

CYRUS ADLER, ALLAN RAMSAY

**TOLD IN THE
COFFEE HOUSE:
TURKISH TALES**

Allan Ramsay

**Told in the Coffee
House: Turkish Tales**

«Public Domain»

Ramsay A.

Told in the Coffee House: Turkish Tales / A. Ramsay — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

PREFACE	5
HOW THE HODJA SAVED ALLAH	6
BETTER IS THE FOLLY OF WOMAN THAN THE WISDOM OF MAN	9
THE HANOUM AND THE UNJUST CADI	12
WHAT HAPPENED TO HADJI, A MERCHANT OF THE BEZESTAN	14
HOW THE JUNKMAN TRAVELLED TO FIND TREASURE IN HIS OWN YARD	16
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	18

Cyrus Adler, Allan Ramsay

Told in the Coffee House Turkish Tales

PREFACE

In the course of a number of visits to Constantinople, I became much interested in the tales that are told in the coffee houses. These are usually little more than rooms, with walls made of small panes of glass. The furniture consists of a tripod with a contrivance for holding the kettle, and a fire to keep the coffee boiling. A carpeted bench traverses the entire length of the room. This is occupied by turbaned Turks, their legs folded under them, smoking nargilehs or chibooks or cigarettes, and sipping coffee. A few will be engaged in a game of backgammon, but the majority enter into conversation, at first only in syllables, which gradually gives rise to a general discussion. Finally, some sage of the neighborhood comes in, and the company appeals to him to settle the point at issue. This he usually does by telling a story to illustrate his opinion. Some of the stories told on these occasions are adaptations of those already known in Arabic and Persian literature, but the Turkish mind gives them a new setting and a peculiar philosophy. They are characteristic of the habits, customs, and methods of thought of the people, and for this reason seem worthy of preservation.

Two of these tales have been taken from the Armenian, and were received from Dr. K. Ohannassian of Constantinople. For one, *The Merciful Khan*, I am indebted to Mr. George Kennan. None of them has been translated from any book or manuscript, and all are, as nearly as practicable, in the form in which they are usually narrated. Most of the stories have been collected by Mr. Allan Ramsay, who, by a long residence in Constantinople, has had special opportunities for learning to know the modern Turk. It is due to him, however, to say that for the style and editing he is in no wise responsible, and that all sins of omission and commission must be laid at my door.

CYRUS ADLER.

Cosmos Club, Washington,
February 1, 1898.

HOW THE HODJA SAVED ALLAH

Not far from the famous Mosque Bayezid an old Hodja kept a school, and very skilfully he taught the rising generation the everlasting lesson from the Book of Books. Such knowledge had he of human nature that by a glance at his pupil he could at once tell how long it would take him to learn a quarter of the Koran. He was known over the whole Empire as the best reciter and imparter of the Sacred Writings of the Prophet. For many years this Hodja, famed far and wide as the Hodja of Hodjas, had taught in this little school. The number of times he had recited the Book with his pupils is beyond counting; and should we attempt to consider how often he must have corrected them for some misplaced word, our beards would grow gray in the endeavor.

Swaying to and fro one day as fast as his old age would let him, and reciting to his pupils the latter part of one of the chapters, Bakara, divine inspiration opened his inward eye and led him to pause at the following sentence: "And he that spends his money in the ways of Allah is likened unto a grain of wheat that brings forth seven sheaves, and in each sheaf an hundred grains; and Allah giveth twofold unto whom He pleaseth." As his pupils, one after the other, recited this verse to him, he wondered why he had overlooked its meaning for so many years. Fully convinced that anything either given to Allah, or in the way that He proposes, was an investment that brought a percentage undreamed of in known commerce, he dismissed his pupils, and putting his hand into his bosom drew forth from the many folds of his dress a bag, and proceeded to count his worldly possessions.

Carefully and attentively he counted and then recounted his money, and found that if invested in the ways of Allah it would bring a return of no less than one thousand piasters.

