

VOLTAIRE

ZADIG; OR, THE
BOOK OF FATE

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Voltaire

Zadig; Or, The Book of Fate

— *Quo fata trahunt, retrahuntque sequamur.*

Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum,

Tendimus in Latium. — Virg.

Thou Joy of ev'ry Eye! Thou Torment of every Heart! Thou Intellectual Light! I do not kiss the Dust of thy Feet; because thou seldom art seen out of the Seraglio, and when thou art, thou walkest only on the Carpets of *Iran*, or on Beds of Roses.

I here present you with a Translation of the Work of an ancient *Sage*, who having the Happiness of living free from all Avocations, thought proper, by Way of Amusement, to write the History of *Zadig*; a Performance, that comprehends in it more Instruction than, 'tis possible, you may at first be aware of. I beg you would indulge me so far as to read it over, and then pass your impartial Judgment upon it: For notwithstanding you are in the Bloom of your Life; tho' ev'ry Pleasure courts you; tho' you are Nature's Darling, and have internal Qualities in proportion to your Beauty; tho' the World resounds your Praises from Morning till Night, and consequently you must have a just Title to a superior Degree of Understanding than the rest of your Sex; Yet your Wit is no ways flashy; Your Taste is refin'd, and I have had the Honour to hear you talk more learnedly

than the wisest *Dervise*, with his venerable Beard, and pointed Bonnet: You are discreet, and yet not mistrustful; you are easy, but not weak; you are beneficent with Discretion; you love your Friends, and create yourself no Enemies. Your most sprightly Flights borrow no Graces from Detraction; you never speak a misbecoming Word, nor do an ill-natur'd Action, tho' 'tis always in your Power. In a Word, your Soul is as spotless as your Person. You have, moreover, a little Fund of Philosophy, which gives me just Grounds to hope that you'll relish this Historical Performance better than any other Lady of your Quality would do.

It was originally compos'd in the *Chaldean* Language, to which both you and my self are perfect Strangers. It was translated, however, into *Arabic*, for the Amusement of the celebrated Sultan Ouloug-beg. It first appear'd in Public, when the *Arabian* and *Persian* Tales of One Thousand and One Nights, and One Thousand and One Days, were most in Vogue: Ouloug chose rather to entertain himself with the Adventures of *Zadig*. The Sultanas indeed were more fond of the former. How can you, said the judicious Ouloug, be so partial, as to prefer a Set of Tales, that are no ways interesting or instructive, to a Work, that has a Variety of Beauties to recommend it? Oh! replied the Sultanas, the less Sense there is in them, the more they are in Taste; and the less their Merit, the greater their Commendation.

I flatter my self, thou Patroness of Wisdom, that thou wilt not copy after those thoughtless Sultanas, but give into the

Sentiments of Ouloug. I am in hopes likewise, when you are tir'd with the Conversation of such as make those senseless Romances abovemention'd their favourite Amusements, you will vouchsafe to listen for one Minute or two, to the Dictates of solid Sense. Had you been *Thalestris* in the Days of *Scander*, the Son of *Philip*; had you been the Queen of *Sheba*, in the Reign of *Solomon*, those Kings would have been proud to have taken a Tour to visit you.

May the Celestial Virtues grant, that your Pleasures may meet with no Interruption; your Charms know no Decay; and may your Felicity be everlasting!

SADI.

I, Who have subscrib'd my Name hereto, ambitious of being thought a Man of Wit and Learning, have perus'd this Manuscript, which I find, to my great Mortification, amusing, moral, philosophical, and fit to be read, even by those who have an utter Aversion to Romances; for which Reason, I have depretiated it, as it deserves, and have in direct Terms told the Cadi-Lesquier, that 'tis a most detestable Performance.

CHAP. I.

The Blind Eye

In the Reign of King *Moabdar*, there was a young Man, a Native of *Babylon*, by name *Zadig*; who was not only endowed by Nature with an uncommon Genius, but born of illustrious Parents, who bestowed on him an Education no ways inferior to his Birth. Tho' rich and young, he knew how to give a Check to his Passions; he was no ways self-conceited; he didn't always act up to the strictest Rules of Reason himself, and knew how to look on the Foibles of others, with an Eye of Indulgence. Every one was surpriz'd to find, that notwithstanding he had such a Fund of Wit, he never insulted; nay, never so much as rallied any of his Companions, for that Tittle Tattle, which was so vague and empty, so noisy and confus'd; for those rash Reflections, those illiterate Conclusions, and those insipid Jokes; and, in short, for that Flow of unmeaning Words, which was call'd polite Conversation in *Babylon*. He had learned from the first Book of *Zoroaster*, that Self-love is like a Bladder full blown, which when once prick'd, discharges a kind of petty Tempest. *Zadig*, in particular, never boasted of his Contempt of the Fair Sex, or of his Facility to make Conquests amongst them. He was of a generous Spirit; insomuch, that he was not afraid of obliging even an ungrateful Man; strictly adhering to that wise

