

LANG ANDREW

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS
ENTERTAINMENTS

Andrew Lang

The Arabian Nights Entertainments

«Public Domain»

Lang A.

The Arabian Nights Entertainments / A. Lang — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Preface	5
The Arabian Nights	7
The Story of the Merchant and the Genius	9
The Story of the First Old Man and of the Hind	12
The Story of the Second Old Man, and of the Two Black Dogs	14
The Story of the Fisherman	16
The Story of the Greek King and the Physician Douban	18
The Story of the Husband and the Parrot	19
The Story of the Vizir Who Was Punished	20
The Story of the Young King of the Black Isles	25
The Story of the Three Calenders, Sons of Kings,	27
The Story of the First Calender, Son of a King	32
The Story of the Second Calender, Son of a King	35
The Story of the Envious Man and of Him Who Was Envied	39
The Story of the Third Calender, Son of a King	45
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	47

Andrew Lang

The Arabian Nights Entertainments

Preface

The stories in the Fairy Books have generally been such as old women in country places tell to their grandchildren. Nobody knows how old they are, or who told them first. The children of Ham, Shem and Japhet may have listened to them in the Ark, on wet days. Hector's little boy may have heard them in Troy Town, for it is certain that Homer knew them, and that some of them were written down in Egypt about the time of Moses.

People in different countries tell them differently, but they are always the same stories, really, whether among little Zulus, at the Cape, or little Eskimo, near the North Pole. The changes are only in matters of manners and customs; such as wearing clothes or not, meeting lions who talk in the warm countries, or talking bears in the cold countries. There are plenty of kings and queens in the fairy tales, just because long ago there were plenty of kings in the country. A gentleman who would be a squire now was a kind of king in Scotland in very old times, and the same in other places. These old stories, never forgotten, were taken down in writing in different ages, but mostly in this century, in all sorts of languages. These ancient stories are the contents of the Fairy books.

Now "The Arabian Nights," some of which, but not nearly all, are given in this volume, are only fairy tales of the East. The people of Asia, Arabia, and Persia told them in their own way, not for children, but for grown-up people. There were no novels then, nor any printed books, of course; but there were people whose profession it was to amuse men and women by telling tales. They dressed the fairy stories up, and made the characters good Mahomedans, living in Bagdad or India. The events were often supposed to happen in the reign of the great Caliph, or ruler of the Faithful, Haroun al Raschid, who lived in Bagdad in 786-808 A.D. The vizir who accompanies the Caliph was also a real person of the great family of the Barmecides. He was put to death by the Caliph in a very cruel way, nobody ever knew why. The stories must have been told in their present shape a good long while after the Caliph died, when nobody knew very exactly what had really happened. At last some storyteller thought of writing down the tales, and fixing them into a kind of framework, as if they had all been narrated to a cruel Sultan by his wife. Probably the tales were written down about the time when Edward I. was fighting Robert Bruce. But changes were made in them at different times, and a great deal that is very dull and stupid was put in, and plenty of verses. Neither the verses nor the dull pieces are given in this book.

People in France and England knew almost nothing about "The Arabian Nights" till the reigns of Queen Anne and George I., when they were translated into French by Monsieur Galland. Grown-up people were then very fond of fairy tales, and they thought these Arab stories the best that they had ever read. They were delighted with Ghouls (who lived among the tombs) and Geni, who seemed to be a kind of ogres, and with Princesses who work magic spells, and with Peris, who are Arab fairies. Sindbad had adventures which perhaps came out of the Odyssey of Homer; in fact, all the East had contributed its wonders, and sent them to Europe in one parcel. Young men once made a noise at Monsieur Galland's windows in the dead of night, and asked him to tell them one of his marvellous tales. Nobody talked of anything but dervishes and vizirs, rocs and peris. The stories were translated from French into all languages, and only Bishop Atterbury complained that the tales were not likely to be true, and had no moral. The bishop was presently banished for being on the side of Prince Charlie's father, and had leisure to repent of being so solemn.