"Think of it," said the Hodja to himself, "one thousand piasters! One thousand piasters! Mashallah! a fortune."

So, having dismissed his school, he sallied forth, his bag of money in his hand, and began distributing its contents to the needy that he met in the highways. Ere many hours had passed the whole of his savings was gone. The Hodja was very happy; for now he was the creditor in Allah's books for one thousand piasters.

He returned to his house and ate his evening meal of bread and olives, and was content.

The next day came. The thousand piasters had not yet arrived. He ate his bread, he imagined he had olives, and was content.

The third day came. The old Hodja had no bread and he had no olives. He suffered the pangs of hunger. So when the end of the day had come, and his pupils had departed to their homes, the Hodja, with a full heart and an empty stomach, walked out of the town, and soon got beyond the city walls.

There, where no one could hear him, he lamented his sad fate, and the great calamity that had befallen him in his old age.

What sin had he committed? What great wrong had his ancestors done, that the wrath of the Almighty had thus fallen on him, when his earthly course was well-nigh run?

"Ya! Allah! Allah!" he cried, and beat his breast.

As if in answer to his cry, the howl of the dreaded Fakir Dervish came over across the plain. In those days the Fakir Dervish was a terror in the land. He knocked at the door, and it was opened. He asked, and received food. If refused, life often paid the penalty.

The Hodja's lamentations were now greater than ever; for should the Dervish ask him for food and the Hodja have nothing to give, he would certainly be killed.

"Allah! Allah! Allah! Guide me now. Protect one of your faithful followers," cried the frightened Hodja, and he looked around to see if there was any one to rescue him from his perilous position. But not a soul was to be seen, and the walls of the city were five miles distant. Just then the howl of the Dervish again reached his ear, and in terror he flew, he knew not whither. As luck would

have it he came upon a tree, up which, although stiff from age and weak from want, the Hodja, with wonderful agility, scrambled and, trembling like a leaf, awaited his fate.

Nearer and nearer came the howling Dervish, till at last his long hair could be seen floating in the air, as with rapid strides he preceded the wind upon his endless journey.

On and on he came, his wild yell sending the blood, from very fear, to unknown parts of the poor Hodja's body and leaving his face as yellow as a melon.

To his utter dismay, the Hodja saw the Dervish approach the tree and sit down under its shade.

Sighing deeply, the Dervish said in a loud voice, "Why have I come into this world? Why were my forefathers born? Why was anybody born? Oh, Allah! Oh, Allah! What have you done! Misery! Misery! Nothing but misery to mankind and everything living. Shall I not be avenged for all the misery my father and my father's fathers have suffered? I shall be avenged."

Striking his chest a loud blow, as if to emphasize the decision he had come to, the Dervish took a small bag that lay by his side, and slowly proceeded to untie the leather strings that bound it. Bringing forth from it a small image, he gazed at it a moment and then addressed it in the following terms:

"You, Job! you bore much; you have written a book in which your history is recorded; you have earned the reputation of being the most patient man that ever lived; yet I have read your history and found that when real affliction oppressed you, you cursed God. You have made men believe, too, that there is a reward in this life for all the afflictions they suffer. You have misled mankind. For these sins no one has ever punished you. Now I will punish you," and taking his long, curved sword in his hand he cut off the head of the figure.

The Dervish bent forward, took another image and, gazing upon it with a contemptuous smile, thus addressed it:

"David, David, singer of songs of peace in this world and in the world to come, I have read your sayings in which you counsel men to lead a righteous life for the sake of the reward which they are to receive. I have learned that you have misled your fellow-mortals with your songs of peace and joy. I have read your history, and I find that you have committed many sins. For these sins and for misleading your fellowmen you have never been punished. Now I will punish you," and taking his sword in his hand he cut off David's head.

