therefore furnished his son with such sorts of merchandize as would be most suitable to trade with in the countries he was about to visit, took leave of him with much emotion and many injunctions both as to his personal conduct, and the management of his affairs.

"After passing through several countries most frequently traversed by caravans belonging to the merchants of this city, and where he saw nothing but what is familiarly known to all here present, and met with no adventure I need pause to

describe, he set sail in a merchantman, bound for the coast of India.

"He had not been at sea more than three days when a violent storm arose, and the force of the hurricane, driving the ship altogether out of her course, she found herself at length off a coast altogether unknown to the captain, and in spite of his exertions she was blown in shore, and became very shortly a total wreck.

"Mubarek, who fortunately succeeded in reaching the land, although with the loss of all that he possessed, wandered about for some time in a most forlorn and starving condition. At length, meeting some natives of the country, he was conducted by them to a large town on the coast, which was the capital of the kingdom. Here, in a very magnificent palace situated in the midst of extensive and fragrant gardens, lived Ahesha the Queen. An idolater, like all her subjects, she was, although an exceedingly beautiful woman, cruel, vindictive, and a proficient in all the arts of magic.

"Mubarek, as a stranger, being brought before her, as the laws of that kingdom required, she immediately fell violently in love with him, which was the less to be wondered at, inasmuch as he was a young man of pleasant features, a striking figure, and considerable personal attractions.

"Ahesha, having commanded the stranger to be led to the bath, and arrayed in rich robes appropriate to one occupying the position of a Vizier or Prince, she invited him to join her in partaking of a sumptuous repast, and afterwards to accompany her in strolling through the charming gardens which surrounded her palace.

"Mubarek, consoled for the hardship and dangers of the shipwreck and the loss of his merchandize by so flattering and distinguished a reception, and by the society of a woman and Queen of so much beauty, wandered with her alone through the most retired walks of the garden.

"Coming at length to a grassy seat in the cool shade of a spreading tree, they sat down.

"'Tell me,' said she, 'whether you are capable of loving a woman like me, as a woman and a Queen should be loved?'

"'I love you,' he replied, 'with all the passion of youth, with all my soul.'

"'But,' said she, 'a Queen must be loved alone. She cannot consent to divide the love of a man with any other woman.'

"'My charming and incomparable Queen,' he exclaimed, 'by Allah and the Prophet of God! there is no woman that can stand beside you. The man who is so happy as to possess you can want no other woman.'

"Ahesha laughed scornfully, and said, 'What an oath is that which you use! I laugh at your Allah and his Prophet.'

"Mubarek was a young man of very hot blood and fierce passions, and being brought up a strict Moslim, he was so much enraged at the Queen's scoff, that no sooner were the words out of her mouth, than drawing instantly a jewelled dagger which she wore at her girdle, he plunged it into her heart.

"Then seeing the Queen lying at his feet with the blood gushing out of her breast, he repented of his hasty act, but it was too late. He perceived moreover that should he be discovered in that situation by the enraged attendants of the beautiful Queen, he would be put to death, probably with torture. At the same time, he knew neither where he could find a place of safety nor how he should

manage to obtain food for the support of life in the midst of that city of idolaters.

"Wandering about the extensive gardens and groves surrounding the palace, and expecting every moment to fall in with some party of the royal guards who would seize him and take him prisoner, he came at length, in a very retired part of the woods, to a small cavern or grotto, and being very tired, he there laid himself down and very soon fell asleep.

"When he awoke the air was cool and fresh. The stars, still discernible, were fading in the light of the approaching dawn; and as he left the grotto he hastened, drawn by an indefinable and insensible impulse, to seek the place where he had left the body of the heathen Queen.

"With some difficulty he again found the spot which had been the scene of the love-making and the sudden tragedy on the previous day. The body of the Queen was no longer there. It had evidently been discovered and removed by her people. But precisely where her blood had streamed out upon the ground a small shrub was growing, which already bore a great number of bunches or clusters of a small fruit resembling currants. Feeling very hungry he gathered a quantity of this fruit and eat it as he walked. To his great surprise, notwithstanding that he had but just risen from a long rest and sound sleep, he began to feel excessively drowsy, and selecting a secluded and shady nook, he lay down and at once again fell asleep.