In this book "The Arabian Nights" are translated from the French version of Monsieur Galland, who dropped out the poetry and a great deal of what the Arabian authors thought funny, though it

seems wearisome to us. In this book the stories are shortened here and there, and omissions are made of pieces only suitable for Arabs and old gentlemen. The translations are by the writers of the tales in the Fairy Books, and the pictures are by Mr. Ford.

I can remember reading "The Arabian Nights" when I was six years old, in dirty yellow old volumes of small type with no pictures, and I hope children who read them with Mr. Ford's pictures will be as happy as I was then in the company of Aladdin and Sindbad the Sailor.

The Arabian Nights

In the chronicles of the ancient dynasty of the Sassanidae, who reigned for about four hundred years, from Persia to the borders of China, beyond the great river Ganges itself, we read the praises of one of the kings of this race, who was said to be the best monarch of his time. His subjects loved him, and his neighbors feared him, and when he died he left his kingdom in a more prosperous and powerful condition than any king had done before him.

The two sons who survived him loved each other tenderly, and it was a real grief to the elder, Schahriar, that the laws of the empire forbade him to share his dominions with his brother Schahzeman. Indeed, after ten years, during which this state of things had not ceased to trouble him, Schahriar cut off the country of Great Tartary from the Persian Empire and made his brother king.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It would be an excellent thing to do," returned the grand-vizir, "but how do you propose to accomplish it?"

"My father," answered Scheherazade, "it is you who have to provide the Sultan daily with a fresh wife, and I implore you, by all the affection you bear me, to allow the honour to fall upon me."

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

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

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

"Once again, my father," said Scheherazade, "will you grant me what I ask?"

"What, are you still so obstinate?" exclaimed the grand-vizir. "Why are you so resolved upon your own ruin?"

But the maiden absolutely refused to attend to her father's words, and at length, in despair, the grand-vizir was obliged to give way, and went sadly to the palace to tell the Sultan that the following evening he would bring him Scheherazade.

The Sultan received this news with the greatest astonishment.

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

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

"Let there be no mistake, vizir," said the Sultan. "Remember you will have to take her life yourself. If you refuse, I swear that your head shall pay forfeit."

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

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

When they were alone, Scheherazade addressed her thus:

"My dear sister; I want your help in a very important affair. My father is going to take me to the palace to celebrate my marriage with the Sultan. When his Highness receives me, I shall beg him, as a last favour, to let you sleep in our chamber, so that I may have your company during the last night I am alive. If, as I hope, he grants me my wish, be sure that you wake me an hour before the dawn, and speak to me in these words: 'My sister, if you are not asleep, I beg you, before the sun rises, to tell me one of your charming stories.' Then I shall begin, and I hope by this means to deliver the people from the terror that reigns over them." Dinarzade replied that she would do with pleasure what her sister wished.

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

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

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

"Willingly," he answered. So Scheherazade began.

The Story of the Merchant and the Genius

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

When he was thus employed he saw an enormous genius, white with rage, coming towards him, with a scimitar in his hand.

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

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

"I shall kill you," repeated the genius, "as you have killed my son."

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

"When you arrived here did you not sit down on the ground?" asked the genius, "and did you not take some dates from your wallet, and whilst eating them did not you throw the stones about?"

"Yes," said the merchant, "I certainly did so."

"Then," said the genius, "I tell you you have killed my son, for whilst you were throwing about the stones, my son passed by, and one of them struck him in the eye and killed him. So I shall kill you."

"Ah, sir, forgive me!" cried the merchant.

"I will have no mercy on you," answered the genius.

"But I killed your son quite unintentionally, so I implore you to spare my life."

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

The merchant, protesting his innocence, bewailed his wife and children, and tried pitifully to avert his fate. The genius, with his raised scimitar, waited till he had finished, but was not in the least touched.

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

"Indeed, sister," said Dinarzade, "this is a wonderful story."

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

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

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

The next morning, before the day broke, Dinarzade said to her sister, "Dear sister, if you are awake I pray you to go on with your story."

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

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

When the merchant saw that the genius was determined to cut off his head, he said: "One word more, I entreat you. Grant me a little delay; just a short time to go home and bid my wife and children farewell, and to make my will. When I have done this I will come back here, and you shall kill me."