Again the Dervish bent forward and brought forth an image which he addressed as follows:

"You, Solomon, are reputed to have been the wisest man that ever lived. You had command over the host of the Genii and could control the legion of the demons. They came at the bidding of your signet ring, and they trembled at the mysterious names to which you gave utterance. You understood every living thing. The speech of the beasts of the field, of the birds of the air, of the insects of the earth, and of the fishes of the sea, was known unto you. Yet when I read your history I found that in spite of the vast knowledge that was vouchsafed unto you, you committed many wrongs and did many foolish things, which in the end brought misery into the world and destruction unto your people; and for all these no one has ever punished you. Now I will punish you," and taking his sword he cut off Solomon's head.

Again the Dervish bent forward and brought forth from the bag another figure, which he addressed thus:

"Jesus, Jesus, prophet of God, you came into this world to atone, by giving your blood, for the sins of mankind and to bring unto them a religion of peace. You founded a church, whose history I have studied, and I see that it set fathers against their children and brethren against one another; that it brought strife into the world; that the lives of men and women and children were sacrificed so that the rivers ran red with blood unto the seas. Truly you were a great prophet, but the misery you caused must be avenged. For it no one has yet punished you. Now I will punish you," and he took his sword and cut off Jesus' head.

With a sorrowful face the Dervish bent forward and brought forth another image from the bag.

"Mohammed," he said, "I have slain Job, David, Solomon, and Jesus. What shall I do with you? After the followers of Jesus had shed much blood, their religion spread over the world, was acceptable unto man, and the nations were at peace. Then you came into the world, and you brought a new religion, and father rose against father, and brother rose against brother; hatred was sown between your followers and the followers of Jesus, and again the rivers ran red with blood unto the seas; and you have not been punished. For this I will punish you. By the beard of my forefathers, whose blood was made to flow in your cause, you too must die," and with a blow the head of Mohammed fell to the ground.

Then the Dervish prostrated himself to the earth, and after a silent prayer rose and brought forth from the bag the last figure. Reverently he bowed to it, and then he addressed it as follows:

"Oh, Allah! The Allah of Allahs. There is but one Allah, and thou art He. I have slain Job, David, Solomon, Jesus, and Mohammed for the folly that they have brought into the world. Thou, God, art all powerful. All men are thy children, thou createst them and bringest them into the world. The thoughts that they think are thy thoughts. If all these men have brought all this evil into the world, it is thy fault. Shall I punish them and allow thee to go unhurt? No. I must punish thee also," and he raised his sword to strike.

As the sword circled in the air the Hodja, secreted in the tree, forgot the fear in which he stood of the Dervish. In the excitement of the moment he cried out in a loud tone of voice: "Stop! Stop! He owes me one thousand piasters."

The Dervish reeled and fell senseless to the ground. The Hodja was overcome at his own words and trembled with fear, convinced that his last hour had arrived. The Dervish lay stretched upon his back on the grass like one dead. At last the Hodja took courage. Breaking a twig from off the tree, he threw it down upon the Dervish's face, but the Dervish made no sign. The Hodja took more courage, removed one of his heavy outer shoes and threw it on the outstretched figure of the Dervish, but still the Dervish lay motionless. The Hodja carefully climbed down the tree, gave the body of the Dervish a kick, and climbed back again, and still the Dervish did not stir. At length the Hodja descended from the tree and placed his ear to the Dervish's heart. It did not beat. The Dervish was dead.

"Ah, well," said the Hodja, "at least I shall not starve. I will take his garments and sell them and buy me some bread."

The Hodja commenced to remove the Dervish's garments. As he took off his belt he found that it was heavy. He opened it, and saw that it contained gold. He counted the gold and found that it was exactly one thousand piasters.

The Hodja turned his face toward Mecca and raising his eyes to heaven said, "Oh God, you have kept your promise, but," he added, "not before I saved your life."