Maxim of Zoroaster. When you are eating, throw an Offal to the Dogs that are under the Table, lest they should be tempted to bite you. He was as wise as he could well be wish'd; since he was fond of no Company, but such as were distinguish'd for Men of Sense. As he was well-grounded, in all the Sciences of the antient *Chaldeans*, he was no Stranger to those Principles of Natural Philosophy, which were then known: And understood as much of Metaphysics as any one in all Ages after him; that is to say, he knew little or nothing of the Matter. He was firmly convinc'd, that the Year consisted of 365 Days and an half, tho' directly repugnant to the new Philosophy of the Age he liv'd in; and that the Sun was situated in the Center of the Earth; And when the Chief Magi told him, with an imperious Air, that he maintain'd erroneous Principles; and that it was an Indignity offered to the Government under which he liv'd, to imagine the Sun should roll round its own Axis, and that the Year consisted of twelve Months, he knew how to sit still and quiet, without shewing the least Tokens of Resentment or Contempt.

As *Zadig* was immensely rich, and had consequently Friends without Number; and as he was a Gentleman of a robust Constitution, and remarkably handsome; as he was endowed with a plentiful Share of ready and inoffensive Wit: And, in a Word, as his Heart was perfectly sincere and open, he imagin'd himself, in some Measure, qualified to be perfectly happy. For which Purpose he determin'd to marry a gay young Lady (one *Semira* by name) whose Beauty, Birth and Fortune, render'd her the

most desirable Person in all *Babylon*. He had a sincere Affection for her, grounded on Honour, and *Semira* conceiv'd as tender a Passion for him. They were just upon the critical Minute of a mutual Conjunction in the Bands of Matrimony, when, as they were walking Hand in Hand together towards one of the Gates of *Babylon*, under the Shade of a Row of Palm-trees, that grew on the Banks of the River *Euphrates*, they were beset by a Band of Ruffians, arm'd with Sabres, Bows and Arrows. They were the Guards, it seems, of young *Orcan* (Nephew of a certain Minister of State) whom the Parasites, kept by his Uncle, had buoy'd up with a Permission to do, with Impunity, whatever he thought proper. This young Rival, tho' he had none of those internal Qualities to boast of that *Zadig* had, yet he imagin'd himself a Man of more Power; and for that Reason, was perfectly outrageous to see the other prefer'd before him. This Fit of Jealousy, the Result of mere Vanity, prompted him to think that he was deeply in Love with the fair *Semira*; and fir'd with that amorous Notion, he was determin'd to take her away from *Zadig*, by Dint of Arms. The Ravishers rush'd rudely upon her, and in the Transport of their Rage, drew the Blood of a Beauty, the Sight of whose Charms would have soften'd the very Tigers of Mount *Imaiis*. The injur'd Lady rent the very Heavens with her Exclamations. Where's my dear Husband, she cried? They have torn me from the Arms of the only Man whom I adore. She never reflected on the Danger to which she was expos'd; her sole Concern was for her beloved *Zadig*. At

the same Time, he defended her, like a Lover, and a Man of Integrity and Courage. With the Assistance only of two domestic Servants, he put those Sons of Violence to Flight, and conducted *Semira*, bloody as she was, and in fainting Fits, to her own House. No sooner was she come to her self, but she fix'd her lovely Eyes on her Dear Deliverer. O *Zadig*, said she, I love thee as affectionately, as if I were actually thy Bride: I love thee, as the Man, to whom I owe my Life, and what is dearer to me, the Preservation of my Honour. No Heart sure could be more deeply smitten than that of *Semira*. Never did the Lips of the fairest Creature living utter softer Sounds; never did the most enamoured Lady breathe such tender Sentiments of Love and Gratitude for his signal Service; never, in short, did the most affectionate Bride express such Transports of Joy for the fondest Husband. Her Wounds, however, were but very superficial, and she was soon recover'd. *Zadig* receiv'd a Wound that was much more dangerous: An unlucky Arrow had graz'd one of his Eyes, and the Orifice was deep. *Semira* was incessant in her Prayers to the Gods that they might restore her *Zadig*. Her Eyes were Night and Day overwhelm'd with Tears. She waited with Impatience for the happy Moment, when those of *Zadig* might dart their Fires upon her; but alas! the wounded Eye grew so inflam'd and swell'd, that she was terrified to the last Degree. She sent as far as *Memphis* for *Hermes*, the celebrated Physician there, who instantly attended his new Patient with a numerous Retinue. Upon his first Visit, he peremptorily declared that *Zadig* would