"He must have slept several hours, as when he recovered consciousness the sun was high in the heavens. But although it was apparently about midday he presently noticed that he did not experience any sensation of heat. It gradually dawned upon him, moreover, that, although perfectly conscious and able to reason and reflect and to distinguish clearly everything around him, this state of consciousness was wholly separate from and disconnected with the body. In fact, looking down he perceived his body lying stretched upon the grass, and still wrapped apparently in the total oblivion of the profoundest sleep.

"While he was yet lost in astonishment at the marvel of this strange condition, a fairy or spirit of the air stood beside him, and addressing him said—

"'Mubarek, why do you stand thus gazing upon the ground? Say, to what place shall we go? With so many lovely and charming scenes to which we can resort, we need not remain fettered to this earth.'

"'Fairy,' answered Mubarek, 'the choice rests with you. Take me with you wheresoever you will.'

"'Mubarek,' said the fairy, 'look up and tell me which star we shall visit.'

"Mubarek, looking up, found that the brightness of the noonday sun no longer obscured his vision, but that the stars also appeared clearly to him sparkling in all their myriad hosts throughout the heaven. Selecting modestly one of the smaller stars, a mere point of light glistening in the distance, he said—

"'We will go there.'

"In a moment, not with the speed of lightning, for the lightning lags and travels slowly, but in a moment and with the speed of thought, the swiftest of all travellers known to man, they passed at once through all the vast immeasurable space which lay between that little world and this.

"On their arrival, after they had time to look about them and realize the peculiarities of their novel surroundings, Mubarek perceived that in this strange world the light was not derived from any one fixed point, such as our sun, but came in a steady and evenly diffused brightness from every part of the clear and luminous vault of heaven. But, notwithstanding that the heat under that cloudless sky and glowing firmament must have been very great, yet to the inhabitants of that world, whose bodies are composed of quite other elements than ours and have a much higher temperature, the atmosphere, hot as it would appear to us, seems always cool and refreshing.

"At the place where Mubarek and his fairy companion had alighted there was situated a great and populous city. Its arrangements and magnificence were such that no city that has ever existed on our earth could be compared with it. In its wide thoroughfares and ample squares, planted with fine trees, gay with an infinite variety of many-tinted flowers, and adorned with lofty and ever-springing fountains of cool and sparkling liquid, which, as Mubarek afterwards discovered, was not water but the purest liquid glass, every dwelling was a palace. In that happy country there were no mean and squalid houses and no poor people.

"Mubarek and the fairy alighted in one of the noble squares of this great city, and after they had been standing only a few minutes looking about them in unfeigned wonder and admiration at all they saw, several of the inhabitants approached

them, and bidding them welcome, offered to conduct them to the mansion which had been prepared for their reception.

"'How,' asked Mubarek, 'is it possible that any house can have been prepared for me, seeing that until this moment I have had no idea or intention of coming hither?'

"'Let not that surprise you,' said one of those who had addressed them: 'Allah, whose power and beneficence extends to every place, has ordained that we who are privileged to live in this delightful world, where it is always light, and where we are never weary and want for nothing that is necessary for our subsistence, should ever occupy ourselves with the happy task of preparing, not only all the luxuries and conveniences which we ourselves may desire, but also fair abodes for those whom he may from time to time allow to come among us.'

"Saying this, they conducted Mubarek and the fairy to a spacious and beautiful palace which stood not far from the spot where they were standing.

"The house, like all those in this city, appeared to be composed of immense blocks of crystal or translucent marble of many hues. The great pillars that supported the arches, the massive walls, the glistening roof with its domes and minarets, all were composed of the same unique and costly material.

"Entering the hall of the palace through the wide portal, on each side of which, standing open, were two curiously carved doors of some substance resembling mother-of-pearl, they passed through the various apartments of the palace—all large, stately, and furnished handsomely.

"One peculiarity of this building which immediately attracted their attention was that there were no windows, sufficient of the perpetual and never-clouded brightness of the heavens passing through the semi-translucent substance of the walls to afford a subdued and pleasant light to those within them.

"Mubarek, seating himself, at the invitation of his friendly conductors, on a couch covered with a fine soft fabric of a kind such as he had never seen before, expected that the slaves who attended in this superb palace would shortly appear to do his bidding, and prepare some kind of refreshment for himself and those who had brought him thither, and who declared him to be the owner of the place and themselves to be his guests.