BETTER IS THE FOLLY OF WOMAN THAN THE WISDOM OF MAN

There lived in Constantinople an old Hodja, a learned man, who had a son. The boy followed in his father's footsteps, went every day to the Mosque Aya Sofia, seated himself in a secluded spot, to the left of the pillar bearing the impress of the Conqueror's hand, and engaged in the study of the Koran. Daily he might be seen seated, swaying his body to and fro, and reciting to himself the verses of the Holy Book.

The dearest wish of a Mohammedan theological student is to be able to recite the entire Koran by heart. Many years are spent in memorizing the Holy Book, which must be recited with a prescribed cantillation, and in acquiring a rhythmical movement of the body which accompanies the chant.

When Abdul, for that was the young man's name, had reached his nineteenth year, he had, by the most assiduous study, finally succeeded in mastering three-fourths of the Koran. At this achievement his pride rose, his ambition was fired, and he determined to become a great man.

The day that he reached this decision he did not go to the Mosque, but stopped at home, in his father's house, and sat staring at the fire burning in the grate. Several times the father asked:

"My son, what do you see in the fire?"

And each time the son answered:

"Nothing, father."

He was very young; he could not see.

Finally, the young man picked up courage and gave expression to his thoughts.

"Father," he said, "I wish to become a great man."

"That is very easy," said the father.

"And to be a great man," continued the son, "I must first go to Mecca." For no Mohammedan priest or theologian, or even layman, has fulfilled all of the cardinal precepts of his faith unless he has made the pilgrimage to the Holy City.

To his son's last observation the father blandly replied: "It is very easy to go to Mecca."

"How, easy?" asked the son. "On the contrary, it is very difficult; for the journey is costly, and I have no money."

"Listen, my son," said the father. "You must become a scribe, the writer of the thoughts of your brethren, and your fortune is made."

"But I have not even the implements necessary for a scribe," said the son.

"All that can be easily arranged," said the father; "your grandfather had an ink-horn; I will give it you; I will buy you some writing-paper, and we will get you a box to sit in; all that you need to do is to sit still, look wise and your fortune is made."

And indeed the advice was good. For letter-writing is an art which only the few possess. The ability to write by no means carries with it the ability to compose. Epistolary genius is rare.

Abdul was much rejoiced at the counsel that had been given him, and lost no time in carrying out the plan. He took his grandfather's ink-horn, the paper his father bought, got himself a box and began his career as a scribe.

Abdul was a child, he knew nothing, but deeming himself wise he sought to surpass the counsel of his father.

"To look wise," he said, "is not sufficient; I must have some other attraction."

And after much thought he hit upon the following idea. Over his box he painted a legend: "The wisdom of man is greater than the wisdom of woman." People thought the sign very clever, customers came, the young Hodja took in many piasters and he was correspondingly happy.

This sign one day attracted the eyes and mind of a Hanoum (Turkish lady). Seeing that Abdul was a manly youth, she went to him and said:

"Hodja, I have a difficult letter to write. I have heard that thou art very wise, so I have come to thee. To write the letter thou wilt need all thy wit. Moreover, the letter is a long one, and I cannot stand here while it is being written. Come to my Konak (house) at three this afternoon, and we will write the letter."

The Hodja was overcome with admiration for his fair client, and surprised at the invitation. He was enchanted, his heart beat wildly, and so great was his agitation that his reply of acquiescence was scarcely audible.

The invitation had more than the charm of novelty to make it attractive. He had never talked with a woman outside of his own family circle. To be admitted to a lady's house was in itself an adventure.

Long before the appointed time, the young Hodja – impetuous youth – gathered together his reeds, ink, and sand. With feverish step he wended his way to the house. Lattices covered the windows, a high wall surrounded the garden, and a ponderous gate barred the entrance. Thrice he raised the massive knocker.

"Who is there?" called a voice from within.

"The scribe," was the reply.

"It is well," said the porter; the gate was unbarred, and the Hodja permitted to enter. Directly he was ushered into the apartment of his fair client.