"But," said the genius, "if I grant you the delay you ask, I am afraid that you will not come back."

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

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

"I ask you for a year's grace," replied the merchant. "I promise you that to-morrow twelvemonth, I shall be waiting under these trees to give myself up to you."

On this the genius left him near the fountain and disappeared.

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

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

"Tell us, I pray you," said his wife, "what has happened."

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

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

The next day the merchant began to settle his affairs, and first of all to pay his debts. He gave presents to his friends, and large alms to the poor. He set his slaves at liberty, and provided for his wife and children. The year soon passed away, and he was obliged to depart. When he tried to say good-bye he was quite overcome with grief, and with difficulty tore himself away. At length he reached the place where he had first seen the genius, on the very day that he had appointed. He dismounted, and sat down at the edge of the fountain, where he awaited the genius in terrible suspense.

Whilst he was thus waiting an old man leading a hind came towards him. They greeted one another, and then the old man said to him, "May I ask, brother, what brought you to this desert place, where there are so many evil genii about? To see these beautiful trees one would imagine it was inhabited, but it is a dangerous place to stop long in."

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

"This is a most marvellous affair. I should like to be a witness of your interview with the genius." So saying he sat down by the merchant.

While they were talking another old man came up, followed by two black dogs. He greeted them, and asked what they were doing in this place. The old man who was leading the hind told him the adventure of the merchant and the genius. The second old man had not sooner heard the story than he, too, decided to stay there to see what would happen. He sat down by the others, and was talking, when a third old man arrived. He asked why the merchant who was with them looked so sad. They told him the story, and he also resolved to see what would pass between the genius and the merchant, so waited with the rest.

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

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

Then the old man leading the hind threw himself at the monster's feet and said, "O Prince of the Genii, I beg of you to stay your fury and to listen to me. I am going to tell you my story and that of the hind I have with me, and if you find it more marvellous than that of the merchant whom you are about to kill, I hope that you will do away with a third part of his punishment?"

The genius considered some time, and then he said, "Very well, I agree to this."

The Story of the First Old Man and of the Hind

I am now going to begin my story (said the old man), so please attend.

This hind that you see with me is my wife. We have no children of our own, therefore I adopted the son of a favorite slave, and determined to make him my heir.

My wife, however, took a great dislike to both mother and child, which she concealed from me till too late. When my adopted son was about ten years old I was obliged to go on a journey. Before I went I entrusted to my wife's keeping both the mother and child, and begged her to take care of them during my absence, which lasted a whole year. During this time she studied magic in order to carry out her wicked scheme. When she had learnt enough she took my son into a distant place and changed him into a calf. Then she gave him to my steward, and told him to look after a calf she had bought. She also changed the slave into a cow, which she sent to my steward.

When I returned I inquired after my slave and the child. "Your slave is dead," she said, "and as for your son, I have not seen him for two months, and I do not know where he is."

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

To celebrate it I ordered my steward to bring me a very fat cow to sacrifice. He did so. The cow that he brought was my unfortunate slave. I bound her, but just as I was about to kill her she began to low most piteously, and I saw that her eyes were streaming with tears. It seemed to me most extraordinary, and, feeling a movement of pity, I ordered the steward to lead her away and bring another. My wife, who was present, scoffed at my compassion, which made her malice of no avail. "What are you doing?" she cried. "Kill this cow. It is the best we have to sacrifice."

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

"Take her away," I said to the steward, "and kill her; I cannot."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Wife," I answered, "I will not sacrifice this calf," and in spite of all her remonstrances, I remained firm.

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

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

"Father," she answered, "this calf is the son of our master. I smile with joy at seeing him still alive, and I weep to think of his mother, who was sacrificed yesterday as a cow. These changes have been wrought by our master's wife, who hated the mother and son."

"At these words, of Genius," continued the old man, "I leave you to imagine my astonishment. I went immediately with the steward to speak with his daughter myself. First of all I went to the stable to see my son, and he replied in his dumb way to all my caresses. When the steward's daughter came I asked her if she could change my son back to his proper shape."