lose his Eye; and foretold not only the Day, but the very Hour when that woful Disaster would befall him. Had it been, said that Great Man, his right Eye, I could have administred an infallible Specific; but as it is, his Misfortune is beyond the Art of Man to cure. Tho' all *Babylon* pitied the hard Case of *Zadig*, they equally stood astonish'd at the profound Penetration of *Hermes*. Two Days after the Imposthume broke, without any Application, and *Zadig* soon after was perfectly recover'd. *Hermes* thereupon wrote a very long and elaborate Treatise, to prove that his Wound ought not to have been heal'd. *Zadig*, however, never thought it worth his while to peruse his learned Lucubrations; but, as soon as ever he could get abroad, determin'd to pay the Lady a Visit, who had testified such uncommon Concern for his Welfare, and for whose Sake alone he wish'd for the Restoration of his Sight. *Semira* he found had been out of Town for three Days; but was inform'd, by the bye, that his intended Spouse, having conceived an implacable Aversion to a one-ey'd Man, was that very Night to be married to *Orcan*. At this unexpected ill News, poor *Zadig* was perfectly thunder-struck: He laid his Disappointment so far to Heart, that in a short Time he was become a mere Skeleton, and was sick almost to death for some Months afterwards. At last, however, by Dint of Reflection, he got the better of his Distemper; and the Acuteness of the Pain he underwent, in some Measure, contributed towards his Consolation.

Since I have met with such an unexpected Repulse, said he, from a capricious Court-Lady, I am determin'd to marry

some substantial Citizen's Daughter. He pitch'd accordingly upon *Azora*, a young Gentlewoman extremely well-bred, an excellent Oeconomist, and one, whose Parents were very rich.

Their Nuptials accordingly were soon after solemniz'd, and for a whole Month successively, no two Turtles were ever more fond of each other. In Process of Time, however, he perceiv'd she was a little Coquettish, and too much inclin'd to think, that the handsomest young Fellows were always the most virtuous and the greatest Wits.

CHAP. II.

The Nose

One Day *Azora*, as she was just return'd home from taking a short Country airing, threw herself into a violent Passion, and swell'd with Invectives. What, in God's Name, my Dear, said *Zadig*, has thus ruffled your Temper? What can be the Meaning of all these warm Exclamations? Alas! said she, you would have been disgusted as much as I am, had you been an Eye-witness of that Scene of Female Falshood, as I was Yesterday. I went, you must know, to visit the disconsolate Widow *Cosrou*, who has been these two Days erecting a Monument to the Memory of her young deceased Husband, near the Brook that runs on one side of her Meadow. She made the most solemn Vow, in the Height of her Affliction, never to stir from that Tomb, as long as ever that Rivulet took its usual Course. – Well! and wherein, pray, said *Zadig*, is the good Woman so much to blame? Is it not an incontestable Mark of her superior Merit and Conjugal-Affection? But, *Zadig*, said *Azora*, was you to know how her Thoughts were employ'd when I made my Visit, you'd never forget or forgive her. Pray, my dearest *Azora*, what then was she about? Why, the Creature, said *Azora*, was studying, to be sure, to find out Ways and Means to turn the Current of the River.

Azora, in short, harangu'd so long, and, was so big with her

Invectives against the young Widow, that her too affected, vain Shew of Virtue, gave *Zadig* a secret Disgust.

Zadig had an intimate Friend, one *Cador* by Name, whose Spouse was perfectly honest, and had in reality a greater Regard for him, than all Mankind besides: This Friend *Zadig* made his Confident, and bound him to keep a Project of his entirely a Secret, by a Promise of some valuable Token of his Respect. *Azora* had been visiting a Female Companion for two Days together in the Country, and on the third was returning home: No sooner, however, was she in Sight of the House, but the Servants ran to meet her with Tears in their Eyes, and told her, that their Master dy'd suddenly the Night before; that they durstn't carry her the doleful Tidings, but were going to bury *Zadig* in the Sepulchre of his Ancestors, at the Bottom of the Garden. She burst into a Flood of Tears; tore her Hair; and vow'd to die by his Side. As soon as it was dark, young *Cador* came, and begg'd the Favour of being introduc'd to the Widow. He was so, and they wept together very cordially. Next Day the Storm was somewhat abated, and they din'd together; *Cador* inform'd her, that his Friend had left him the much greater Part of his Effects, and gave her to understand, that he should think himself the happiest Creature in the World, if she would condescend to be his Partner in that Demise. The Widow wept, sobb'd, and began to melt. More Time was spent in Supper than at Dinner. They discoursed together with a little more Freedom. *Azora* was lavish of her Encomiums on *Zadig*; but then, 'twas true, she said,

he had some secret Infirmities to which *Cador* was a Stranger. In the Midst of their Midnight Entertainment, *Cador* all on a sudden complain'd that he was taken with a most violent pleuretic Fit, and was ready to swoon away. Our Lady being extremely concern'd, and over-officious, flew to her Closet of Cordials, and brought down every Thing she could think of that might be of Service on this emergent Occasion. She was extremely sorry that the famous *Hermes* was gone from *Babylon*, and condescended to lay her warm Hand upon the Part affected, in which he felt such an agonizing Pain. Pray Sir, said she, in a soft, languishing Tone, are you subject to this tormenting Malady? Sometimes, Madam, said *Cador*, so strong, that they bring me almost to Death's Door; and there is but one Thing can infallibly cure me; and that is, the Application of a dead Man's Nose to the part affected. An odd Remedy truly, said *Azora*. Not stranger, Madam, said he, than the Great **Arnon's** There was at this Time in *Babylon*, a famous Doctor, nam'd *Arnon*, who both cur'd Apoplectic Fits, and prevented them from affecting his Patients, as was frequently advertiz'd in the Gazettes, by a little never-failing Purse that he hung round their Necks. infallible Apoplectic Necklaces.