The lady welcomed him cordially.

"Ah! Hodja Effendi, I am glad to see you; pray sit down."

The Hodja nervously pulled out his writing-implements.

"Do not be in such a hurry," said the lady. "Refresh yourself; take a cup of coffee, smoke a cigarette, and we will write the letter afterwards."

So he lit a cigarette, drank a cup of coffee, and they fell to talking. Time flew; the minutes seemed like seconds, and the hours were as minutes. While they were thus enjoying themselves there suddenly came a heavy knock at the gate.

"It is my husband, the Pasha," cried the lady. "What shall I do? If he finds you here, he will kill you! I am so frightened."

The Hodja was frightened too. Again there came a knock at the gate.

"I have it," and taking Abdul by the arm, she said, "you must get into the box," indicating a large chest in the room. "Quick, quick, if you prize your life utter not a word, and Inshallah I will save you."

Abdul now, too late, saw his folly. It was his want of experience; but driven by the sense of danger, he entered the chest; the lady locked it and took the key.

A moment afterwards the Pasha came in.

"I am very tired," he said; "bring me coffee and a chibook."

"Good evening, Pasha Effendi," said the lady. "Sit down. I have something to tell you."

"Bah!" said the Pasha; "I want none of your woman's talk; 'the hair of woman is long, and her wits are short,' says the proverb. Bring me my pipe."

"But, Pasha Effendi," said the lady, "I have had an adventure to-day."

"Bah!" said the Pasha; "what adventure can a woman have – forgot to paint your eyebrows or color your nails, I suppose."

"No, Pasha Effendi. Be patient, and I will tell you. I went out to-day to write a letter."

"A letter?" said the Pasha; "to whom would you write a letter?"

"Be patient," she said, "and I will tell you my story. So I came to the box of a young scribe with beautiful eyes."

"A young man with beautiful eyes," shouted the Pasha. "Where is he? I'll kill him!" and he drew his sword.

The Hodja in the chest heard every word and trembled in every limb.

"Be patient, Pasha Effendi; I said I had an adventure, and you did not believe me. I told the young man that the letter was long, and I could not stand in the street to write it. So I asked him to come and see me this afternoon."

"Here? to this house?" thundered the Pasha.

"Yes, Pasha Effendi," said the lady. "So the Hodja came here, and I gave him coffee and a cigarette, and we talked, and the minutes seemed like seconds, and the hours were as minutes. All at once came your knock at the gate, and I said to the Hodja, 'That is the Pasha; and if he finds you here, he will kill you.'"

"And I will kill him," screamed the Pasha, "where is he?"

"Be patient, Pasha Effendi," said the lady, "and I will tell you. When you knocked a second time, I suddenly thought of the chest, and I put the Hodja in."

"Let me at him!" screamed the Pasha. "I'll cut off his head!"

"O Pasha," she said, "what a hurry you are in to slay this comely youth. He is your prey; he cannot escape you. The youth is not only in the box, but it is locked, and the key is in my pocket. Here it is."

The lady walked over to the Pasha, stretched out her hand and gave him the key.

As he took it, she said:

"Philopena!"

"Bah!" said the Pasha, in disgust. He threw the key on the floor and left the harem, slamming the door behind him.

After he had gone, the lady took up the key, unlocked the door, and let out the trembling Hodja.

"Go now, Hodja, to your box," she said. "Take down your sign and write instead: 'The wit of woman is twofold the wit of man,' for I am a woman, and in one day I have fooled two men."

THE HANOUM AND THE UNJUST CADI

It was, and still is, in some parts of Constantinople, the custom of the refuse-gatherer to go about the streets with a basket on his back, and a wooden shovel in his hand, calling out 'refuse removed.'