"As, however, after sitting and conversing for some time, no servant made his appearance, he imagined that perhaps in that country no slave would dare to present himself even to tender his services without awaiting the signal from his lord. Mubarek therefore clapped his hands to summon the attendants. No one appeared, however, and those who sat with him looked surprised, and said—

""What is the meaning of that action? Why do you clap your hands?"

""I wish," said he, 'to call the slaves, who, no doubt, are in attendance in some ante-chamber.'

""What," asked the others, 'are slaves?'

""The servants, the attendants," explained Mubarek, 'those who do the work of the house, who wait upon us, who cook our food and bring it to us.'

""There are," said the others, smiling, 'no such creatures in this world. All the inhabitants of these houses, no matter how large or fine they may be—and all our dwellings are spacious and magnificent—do whatever work may be necessary, and are ever ready to exert themselves in the interest both of themselves and of others. Besides,' the speaker continued, 'we have so many forces and contrivances, unknown perhaps in the region whence you come, that, although we have plenty of work, without which we might be dull, we have no drudgery.'

""That is all very easy to say," replied Mubarek, 'but who then kills the animals you eat, cooks them, and serves your table?'

""What!" exclaimed the other, in surprise, 'do you kill and devour each other?'

""No," answered Mubarek; 'not each other, but other animals, such as the camel, the sheep, and the goat.'

"They heard this avowal with almost the same disgust as we should an avowal of man-eating, and explained that in their world they neither killed nor ate any living thing.

""We have," they said, 'fruits pleasing to the palate and nourishing to the body. These we gather, each one for himself, and should regard a man who required some one to gather his food for him very much as you would regard a man so

lazy as to want some one to put it into his mouth for him.'

"Saying this, they rose, and Mubarek and the fairy with them, and taking each a plate or dish, every one of which was fashioned out of a single piece of the same beautiful and many-tinted crystal as composed the walls of their dwellings, they proceeded to gather in the garden which surrounded the palace all kinds of fruit.

"This fruit seemed to Mubarek to consist of all sorts of precious stones—the topaz, the jasper, the onyx, the carbuncle, the emerald, the ruby, and many others, and having brought their plates filled with this fruit into the house, these strange people sat down and ate them with much relish, praising highly their delicious flavour and nutritious qualities.

"They then replaced the plates, unsoiled by the repast they had contained, and prepared to show Mubarek and the fairy the beauties of their marvellous city.

"Instead of mounting on horseback like men, or being carried in litters like women, these singular beings had but to press a knob or spring on a pillar standing before the house, and straightway a gentle breeze arose and carried them smoothly, and swiftly or slowly as they pleased, whithersoever they desired to go.

"In this easy and pleasant manner they journeyed through the city and were received by all they met with the most friendly and affectionate greetings. In every house they entered they were welcomed with frank cordiality, and at once, without ceremony or embarrassment, fell to assisting the host in any work at which he might chance to be engaged, or discussing any topic of interest that might occur to them.

"After paying many of these visits and admiring the extraordinary richness and variety of architecture, furniture and utensils to be observed in every one of the dwellings of this happy and intelligent race, Mubarek said with some astonishment—

"In all this vast and incomparable city through which you have so long conducted me, one thing I observe to be lacking. Among all this multitude of houses, every one of which is well worthy of being styled a palace, I have not seen, and you have not shown me, a single mosque, a single building that is,' he explained, 'dedicated to the service of Allah.'

"'Truly,' said they, looking upon him with amazement, 'some of your remarks and questions are more surprising to us than anything we can say or show can appear to you. Is it possible that any people can build any house that is not to be dedicated to the service of Allah, and if not, what can be the meaning or necessity of such a building as you allude to?'

"'Have you, then,' asked Mubarek, 'no religion?'

"'What is that?' said they; 'the word is new to us.'

"'Do you not,' asked Mubarek, 'serve God?'

"'Allah forbid that it should be otherwise,' said they. 'He has created us and placed us in this world, and what He wills we do. We do not comprehend your meaning.'

"Perceiving this to be indeed the case, Mubarek did not continue to speak of religion. With these people to do what they conceived to be right was part of their life, and to do either less or more was to them incomprehensible. Their life was their religion, their work was their prayer, and their enjoyment was their praise.