This Assurance of Success, together with *Cador's* personal Merit, determin'd *Azora* in his Favour. After all, said she, when my Husband shall be about to cross the Bridge *Tchimavar*, from this World of Yesterday, to the other, of To-morrow, will the Angel *Asrael*, think you, make any Scruple about his Passage, should his Nose prove something shorter in the next Life than

'twas in this? She would venture, however, and taking up a sharp Razor, repair'd to her Husband's Tomb; water'd it first with her Tears, and then intended to perform the innocent Operation, as he lay extended breathless, as she thought, in his Coffin. *Zadig* mounted in a Moment; secur'd his Nose with one Hand, and the Incision-Knife with the other. Madam, said he, never more exclaim against the Widow *Cosrou*. The Scheme for cutting my Nose off was much closer laid than hers of throwing the River into a new Channel.

CHAP. III.

The Dog and the Horse

Zadig found, by Experience, that the first thirty Days of Matrimony (as 'tis written in the Book of *Zend*) is Honey-Moon; but the second is all Wormwood. He was oblig'd, in short, as *Azora* grew such a Termagant, to sue out a Bill of Divorce, and to seek his Consolation for the future, in the Study of Nature. Who is happier, said he, than the Philosopher, who peruses with Understanding that spacious Book, which the supreme Being has laid open before his Eyes? The Truths he discovers there, are of infinite Service to him. He thereby cultivates and improves his Mind. He lives in Peace and Tranquility all his Days; he is afraid of Nobody, and he has no tender, indulgent Wife to shorten his Nose for him.

Wrapped up in these Contemplations, he retir'd to a little Country House on the Banks of the *Euphrates*; there he never spent his Time in calculating how many Inches of Water run thro' the Arch of a Bridge in a second of Time, or in enquiring if a Cube Line of Rain falls more in the *Mouse-Month*, than in that of the *Ram*. He form'd no Projects for making Silk Gloves and Stockings out of Spiders Webbs, nor of China-Ware out of broken Glass-Bottles; but he pry'd into the Nature and Properties of Animals and Plants, and soon, by his strict and repeated

Enquiries, he was capable of discerning a Thousand Variations in visible Objects, that others, less curious, imagin'd were all alike.

One Day, as he was taking a solitary Walk by the Side of a Thicket, he espy'd one of the Queen's Eunuchs, with several of his Attendants, coming towards him, hunting about, in deep Concern, both here and there, like Persons almost in Despair, and seeking, with Impatience, for something lost of the utmost Importance. Young Man, said the Queen's chief Eunuch, have not you seen, pray, her Majesty's Dog? *Zadig* very coolly replied, you mean her Bitch, I presume. You say very right Sir, said the Eunuch, 'tis a Spaniel-Bitch indeed. – And very small said *Zadig*: She has had Puppies too lately; she's a little lame with her left Fore-foot, and has long Ears. By your exact Description, Sir, you must doubtless have seen her, said the Eunuch, almost out of Breath. But I have not Sir, notwithstanding, neither did I know, but by you, that the Queen ever had such a favourite Bitch.

Just at this critical Juncture, so various are the Turns of Fortune's Wheel! the best Palfrey in all the King's Stable had broke loose from the Groom, and got upon the Plains of *Babylon*. The Head Huntsman with all his inferior Officers, were in Pursuit after him, with as much Concern, as the Eunuch about the Bitch. The Head Huntsman address'd himself to *Zadig*, and ask'd him, whether he hadn't seen the King's Palfrey run by him. No Horse, said *Zadig*, ever gallop'd smoother; he is about five Foot high, his Hoofs are very small; his Tail is about three Foot six Inches long; the studs of his Bit are of pure Gold, about 23

Carats; and his Shoes are of Silver, about Eleven penny Weight a-piece. What Course did he take, pray, Sir? Whereabouts is he, said the Huntsman? I never sat Eyes on him, reply'd *Zadig*, not I, neither did I ever hear before now, that his Majesty had such a Palfrey.