A certain Chepdji, plying his trade, had, in the course of five years of assiduous labor, amassed, to him, the no unimportant sum of five hundred piasters. He was afraid to keep this money by him; so hearing the Cadi of Stamboul highly and reverently spoken of, he decided to entrust his hard-earned savings to the Cadi's keeping.

Going to the Cadi, he said: "Oh learned and righteous man, for five long years have I labored, carrying the dregs and dross of rich and poor alike, and I have saved a sum of five hundred piasters. With the help of Allah, in another two years I shall have saved a further sum of at least one hundred piasters, when, Inshallah, I shall return to my country and clasp my wife and children again. In the meantime you will be granting a boon to your slave, if you will consent to keep this money for me until the time for departure has come."

The Cadi replied: "Thou hast done well, my son; the money will be kept and given to thee when required."

The poor Chepdji, well satisfied, departed. But after a very short time he learned that several of his friends were about to return to their Memleket (province), and he decided to join them, thinking that his five hundred piasters were ample for the time being, 'Besides,' said he, 'who knows what may or may not happen in the next two years?' So he decided to depart with his friends at once.

He went to the Cadi, explained that he had changed his mind, that he was going to leave for his country immediately, and asked for his money. The Cadi called him a dog and ordered him to be whipped out of the place by his servants. Alas! what could the poor Chepdji do! He wept in impotent despair, as he counted the number of years he must yet work before beholding his loved ones.

One day, while moving the dirt from the Konak of a wealthy Pasha, his soul uttered a sigh which reached the ears of the Hanoum, and from the window she asked him why he sighed so deeply. He replied that he sighed for something that could in no way interest her. The Hanoum's sympathy was excited, and after much persuasion, he finally, with tears in his eyes, related to her his great misfortune. The Hanoum thought for a few minutes and then told him to go the following day to the Cadi at a certain hour and again ask for the money as if nothing had happened.

The Hanoum in the meantime gathered together a quantity of jewelry, to the value of several hundred pounds, and instructed her favorite and confidential slave to come with her to the Cadi and remain outside whilst she went in, directing her that when she saw the Chepdji come out and learned that he had gotten his money, to come in the Cadi's room hurriedly and say to her, "your husband has arrived from Egypt, and is waiting for you at the Konak."

The Hanoum then went to the Cadi, carrying in her hand a bag containing the jewelry. With a profound salaam she said:

"Oh Cadi, my husband, who is in Egypt and who has been there for several years, has at last asked me to come and join him there; these jewels are of great value, and I hesitate to take them with me on so long and dangerous a journey. If you would kindly consent to keep them for me until my return, or if I never return to keep them as a token of my esteem, I will think of you with lifelong gratitude."

The Hanoum then began displaying the rich jewelry. Just then the Chepdji entered, and bending low, said:

"Oh master, your slave has come for his savings in order to proceed to his country."

"Ah, welcome," said the Cadi, "so you are going already!" and immediately ordered the treasurer to pay the five hundred piasters to the Chepdji.

"You see," said the Cadi to the Hanoum, "what confidence the people have in me. This money I have held for some time without receipt or acknowledgment; but directly it is asked for it is paid."

No sooner had the Chepdji gone out of the door, than the Hanoum's slave came rushing in, crying: "Hanoum Effendi! Hanoum Effendi! Your husband has arrived from Egypt, and is anxiously awaiting you at the Konak."

The Hanoum, in well-feigned excitement, gathered up her jewelry and, wishing the Cadi a thousand years of happiness, departed.

The Cadi was thunderstruck, and caressing his beard with grave affection thoughtfully said: "Allah! Allah! For forty years have I been judge, but never was a cause pleaded in this fashion before."

WHAT HAPPENED TO HADJI, A MERCHANT OF THE BEZESTAN

Hadji was a married man, but even Turkish married men are not invulnerable to the charms of other women. It happened one day, when possibly the engrossing power of his lawful wife's influence was feeble upon him, that a charming Hanoum came to his shop to purchase some spices. After the departure of his fair visitor Hadji, do what he might, could not drive from his mind's eye, either her image, or her attractive power. He was further greatly puzzled by a tiny black bag containing twelve grains of wheat, which the Hanoum had evidently forgotten.