"Mubarek and the fairy spent a very long period in visiting and viewing all the beauties and wonders of this strange world. How long a period they had no means of estimating, since there light is perpetual as on one bright morning that never knows an end.

"At length, not because they were tired, for weariness is there unknown, Mubarek determined again to return to the house that had been given him. He desired to enter upon the regular performance and enjoyment of the duties of the new existence in this other world. But they were told that first each might select a wife or partner of his labours and his pleasures.

"For this purpose a great number of the women were assembled, each more lovely than the fairest woman man has ever seen, and all clad in such gauzelike glistening robes as would make the finest fabrics of this world look coarse and homely.

"In this regard alone, however, are the men in that world stinted. Each has but one wife. Mubarek found the difficulty great of choosing only one. Yet, having

made his choice, he soon became contented with his lot. For in that bright world, where illness is unknown and labour never wearies, woman continues always gay and fresh and pleasant. She talks as much perhaps as her sisters in less-favoured worlds, but never learns to scold or grumble or complain.

"The fairy, however, or spirit of the air, who had brought Mubarek thither, would not accept a house or choose a wife or settle anywhere. A restless and inconstant being, it preferred to wander forth and view with never-sated curiosity the ever-varying marvels displayed by other worlds.

"A long time passed, a time unmarked by any of the changes and small vicissitudes that we encounter here. No night succeeding day, and bringing with it unconsciousness and rest. No procession of the seasons—autumn, winter, spring; but one long summer, whose heat, instead of seeming oppressive or exhausting, appeared ever cool, refreshing, and exhilarating, filled with a stream of life, not fluctuating and intermitting, but constant and untiring.

"Such then was the existence of Mubarek, till one day, happening to drop and dash in fragments a superb crystal vase which he himself had fashioned with much delightful labour as a present for his wife, the old fierce impatience of his native land and race caused him to break out into fearful imprecations.

"At once, as though on the involuntary rupture of some mysterious spell or charm, he found himself, with a rapidity equal to that by which he had mounted to that distant world, transported back to this. He was in his own body which he had left sleeping on the ground, and in the very spot at which he had left it sleeping.

"At first he was so dazed and confused by the recollection of all that he had experienced that he scarce remembered where he was. By and by becoming more composed, he recognized the danger of remaining in the grounds of the palace whose Queen he had stabbed, and making his way by paths as little frequented as he could find to the sea-coast, he beheld with joy a ship sailing at no great distance from the shore. Making signals of distress, they put out a small boat and brought him on board.

"The vessel chanced to be one bound for Bussora, whither in due time Mubarek arrived, and hastening to Bagdad, found his father, now an old man, and who had long mourned his death, still alive and overjoyed to again behold his son.

"BereyDAH abou Mubarek dying not long after his son's return, Mubarek succeeded to his father's fortune and his father's house, and lived quietly and happily in Bagdad during the remainder of his days."

The story of Mubarek being ended, and the company having thanked Abu 'Atahiyeh for having related it to them, the Caliph, in his character as host, addressed himself to Sidi ibn Thalabi.

"Friend Sidi ibn Thalabi," he said, "none of the good company here present, excepting only ourselves, has heard the story of the barber and the camel's-hair brush; will you therefore do us the favour to tell it?"

"Friend Hamad," replied Sidi ibn Thalabi, "there is, I am persuaded, no one so churlish as to refuse to do aught that he may be requested to do, with the object of amusing your guests at this hospitable and magnificent banquet."

When Sidi ibn Thalabi had concluded the story of the barber and the camel's-hair brush, many of those present were as anxious as Haroun had been when he first heard it, to know what had become of the little brush, and whether Sidi ibn Thalabi had bought it of the barber.

"No, gentlemen," said Sidi ibn Thalabi; "the barber altogether refused to sell the brush on any terms, or at any price, and declared that he would never part with it unless the Caliph himself, seated upon his throne and arrayed in his royal robes, demanded it of him."

While Sidi ibn Thalabi was concluding his tale, the Caliph had observed that one of the black slaves in attendance was showing all the teeth he possessed—and a very sound white set they were—in a capacious grin of enjoyment of the circumstances that were being narrated. Therefore, taking the little brush, and moistening it in a vase of water that stood near, he handed it to Giafer, and bid him in a whisper apply it to the top of the fellow's spine.