The Head Huntsman, as well as the Head Eunuch, upon his answering their Interrogatories so very exactly, not doubting in the least, but that *Zadig* had clandestinely convey'd both the Bitch and the Horse away, secur'd him, and carried him before the grand Desterham, who condemn'd him to the *Knout*, and to be confin'd for Life in some remote and lonely Part of *Siberia*. No sooner had the Sentence been pronounc'd, but the Horse and Bitch were both found. The Judges were in some Perplexity in this odd Affair, and yet thought it absolutely necessary, as the Man was innocent, to recal their Decree. However, they laid a Fine upon him of Four Hundred Ounces of Gold, for his false Declaration of his not having seen, what doubtless he did: And the Fine was order'd to be deposited in Court accordingly: On the Payment whereof, he was permitted to bring his Cause on to a Hearing before the grand Desterham.

On the Day appointed for that Purpose he open'd the Cause himself, in Terms to this or the like Effect.

Ye bright Stars of Justice, ye profound Abyss of universal Knowledge, ye Mirrors of Equity, who have in you the Solidity of Lead, the Hardness of Steel, the Lustre of a Diamond, and the Resemblance of the purest Gold! Since ye have condescended so

far, as to admit of my Address to this August Assembly, I here, in the most solemn Manner, swear to you by *Orosmades*, that I never saw the Queen's illustrious Bitch, nor the sacred Palfrey of the King of Kings. I'll be ingenuous, however, and declare the Truth, and nothing but the Truth. As I was walking by the Thicket's Side, where I met with her Majesty's most venerable chief Eunuch, and the King's most illustrious chief Huntsman, I perceiv'd upon the Sand the Footsteps of an Animal, and I easily inferr'd that it must be a little one. The several small, tho' long Ridges of Land between the Footsteps of the Creature, gave me just Grounds to imagine it was a Bitch whose Teats hung down; and for that Reason, I concluded she had but lately pupp'd. As I observ'd likewise some other Traces, in some Degree different, which seem'd to have graz'd all the Way upon the Surface of the Sand, on the Side of the fore-Feet, I knew well enough she must have had long Ears. And forasmuch as I discern'd; with some Degree of Curiosity, that the Sand was every where less hollow'd by one Foot in particular, than by the other three, I conceiv'd that the Bitch of our most august Queen was somewhat lamish, if I may presume to say so.

As to the Palfrey of the King of Kings, give me leave to inform you, that as I was walking down the Lane by the Thicket-side, I took particular Notice of the Prints made upon the Sand by a Horse's Shoes; and found that their Distances were in exact Proportion; from that Observation, I concluded the Palfrey gallop'd well. In the next Place, the Dust of some Trees in a

narrow Lane, which was but seven Foot broad, was here and there swept off, both on the Right and on the Left, about three Feet and six Inches from the Middle of the Road. For which Reason I pronounc'd the Tail of the Palfrey to be three Foot and a half long, with which he had whisk'd off the Dust on both Sides as he ran along. Again, I perceiv'd under the Trees, which form'd a Kind of Bower of five Feet high, some Leaves that had been lately fallen on the Ground, and I was sensible the Horse must have shook them off; from whence I conjectur'd he was five Foot high. As to the Bits of his Bridle, I knew they must be of Gold, and of the Value I mention'd; for he had rubb'd the Studs upon a certain Stone, which I knew to be a Touch-stone, by an Experiment that I had made of it. To conclude, by the Prints which his Shoes had left of some Flint-Stones of another Nature, I concluded his Shoes were Silver, and of eleven penny Weight Fineness, as I before mention'd.

The whole Bench of Judges stood astonish'd at the Profundity of *Zadig's* nice Discernment. The News was soon carried to the King and the Queen. *Zadig* was not only the whole Subject of the Court's Conversation; but his Name was mention'd with the utmost Veneration in the King's Chambers, and his Privy-Council. And notwithstanding several of their Magi declar'd he ought to be burnt for a Sorcerer; yet the King thought proper, that the Fine he had deposited in Court, should be peremptorily restor'd. The Clerk of the Court, the Tipstaffs, and other petty Officers, waited on him in their proper Habit, in order to

refund the four Hundred Ounces of Gold, pursuant to the King's express Order; modestly reserving only three Hundred and ninety Ounces, part thereof, to defray the Fees of the Court. And the Domesticks swarm'd about him likewise, in Hopes of some small Consideration.

Zadig, upon winding up of the Bottom, was fully convinc'd, that it was very dangerous to be over-wise; and was determin'd to set a Watch before the Door of his Lips for the future.

An Opportunity soon offer'd for the Trial of his Resolution. A Prisoner of State had just made his Escape, and pass'd under the Window of *Zadig's* House. *Zadig* was examin'd thereupon, but was absolutely dumb. However, as it was plainly prov'd upon him, that he did look out of the Window at the same Time, he was sentenc'd to pay five Hundred Ounces of Gold for that Misdemeanor; and moreover, was oblig'd to thank the Court for their Indulgence; a Compliment which the Magistrates of *Babylon* expect to be paid them. Good God! said he, to himself, have I not substantial Reason to complain, that my impropitious Stars should direct me to walk by a Wood's-Side, where the Queen's Bitch and the King's Palfrey should happen to pass by? How dangerous is it to pop one's Head out of one's Window? And, in a Word, how difficult is it for a Man to be happy on this Side the Grave?