Till a late hour that night did Hadji remain in his shop, in the hope that either the Hanoum or one of her servants would come for the bag, and thus give him the means of seeing her again or at least of learning where she lived. But Hadji was doomed to disappointment, and, much preoccupied, he returned to his home. There he sat, unresponsive to his wife's conversation, thinking, and no doubt making mental comparisons between her and his visitor.

Hadji remained downcast day after day, and at last, giving way to his wife's entreaties to share his troubles, he frankly told her what had happened, and that ever since that day his soul was in his visitor's bondage.

"Oh husband," replied his wife, "and do you not understand what that black bag containing the twelve grains of wheat means?"

"Alas! no," replied Hadji.

"Why, my husband, it is plain, plain as if it had been told. She lives in the Wheat Market, at house No. 12, with a black door."

Much excited, Hadji rushed off and found that there was a No. 12 in the Wheat Market, with a black door, so he promptly knocked. The door opened, and who should he behold but the lady in question? She, however, instead of speaking to him, threw a basin of water out into the street and then shut the door. Hadji, with mingled feelings of gratitude to his wife for having so accurately directed him, but none the less surprised at his reception, lingered about the doorway for a time and then returned home. He greeted his wife more pleasantly than he had for many days, and told her of his strange reception.

"Why," said his wife, "don't you understand what the basin of water thrown out of the door means?"

"Alas! no," said Hadji.

"Veyh! Veyh! (an exclamation of pity) it means that at the back of the house there is a running stream, and that you must go to her that way."

Off rushed Hadji and found that his wife was right; there was a running stream at the back of the house, so he knocked at the back door. The Hanoum, however, instead of opening it, came to the window, showed a mirror, reversed it and then disappeared. Hadji lingered at the back of the house for a long time, but seeing no further sign of life, he returned to his home much dejected. On entering the house, his wife greeted him with: "Well, was it not as I told you?"

"Yes," said Hadji. "You are truly a wonderful woman, Mashallah! But I do not know why she came to the window and showed me a mirror both in front and back, instead of opening the door."

"Oh," said his wife, "that is very simple; she means that you must go when the face of the moon has reversed itself, about ten o'clock." The hour arrived, Hadji hurried off, and so did his wife; the one to see his love, and the other to inform the police.

Whilst Hadji and his charmer were talking in the garden the police seized them and carried them both off to prison, and Hadji's wife, having accomplished her mission, returned home.

The next morning she baked a quantity of lokum cakes, and taking them to the prison, begged entrance of the guards and permission to distribute these cakes to the prisoners, for the repose of the souls of her dead. This being a request which could not be denied, she was allowed to enter. Finding the cell in which the lady who had infatuated her husband was confined, she offered to save her the disgrace of the exposure, provided she would consent never again to look upon Hadji, the merchant, with envious or loving eyes. The conditions were gratefully accepted, and Hadji's wife changed places with the prisoner.

When they were brought before the judge, Hadji was thunderstruck to see his wife, but being a wise man he held his peace, and left her to do the talking, which she did most vigorously, vehemently protesting against the insult inflicted on both her and her husband in bringing them to prison, because they chose to converse in a garden, being lawfully wedded people; in witness whereof, she called upon the Bekdji (watchman) and the Imam (priest) of the district and several of her neighbors.

Poor Hadji was dumfounded, and, accompanied by his better half, left the prison, where he had expected to stay at least a year or two, saying: "Truly thou art a wonderful woman, Mashallah."

HOW THE JUNKMAN TRAVELLED TO FIND TREASURE IN HIS OWN YARD

In one of the towers overlooking the Sea of Marmora and skirting the ancient city of Stamboul, there lived an old junkman, who earned a precarious livelihood in gathering cinders and useless pieces of iron, and selling them to smiths.