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

"To the first condition," I answered, "I agree with all my heart, and I will give you an ample dowry. To the second I also agree, I only beg you to spare her life."

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

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

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

He consented joyfully, but before they were married, the young girl changed my wife into a hind, and it is she whom you see before you. I wished her to have this form rather than a stranger one, so that we could see her in the family without repugnance.

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

"It is indeed," said the genius, "and because of it I grant to you the third part of the punishment of this merchant."

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

"Yes," replied the genius, "provided that your story surpasses that of the hind."

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

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

Great prince of the genii, you must know that we are three brothers-these two black dogs and myself. Our father died, leaving us each a thousand sequins. With this sum we all three took up the same profession, and became merchants. A short time after we had opened our shops, my eldest brother, one of these two dogs, resolved to travel in foreign countries for the sake of merchandise. With this intention he sold all he had and bought merchandise suitable to the voyages he was about to make. He set out, and was away a whole year. At the end of this time a beggar came to my shop. "Good-day," I said. "Good-day," he answered; "is it possible that you do not recognise me?" Then I looked at him closely and saw he was my brother. I made him come into my house, and asked him how he had fared in his enterprise.

"Do not question me," he replied, "see me, you see all I have. It would but renew my trouble to tell of all the misfortunes that have befallen me in a year, and have brought me to this state."

I shut up my shop, paid him every attention, taking him to the bath, giving him my most beautiful robes. I examined my accounts, and found that I had doubled my capital-that is, that I now possessed two thousand sequins. I gave my brother half, saying: "Now, brother, you can forget your losses." He accepted them with joy, and we lived together as we had before.

Some time afterwards my second brother wished also to sell his business and travel. My eldest brother and I did all we could to dissuade him, but it was of no use. He joined a caravan and set out. He came back at the end of a year in the same state as his elder brother. I took care of him, and as I had a thousand sequins to spare I gave them to him, and he re-opened his shop.

One day, my two brothers came to me to propose that we should make a journey and trade. At first I refused to go. "You travelled," I said, "and what did you gain?" But they came to me repeatedly, and after having held out for five years I at last gave way. But when they had made their preparation, and they began to buy the merchandise we needed, they found they had spent every piece of the thousand sequins I had given them. I did not reproach them. I divided my six thousand sequins with them, giving a thousand to each and keeping one for myself, and the other three I buried in a corner of my house. We bought merchandise, loaded a vessel with it, and set forth with a favorable wind.

After two months' sailing we arrived at a seaport, where we disembarked and did a great trade. Then we bought the merchandise of the country, and were just going to sail once more, when I was stopped on the shore by a beautiful though poorly dressed woman. She came up to me, kissed my hand, and implored me to marry her, and take her on board. At first I refused, but she begged so hard and promised to be such a good wife to me, that at last I consented. I got her some beautiful dresses, and after having married her, we embarked and set sail. During the voyage, I discovered so many good qualities in my wife that I began to love her more and more. But my brothers began to be jealous of my prosperity, and set to work to plot against my life. One night when we were sleeping they threw my wife and myself into the sea. My wife, however, was a fairy, and so she did not let me drown, but transported me to an island. When the day dawned, she said to me,

"When I saw you on the sea-shore I took a great fancy to you, and wished to try your good nature, so I presented myself in the disguise you saw. Now I have rewarded you by saving your life. But I am very angry with your brothers, and I shall not rest till I have taken their lives."

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

I appeased her wrath, and in a moment she transported me from the island where we were to the roof of my house, and she disappeared a moment afterwards. I went down, and opened the doors, and dug up the three thousand sequins which I had buried. I went to the place where my shop was, opened it, and received from my fellow-merchants congratulations on my return. When I went home,

I saw two black dogs who came to meet me with sorrowful faces. I was much astonished, but the fairy who reappeared said to me,

"Do not be surprised to see these dogs; they are your two brothers. I have condemned them to remain for ten years in these shapes." Then having told me where I could hear news of her, she vanished.