Giafer, rising as though to leave the room, stole behind the black without being noticed by him, so absorbed was he in what was being said. Quickly passing the brush down the back of the neck, the African, in his attitude of rapt attention, and with his wide grin of unfeigned delight, became at once fixed and unchanging, as though he were an image in black marble.

Then Haroun, turning to Sidi ibn Thalabi, said: "There is one man at least whom

you have delighted; behold the power of the brush!"

"What!" exclaimed Sidi ibn Thalabi, "is the barber present?"

"The barber is not present," said Haroun, "but only the brush."

As he said these words, Giafer, with a low bow, placed the brush again in his hands.

"Allah, be merciful to us!" exclaimed the astonished Sidi ibn Thalabi.

"Why, it can be no other than the Caliph himself!"

"It is no other," said Haroun, "yet fear nothing; I have forgiven you any pranks in which you may have indulged in my name, but would have you discontinue them henceforth; therefore I appoint you Governor of Syria; the dawn will soon appear, start for your province in the morning."

Sidi ibn Thalabi having thanked his Majesty for his gracious and generous gifts, Haroun, turning to Murad Essed, the Unfortunate Merchant, said:

"This house, once your own, and all it contains, I give to you, and my treasurer shall to-morrow bring you ten thousand dinars, with which you may recommence to trade; may you be in the future more cautious and more lucky."

The guests then departed, and the entertainment of Hamad the Merchant was at an end.

The Caliph and the Magic Tube.

One day, as Haroun Alraschid sat in one of the apartments of his palace, which overlooked a great public square of the city, he observed a large crowd of people surrounding a man, who, sometimes looking through a small tube he held in his hand, and sometimes addressing the throngs around him, seemed to attract in a high degree their interest and attention.

After watching this scene for some little time, the Caliph became curious to learn what the properties or merits of the tube might be, and sent therefore to fetch the

man into the palace. When he entered, Haroun saw that he was a fine young man, whose countenance bore a pleasing expression, while his dress, by its foreign and unusual character, plainly proclaimed him to be a traveller.

The Caliph demanding of him what might be the peculiarity of that tube which he had seen him exhibiting to the people, the man replied:

"This tube which I hold in my hand, although it is in appearance a very common, ordinary tube, possesses, in fact, powers so wonderful, that I doubt not but that your Majesty will be greatly astonished as I exhibit them to you.

"Having rendered an important service to a powerful Magician with whom I became acquainted while I was in India, he presented me with this tube, and initiated me into the proper manner of using it. By adjusting it in a particular way, the details of which I am not permitted to divulge to any one, I am enabled, on looking through the tube, to observe what is taking place either in distant parts of the world or even future events which shall take place in remote kingdoms after the lapse of many ages."

"Almirvan," said the Caliph—"for such is, I am told, your name—if your magical tube can disclose the distant scenes you speak of, it will interest me much, and you may expect with full confidence an adequate reward. But if your tube be in truth but a mystification for the vulgar, under cover of which you palm off the monstrous and incredible fictions of your imagination, why, you had better confess to me the truth at once, and depart, because, should I discover later that it is so, I will cause your tube to be broken and your head to be removed from your shoulders."

"Sire," replied Almirvan, "of the truth of that which my magic tube discloses to me I am fully persuaded, and am very willing to relate to your Majesty plainly, and without addition or concealment, whatever I may observe when I look through the tube. And first I must ask your Majesty to say whether the scene I am to witness is to be distant in space only, or also in time."

"Almirvan," said the Caliph, "I have already heard so much from the lips of so many travellers concerning the manners and customs of other, and even distant, countries, that your magic tube will probably have little that is new to inform me about them. Therefore, look far into the future, and tell me what you see; but once more I warn you to be careful that you add nothing for the purpose of

astonishing. I am tired of hearing of men who walk with their heads under their arms—of men as tall as trees, or short as pigmies, or other such like travellers' monstrous stories."