CHAP. IV.

The envious Man

As *Zadig* had met with such a Series of Misfortunes, he was determin'd to ease the Weight of them by the Study of Philosophy, and the Conversation of select Friends. He was still possess'd of a little pretty Box in the Out-parts of *Babylon*, which was furnish'd in a good Taste; where every Artist was welcome, and wherein he enjoy'd all the rational Pleasures that a virtuous Man could well wish for. In the Morning, his Library was always open for the Use of the Learned; at Night his Table was fill'd with the most agreeable Companions; but he was soon sensible, by Experience, how dangerous it was to keep learned Men Company. A warm Dispute arose about a certain Law of *Zoroaster*; which prohibited the Eating of Griffins: But to what Purpose said some of the Company, was that Prohibition, since there is no such Animal in Nature? Some again insisted that there must; for otherwise *Zoroaster* could never have been so weak as to give his Pupils such a Caution. *Zadig*, in order to compromise the Matter, said; Gentlemen, If there are such Creatures in Being, let us never touch them; and if there are not, we are well assur'd we can't touch them; so in either Case we shall comply with the Commandment.

A learned Man at the upper End of the Table, who had

compos'd thirteen Volumes, expatiating on every Property of the Griffin, took this Affair in a very serious Light, which would greatly have embarrass'd *Zadig*, but for the Credit of a Magus, who was Brother to his Friend *Cador*. From that Day forward, *Zadig* ever distinguish'd and preferr'd good, before learned Company: He associated with the most conversible Men, and the most amiable Ladies in all *Babylon*; he made elegant Entertainments, which were frequently preceded by a Concert of Musick, and enliven'd by the most facetious Conversation, in which, as he had felt the Smart of it, he had laid aside all Thoughts of shewing his Wit, which is not only the surest Proof that a Man has none, but the most infallible Means to spoil all good Company.

Neither the Choice of his Friends, nor that of his Dishes, was the Result of Pride or Ostentation. He took Delight in appearing to be, what he actually was, and not in seeming to be what he was not; and by that Means, got a greater real Character than he actually aim'd at.

Directly opposite to his House liv'd *Arimazes*, one puff'd up with Pride, who not meeting with Success in the World, sought his Revenge in railing against all Mankind. Rich as he was, it was almost more than he could accomplish, to procure ev'n any Parasites about him. Tho' the rattling of the Chariots which stopp'd at *Zadig's* Door was a perfect Nuisance to him; yet the good Character which every Body gave him was still a higher Provocation. He would sometimes intrude himself upon *Zadig*,

and set down at his Table without any Invitation; when there, he would most certainly interrupt the Mirth of the Company, as Harpies, they say, infect the very Carrion that they eat.

Arimazes took it in his Head one Day to invite a young Lady to an Entertainment; but she, instead of accepting of his Offer, spent the Evening at *Zadig's*. Another Time, as *Zadig* and he were chatting together at Court, a Minister of State came up to them, and invited *Zadig* to Supper, but took no Notice of *Arimazes*. The most implacable Aversions have frequently no better Foundations. This Gentleman, who was call'd the *envious Man*, would have taken away the Life of *Zadig* if he could because most People distinguish'd him by the Title of the *Happy Man*. "An Opportunity of doing Mischief, says *Zoroaster*, offers itself a hundred Times a Day; but that of doing a Friend a good Office but once a Year."

Arimazes went one Day to *Zadig's* House, when he was walking in his Garden with two Friends, and a young Lady, to whom he said Abundance of fine Things, with no other Design but the innocent Pleasure of saying them. Their Conversation turn'd on a War that the King had happily put an End to, between him and his Vassal, the Prince of *Hyrkania*. *Zadig* having signaliz'd himself in that short War, commended his Majesty very highly, but was more lavish of his Compliments on the Lady. He took out his Pocket Book, and wrote four extempore Verses on that Occasion, and gave them the Lady to read. The Gentlemen then present begg'd to be oblig'd with a

Sight of them, as well as the Lady, But either thro' Modesty, or rather a self-Consciousness that he hadn't happily succeeded, he gave them a flat Denial. He was sensible, that a sudden poetic Flight must prove insipid to every one but the Person in whose Favour it is written, whereupon he snapt the Table in two whereon the Lines were wrote, and threw both Pieces into a Rose-bush, where they were hunted for, but to no Purpose. Soon after it happened to rain, and all the Company flew into the House, but *Arimazes*. Notwithstanding the Shower, he continued in the Garden, and never quitted it, till he had found one Moiety of the Tablet, which was unfortunately broke in such a Manner, that even the half Lines were good sense, and good Metre, tho' very short. But what was still more remarkably unfortunate, they appear'd at first View, to be a severe satyr upon the King: The Words were these:

To flagrant Crimes
His Crown he owes;
To peaceful Times
The worst of Foes.