The ten years are nearly passed, and I am on the road to find her. As in passing I met this merchant and the old man with the hind, I stayed with them.

This is my history, O prince of genii! Do you not think it is a most marvellous one?

"Yes, indeed," replied the genius, "and I will give up to you the third of the merchant's punishment."

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

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

But I do know that it was even more marvellous than either of the others, so that the genius was astonished, and said to the third old man, "I will give up to you the third part of the merchant's punishment. He ought to thank all three of you for having interested yourselves in his favour. But for you, he would be here no longer."

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

"But, sire," added Scheherazade, "however beautiful are the stories I have just told you, they cannot compare with the story of the Fisherman."

The Story of the Fisherman

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

Vexed with having such a bad haul, when he had mended his nets, which the carcass of the ass had broken in several places, he threw them a second time. In drawing them in he again felt a great weight, so that he thought they were full of fish. But he only found a large basket full of rubbish. He was much annoyed.

"O Fortune," he cried, "do not trifle thus with me, a poor fisherman, who can hardly support his family!"

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

Then he threw his nets for the fourth time. When he thought he had a fish he drew them in with a great deal of trouble. There was no fish however, but he found a yellow pot, which by its weight seemed full of something, and he noticed that it was fastened and sealed with lead, with the impression of a seal. He was delighted. "I will sell it to the founder," he said; "with the money I shall get for it I shall buy a measure of wheat."

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

"Great king of the genii," cried the monster, "I will never again disobey you!"

At these words the fisherman took courage.

"What is this you are saying, great genius? Tell me your history and how you came to be shut up in that vase."

At this, the genius looked at the fisherman haughtily. "Speak to me more civilly," he said, "before I kill you."

"Alas! why should you kill me?" cried the fisherman. "I have just freed you; have you already forgotten that?"

"No," answered the genius; "but that will not prevent me from killing you; and I am only going to grant you one favour, and that is to choose the manner of your death."

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

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

"I rebelled against the king of the genii. To punish me, he shut me up in this vase of copper, and he put on the leaden cover his seal, which is enchantment enough to prevent my coming out. Then he had the vase thrown into the sea. During the first period of my captivity I vowed that if anyone should free me before a hundred years were passed, I would make him rich even after his death. But

that century passed, and no one freed me. In the second century I vowed that I would give all the treasures in the world to my deliverer; but he never came.

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

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

"I have told you," said the genius, "that it is impossible. Choose quickly; you are wasting time."

The fisherman began to devise a plot.

"Since I must die," he said, "before I choose the manner of my death, I conjure you on your honour to tell me if you really were in that vase?"

"Yes, I was," answered the genius.

"I really cannot believe it," said the fisherman. "That vase could not contain one of your feet even, and how could your whole body go in? I cannot believe it unless I see you do the thing."

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

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

"Now, O genius," he cried, "ask pardon of me, and choose by what death you will die! But no, it will be better if I throw you into the sea whence I drew you out, and I will build a house on the shore to warn fishermen who come to cast their nets here, against fishing up such a wicked genius as you are, who vows to kill the man who frees you."

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

Then he tried to get out by cunning.

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

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

The Story of the Greek King and the Physician Douban

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

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

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

The king listened to this proposal.

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

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

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

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

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

That evening he gave him a long and rich robe of state, and presented him with two thousand sequins. The following day he continued to load him with favours.

Now the king had a grand-vizir who was avaricious, and envious, and a very bad man. He grew extremely jealous of the physician, and determined to bring about his ruin.

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

"What is it?" asked the king.

"Sire," answered the grand-vizir, "it is most dangerous for a monarch to confide in a man whose faithfulness is not proved, You do not know that this physician is not a traitor come here to assassinate you."

"I am sure," said the king, "that this man is the most faithful and virtuous of men. If he wished to take my life, why did he cure me? Cease to speak against him. I see what it is, you are jealous of him; but do not think that I can be turned against him. I remember well what a vizir said to King Sindbad, his master, to prevent him from putting the prince, his son, to death."

What the Greek king said excited the vizir's curiosity, and he said to him, "Sire, I beg your majesty to have the condescension to tell me what the vizir said to King Sindbad."