Often did he moralize on the sad Kismet that had reduced him to the task of daily laboring for his bread to make a shoe, perhaps for an ass. Surely he, a true Mussulman, might at least be permitted to ride the ass. His eternal longing often found satisfaction in passing his hours of sleep in dreams of wealth and luxury. But with the dawning of the day came reality and increased longing.

Often did he call on the spirit of sleep to reverse matters, but in vain; with the rising of the sun began the gathering of the cinders and iron.

One night he dreamt that he begged this nocturnal visitor to change his night to day, and the spirit said to him: "Go to Egypt, and it shall be so."

This encouraging phrase haunted him by day and inspired him by night. So persecuted was he with the thought that when his wife said to him, from the door, "Have you brought home any bread?" he would reply, "No, I have not gone; I will go to-morrow;" thinking she had asked him, "Have you gone to Egypt?"

At last, when friends and neighbors began to pity poor Ahmet, for that was his name, as a man on whom the hand of Allah was heavily laid, removing his intelligence, he one morning left his house, saying: "I go! I go! to the land of wealth!" And he left his wife wringing her hands in despair, while the neighbors tried to comfort her. Poor Ahmet went straight on board a boat which he had been told was bound for Iskender (Alexandria), and assured the captain that he was summoned thither, and that he was bound to take him. Half-witted and mad persons being more holy than others, Ahmet was conveyed to Iskender.

Arriving in Iskender, Hadji Ahmet roamed far and wide, proceeding as far as Cairo, in search of the luxuries he had enjoyed at Constantinople when in the land of Morpheus, which he had been promised to enjoy in the sunshine, if he came to Egypt. Alas! for Hadji Ahmet; the only bread he had to eat was that which was given him by sympathizing humanity. Time sped on, sympathy was growing tired of expending itself on Hadji Ahmet, and his crusts of bread were few and far between.

Wearied of life and suffering, he decided to ask Allah to let him die, and wandering out to the Pyramids he solicited the stones to have pity and fall on him. It happened that a Turk heard this prayer, and said to him:

"Why so miserable, father? Has your soul been so strangled that you prefer its being dashed out of your body, to its remaining the prescribed time in bondage?"

"Yes, my son," said Hadji Ahmet. "Far away in Stamboul, with the help of God, I managed as a junkman to feed my wife and myself; but here am I, in Egypt, a stranger, alone and starving, with possibly my wife already dead of starvation, and all this through a dream."

"Alas! Alas! my father! that you at your age should be tempted to wander so far from home and friends, because of a dream. Why, were I to obey my dreams, I would at this present moment be in Stamboul, digging for a treasure that lies buried under a tree. I can even now, although I have never been there, describe where it is. In my mind's eye I see a wall, a great wall, that must have been built many years ago, and supporting or seeming to support this wall are towers with many corners, towers that are round, towers that are square, and others that have smaller towers within them. In one of these towers, a square one, there live an old man and woman, and close by the tower is a large tree, and every night when I dream of the place, the old man tells me to dig and disclose the treasure. But,

father, I am not such a fool as to go to Stamboul and seek to verify this. It is an oft-repeated dream and nothing more. See what you have been reduced to by coming so far."

"Yes," said Hadji Ahmet, "it is a dream and nothing more, but you have interpreted it. Allah be praised, you have encouraged me; I will return to my home."

And Hadji Ahmet and the young stranger parted, the one grateful that it had pleased Allah to give him the power to revive and encourage a drooping spirit, and the other grateful to Allah that when he had despaired of life a stranger should come and give him the interpretation of his dream. He certainly had wandered far and long to learn that the treasure was in his own garden.

Hadji Ahmet in due course, much to the astonishment of both wife and neighbors, again appeared upon the scene not a much changed man. In fact, he was the cinder and iron gatherer of old.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.