The traveller, after muttering certain words of prayer or incantation, gazed for some time steadfastly through the tube, and then, as though describing slowly and with difficulty a scene upon which he was looking, he said—

"I see distant, far distant, by reason of the countless leagues and many centuries that intervene, a strange and populous country. The land is bright and pleasant, and verdant everywhere, for water is abundant; the white cliffs upon the frontier glisten in the water, the land is an island of the sea. The inhabitants are unbelievers evidently, and rude and barbarous, for their women go about with naked faces, and every man that passes may gaze upon the best of them. The dress of all, both men and women, is strange and hideous, and one looks in vain for the well-folded turban, or the decent modest yashmak.

"This odd people have horses, and very good ones, but seldom ride them; because for the most part they have machines like chariots, made with wheels and of many various shapes; and in these they sit, and cause the horses to draw them.

"But stranger than all this, they have a creature of amazing strength and huge size, which, though larger than an elephant, is swifter than a bird. On the back of this terrible creature, which is thirty or forty feet long, and whose stomach is like a fiery furnace, two or three men will stand without fear, even when it is running at its utmost speed. Most remarkable of all, they feed the creature from behind."

"What!" exclaimed the Caliph, "is this your travellers' tale?"

"Sire," said Almirvan, "it is truly wonderful, but I describe to you that only which I behold. At the back of the creature there plainly appears to be an opening, leading into its fiery stomach, and therein the men upon its back do place the food of the creature, which appears to consist of great blocks of black marble."

"Oh, Almirvan, unhappy traveller! what hast thou done that thou shouldst be tired of thy life?" said the Caliph. "What wouldest thou have me believe—that in the farthest islands of the sea, or in remotest ages yet to come, this monster of thine, huger than an elephant, fleetier than a bird, and swallowing great pieces of

stone from behind, can by any possibility exist?"

"Your Majesty," answered Almirvan, "the people must without doubt be very skilful magicians. But most assuredly I affirm that I see them through this tube, doing not only all that I have related to you, but harnessing the creature to long strings of immense chariots, and causing it to convey in this way both themselves and their merchandize from place to place."

"At what speed didst thou say that the creature goes?" asked the Caliph.

"It goes with the speed of the wind," answered Almirvan.

"And therefore the people and their heavy merchandize go also with the speed of the wind? Is this your truthful tale? Why, every lie outstrips its predecessor."

"Your Majesty," said Almirvan, "I say but what I see."

"Almirvan," said the Caliph, "what further dost thou see?"

"I see," replied Almirvan, looking again through the magic tube, "many great and marvellous works erected in all parts of their country by this indefatigable and patient people. Many bridges spanning every stream, and others crossing even arms of the sea, and that at such a height that the largest ships can pass full sail beneath them. Great cities stud the land like jewels on the scabbard of the Caliph's scimitar. Fine palaces and noble mosques, or buildings of that character, abound, but most singular and beautiful of all is a palace formed entirely of crystal, which stands amid gardens adorned with fountains, and every facet of whose transparent walls glistens in the sun. But another circumstance that much attracts my notice is that all the country is covered with a marvellous network, like a gigantic spider's web, composed of fine metallic thread. By this means and by the aid of some incomprehensible magic the people communicate with each other with lightning-like rapidity, and no matter how great the distance that may separate them. But, indeed, this is less surprising than another contrivance that they have, by means of which two men as far apart as Bussora from Bagdad converse at their ease and by word of mouth, each evidently hearing the very voice and words of the other."

When the Caliph heard this statement, so astounding, so audacious, he was filled with rage.

"What!" he exclaimed, "can your magic tube, when it pretends to show us future times and other nations, invent no more probable and coherent wonders? What breath shall these men have, and what chests and throats must they be, if one man standing in Bagdad shall make another at Bussora hear him?"

"Take from him," said the Caliph to an officer in attendance, "his magic tube and break it in pieces. As for the fellow himself, let him be carried three times through the streets of the city mounted upon a camel and seated with his face to the tail, and let this proclamation be made by the criers: 'Thus shall it fare with the man who invents lying tales and wonders, deceiving the people and pretending to magical power which he does not possess.' After he has been carried three times round the city in this manner, let him be scourged and beheaded as a warning to others."

Thus perished miserably Almirvan, the owner of the magic tube. But whether he lied more than other men, and whether his punishment has effectually deterred others from following his pernicious example, we will not attempt to determine.

FINIS.

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