"This vizir," he replied, "told King Sindbad that one ought not believe everything that a mother-in-law says, and told him this story."

The Story of the Husband and the Parrot

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Story of the Vizir Who Was Punished

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Greek king was naturally very weak, and did not perceive the wicked intention of his vizir, nor was he firm enough to keep to his first resolution.

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

"The best means, sire, to put your life in security, is to send for him at once, and to cut off his head directly he comes," said the vizir.

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

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

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

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

"What crimes have I committed, your majesty?"

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

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

The fisherman stopped here to say to the genius: "You see what passed between the Greek king and the physician has just passed between us two. The Greek king," he went on, "had no mercy on him, and the executioner bound his eyes."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Turn over a few more pages," answered the head. The king went on turning, still putting his finger in his mouth, till the poison in which each page was dipped took effect. His sight failed him, and he fell at the foot of his throne.

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

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

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

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

"My friend," said the genius, "do not do such a cruel thing. Do not treat me as Imma treated Ateca."

"What did Imma do to Ateca?" asked the fisherman.

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

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

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

The genius promised, and the fisherman lifted the lid. He came out at once in smoke, and then, having resumed his proper form, the first thing he did was to kick the vase into the sea. This frightened the fisherman, but the genius laughed and said, "Do not be afraid; I only did it to frighten you, and to show you that I intend to keep my word; take your nets and follow me."

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

When they reached the lake the genius said to the fisherman, "Throw your nets and catch fish."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She went up to the pan, to the great astonishment of the cook, who stood motionless at the sight of her. She struck one of the fish with her rod, "Fish, fish," said she, "are you doing your duty?" The fish answered nothing, and then she repeated her question, whereupon they all raised their heads together and answered very distinctly, "Yes, yes. If you reckon, we reckon. If you pay your debts, we pay ours. If you fly, we conquer, and we are content."

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

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

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

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

The fisherman did not say what the genius had told him, but he excused himself from bringing them that day on account of the length of the way, and he promised to bring them next day.

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

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

He then took them to the kitchen and shut himself up with the cook, who began to cook them as she had done the four others on the previous day. When she was about to turn them on the other side, the wall opened, the damsel appeared, addressed the same words to the fish, received the same answer, and then overturned the pan and disappeared.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Do you know this lake?" asked the Sultan of the grand-vizir.

"No; though I have hunted many times round that mountain, I have never heard of it," said the vizir.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Sire," he said to the Sultan, "I cannot rise and do you the reverence that I am sure should be paid to your rank."

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

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

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

"Willingly I will tell you my sad history," said the young man.

The Story of the Young King of the Black Isles

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Tell me," he cried, "where is this wicked woman, and where is the miserable object of her affection, whom she just manages to keep alive?"

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

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

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

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

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

She came near his couch and said, "Are you better to-day, my dear slave? Speak but one word to me."

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

"What joy to hear you speak!" answered the queen. "Do you wish him to regain his proper shape?"

"Yes," said the Sultan; "hasten to set him at liberty, so that I may no longer hear his cries."

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

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

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

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

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

The fish then became men, women, and children, and the houses and shops were once more filled. The Sultan's suite, who had encamped by the lake, were not a little astonished to see themselves in the middle of a large and beautiful town.

As soon as she had disenchanting it the queen went back to the palace.

"Are you quite well now?" she said.

"Come near," said the Sultan. "Nearer still."

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

Then he went and found the prince.

"Rejoice," he said, "your cruel enemy is dead."

The prince thanked him again and again.

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

"So near mine!" said the King of the Black Isles.

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

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

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

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

Then he gave each man presents in proportion to his rank.

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

The Story of the Three Calenders, Sons of Kings, and of Five Ladies of Bagdad

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

The lady soon stopped before a closed door, at which she knocked. It was opened by an old man with a long white beard, to whom the lady held out money without speaking. The old man, who seemed to understand what she wanted, vanished into the house, and returned bringing a large jar of wine, which the porter placed in his basket. Then the lady signed to him to follow, and they went their way.