This was the first Moment that ever *Arimazes* was happy. He had it now in his Power to ruin the most virtuous and innocent of Men. Big with his execrable Joy, he flew to his Majesty with this virulent Satyr of *Zadig's* under his own Hand. Not only *Zadig*, but his two Friends and the Lady were immediately close confin'd. His Cause was soon over; for the Judges turn'd a deaf Ear to what

he had to say. When Sentence of Condemnation was pass'd upon him, *Arimazes*, still spiteful, was heard to say, as he went out of Court, with an Air of Contempt, that *Zadig's* Lines were Treason indeed, but nothing more. Tho' *Zadig* didn't value himself on Account of his Genius for Poetry; yet he was almost distracted to find himself condemn'd for the worst of Traitors, and his two Friends and the Lady lock'd up in a Dungeon for a Crime, of which he was no ways guilty. He wasn't permitted to speak one Word for himself. His Pocket-Book was sufficient Evidence against him. So strict were the Laws of *Babylon*! He was carried to the Place of Execution, through a Croud of Spectators, who durstn't condole with him, and who flock'd about him, to observe whether his Countenance chang'd, or whether he died with a good Grace. His Relations were the only real Mourners; for there was no Estate in Reversion for them; three Parts of his Effects were confiscated for the King's Use, and the fourth was devoted, as a Reward, to the use of the Informer.

Just at the Time that he was preparing himself for Death, the King's Parrot flew from her Balcony, into *Zadig's* Garden, and alighted on a Rose-bush. A Peach, that had been blown down, and drove by the Wind from an adjacent Tree, just under the Bush, was glew'd, as it were, to the other Moiety of the Tablet. Away flew the Parrot with her Booty, and return'd to the King's Lap. The Monarch, being somewhat curious, read the Words on the broken Tablet, which had no Meaning in them as he could perceive, but seem'd to be the broken Parts of a Tetrastick. He

was a great Admirer of Poetry; and the odd Adventure of his Parrot, put him upon Reflection. The Queen who recollected full well the Lines that were wrote on the Fragment of *Zadig's* Tablet, order'd that Part of it to be produc'd: Both the broken Pieces being put together, they answered exactly the Indentures; and then the Verses which *Zadig* had written, in a Flight of Loyalty, ran thus,

Tyrants are prone to flagrant Crimes;
To Clemency his Crown he owes;
To Concord and to peaceful Times,
Love only is the worst of Foes.

Upon this the King order'd *Zadig* to be instantly brought before him; and his two Friends and the Lady to be that Moment discharg'd. *Zadig*, as he stood before the King and Queen, fix'd his Eyes upon the Ground, and begg'd their Majesty's Pardon for his little worthless, poetical Attempt. He spoke, however, with such a becoming Grace, and with so much Modesty and good Sense, that the King and the Queen, ordered him to be brought before them once again. He was brought accordingly, and he pleas'd them still more and more. In short, they gave him all the immense Estate of *Arimazes*, who had so unjustly accus'd him; but *Zadig* generously return'd the wicked Informer the Whole to a Farthing. The envious Man, however, was no ways affected, but with the Restoration of his Effects. *Zadig* every Day grew more and more in Favour at Court. He was made a Party in all

the King's Pleasures, and nothing was done in the Privy-Council without him. The Queen, from that very Hour, shew'd him so much Respect, and spoke to him in such soft and endearing Terms, that in Process of Time, it prov'd of fatal Consequence to herself, her Royal Consort, to *Zadig*, and the whole Kingdom. *Zadig* now began to think it was not so difficult a Thing to be happy as at first he imagin'd.

CHAP. V.

The Force of Generosity

The Time now drew near for the Celebration of a grand Festival, which was kept but once in five Years. 'Twas a constant Custom in *Babylon* at the Expiration of the Term above-mention'd, to distinguish that Citizen from all the Rest, in the most solemn Manner, who had done the most generous Action; and the Grandees and Magi always sat as Judges. The *Satrap* inform'd them of every praise-worthy Deed that occur'd within his District. All were put to the Vote, and the King himself pronounc'd the Definitive Sentence. People of all Ranks and Degrees came from the remotest Part of the Kingdom to be present at this Solemnity. The Victor, whoever he was, receiv'd from the King's own Hand a golden Cup, enrich'd with precious Stones, and upon the Delivery, the King made use of the following Salutation. *Receive this Reward of your Generosity, and may the Gods grant me Thousands of such valuable Subjects!*

Upon this memorable Day, the King appear'd in all the Pomp imaginable on his Throne of State, surrounded by his Grandees, the Magi, and the Deputies, from all the surrounding Nations, of every Province that attended these public Sports, where Honour was to be acquir'd, not by the Velocity of the best Race-Horse, or by bodily Strength, but by intrinsic Merit. The principal *Satrap*

proclaim'd, with an audible Voice, such Actions as would entitle the Victor to the inestimable Prize; but never mention'd one Word of *Zadig's* Greatness of Soul, in returning his invidious Neighbour all his Estate, notwithstanding he would have taken away his Life: That was but a Trifle, and not worth speaking of.

The first that was set up for the Prize, was a Judge, that had occasion'd a Citizen to lose a very considerable Cause, through some Mistake, for which he was no ways responsible, and made him Restitution out of his private Purse.

The next Candidate was a Youth, that tho' violently in Love with one that he intended shortly to make his Spouse, yet resign'd her to his Friend, who was just expiring at her Feet; and moreover, gave her a Portion at the same Time.

After this appear'd a Soldier, who, in the *Hyrceanian* War, had done a much more glorious Action than the Lover. A Gang of *Hyrceanians* having taken his Mistress from him, he fought them bravely, and rescued her out of their Hands: Soon after, he was inform'd, that another Band of the same Party had hurried away his Mother to a Place not far distant; he left his Mistress, all drown'd in Tears, and ran to his Mother's Assistance: After that Skirmish was over, he returned to his Sweet-heart, and found her just expiring. He would fain have plung'd a Dagger into his Heart that Moment; but his Mother remonstrated to him, that, should he die, she should be entirely helpless, and upon that Account only he had Courage to live a little longer.

The Judges seem'd very much inclin'd to give their Votes for

the Soldier; but the King prevented them, by saying, that the Soldier's Action was praise-worthy enough, and so were those of the rest, but none of them give me any Surprize. What *Zadig* did Yesterday perfectly struck me with Astonishment. I'll mention another Instance. I had some few Days ago, as a Testimony of my Resentment, banish'd my Prime-Minister, and Favourite *Coreb* from the Court. I complain'd of his Conduct in the warmest Terms; and all my Sycophants about me, told me that I was too merciful; and loaded him with the sharpest Invectives. I ask'd *Zadig* what his Opinion was of *Coreb*; and he dar'd to give him the best of Characters. I must confess, I have read in our publick Records, indeed, of Instances where Restitution have been generally made, for Injuries committed by Mistake; where a Mistress has been resign'd; and where a Mother has been preferr'd to a Mistress; but I never read of a Courtier, that would speak to the Advantage of a Minister in Disgrace, and against whom the Sovereign was highly incens'd. I'll give 20,000 Pieces of Gold to every Candidate that has been this Day proclaim'd, but I'll give the Cup to no one but *Zadig*.

Sire, said *Zadig*, 'tis your Majesty alone, that deserves the Cup; 'tis you alone who have done an Action of Generosity, never heard of before; since you, who are King of Kings, wasn't exasperated against your Slave, when he contradicted you in the Heat of your Passion. Every Body gaz'd with Eyes of Admiration on the King and *Zadig*. The Judge, who had generously made Restitution for his Error; the Lover, who had

married his Mistress to his Friend; the Soldier, who had prefer'd the Welfare of his Mother to that of his Mistress; received the promis'd Donation from the Monarch, and saw their Names register'd in the Book of *Fame*: But *Zadig* had the Cup. The King got the universal Character of a good Prince, which he did not long preserve. This joyful Day was solemniz'd with Festivals beyond the Time by Law establish'd. Tragedies were acted there that drew Tears from the Spectators; and Comedies that made them laugh; Entertainments, that the *Babylonians* were perfect Strangers to: The Commemoration of it is still preserv'd in *Asia*. Now, said *Zadig*, I am happy at last; but he was grosly mistaken.

CHAP. VI.

The Judgments

Young as *Zadig* was, he was constituted chief Judge of all the Tribunals throughout the Empire. He fill'd the Place, like one, whom the Gods had endow'd with the strictest Justice, and the most solid Wisdom. It was to him, the Nations round about were indebted for that generous Maxim; *that 'tis much more Prudence to acquit two Persons, tho' actually guilty, than to pass Sentence of Condemnation in one that is virtuous and innocent.* It was his firm Opinion, that the Laws were intended to be a Praise to those who did well, as much as to be a Terror to Evildoers. It was his peculiar Talent to render Truth as obvious as possible: Whereas most Men study to render it intricate and obscure. On the very first Day of his Entrance into his High Office, he exerted this peculiar Talent. A rich Merchant, and a Native of *Babylon*, died in the *Indies*. He had made his Will, and appointed his two Sons Joint-Heirs of his Estate, as soon as they had settled their Sister, and married her with their mutual Approbation. Moreover, he left a specific Legacy of 30,000 Pieces of Gold to that Son, who should, after his Decease, be prov'd to love him best. The Eldest erected to his Memory a very costly Monument: The Youngest appropriated a considerable Part of his Bequest to the Augmentation of his Sister's Fortune:

Every one, without Hesitation, gave the Preference to the Elder, allowing the Younger to have the greatest Affection for his Sister. The Legacy therefore was doubtless due to the Eldest.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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