The next place she stopped at was a fruit and flower shop, and here she bought a large quantity of apples, apricots, peaches, and other things, with lilies, jasmine, and all sorts of sweet-smelling plants. From this shop she went to a butcher's, a grocer's, and a poulterer's, till at last the porter exclaimed in despair, "My good lady, if you had only told me you were going to buy enough provisions to stock a town, I would have brought a horse, or rather a camel." The lady laughed, and told him she had not finished yet, but after choosing various kinds of scents and spices from a druggist's store, she halted before a magnificent palace, at the door of which she knocked gently. The porteress who opened it was of such beauty that the eyes of the man were quite dazzled, and he was the more astonished as he saw clearly that she was no slave. The lady who had led him hither stood watching him with amusement, till the porteress exclaimed, "Why don't you come in, my sister? This poor man is so heavily weighed down that he is ready to drop."

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

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

The ladies were rather amused at the man's assurances and after some discussion it was agreed that he should be allowed to stay, as his society might prove entertaining. "But listen, friend," said Zobeida, "if we grant your request, it is only on condition that you behave with the utmost politeness, and that you keep the secret of our way of living, which chance has revealed to you." Then they all sat down to table, which had been covered by Amina with the dishes she had bought.

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

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

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

"Let him stay," said Amina, who had before proved herself his friend. "It is only just, as he has given us so much amusement."

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

This being settled, Amina brought in supper, and lit up the hall with a number of sweet smelling tapers. They then sat down again at the table, and began with fresh appetites to eat, drink, sing, and recite verses. In fact, they were all enjoying themselves mightily when they heard a knock at the outer door, which Sadie rose to open. She soon returned saying that three Calenders, all blind in the right eye, and all with their heads, faces, and eyebrows clean shaved, begged for admittance, as they were newly arrived in Bagdad, and night had already fallen. "They seem to have pleasant manners," she added, "but you have no idea how funny they look. I am sure we should find their company diverting."

Zobeida and Amina made some difficulty about admitting the new comers, and Sadie knew the reason of their hesitation. But she urged the matter so strongly that Zobeida was at last forced to consent. "Bring them in, then," said she, "but make them understand that they are not to make remarks about what does not concern them, and be sure to make them read the inscription over the door." For on the door was written in letters of gold, "Whoso meddles in affairs that are no business of his, will hear truths that will not please him."

The three Calenders bowed low on entering, and thanked the ladies for their kindness and hospitality. The ladies replied with words of welcome, and they were all about to seat themselves when the eyes of the Calenders fell on the porter, whose dress was not so very unlike their own, though he still wore all the hair that nature had given him. "This," said one of them, "is apparently one of our Arab brothers, who has rebelled against our ruler."

The porter, although half asleep from the wine he had drunk, heard the words, and without moving cried angrily to the Calender, "Sit down and mind your own business. Did you not read the inscription over the door? Everybody is not obliged to live in the same way."

"Do not be so angry, my good man," replied the Calender; "we should be very sorry to displease you;" so the quarrel was smoothed over, and supper began in good earnest. When the Calenders had satisfied their hunger, they offered to play to their hostesses, if there were any instruments in the house. The ladies were delighted at the idea, and Sadie went to see what she could find, returning in a few moments laden with two different kinds of flutes and a tambourine. Each Calender took the one he preferred, and began to play a well-known air, while the ladies sang the words of the song. These words were the gayest and liveliest possible, and every now and then the singers had to stop to indulge the laughter which almost choked them. In the midst of all their noise, a knock was heard at the door.

Now early that evening the Caliph secretly left the palace, accompanied by his grand-vizir, Giafar, and Mesrour, chief of the eunuchs, all three wearing the dresses of merchants. Passing down the street, the Caliph had been attracted by the music of instruments and the sound of laughter, and had ordered his vizir to go and knock at the door of the house, as he wished to enter. The vizir replied that the ladies who lived there seemed to be entertaining their friends, and he thought his master

would do well not to intrude on them; but the Caliph had taken it into his head to see for himself, and insisted on being obeyed.

The knock was answered by Sadie, with a taper in her hand, and the vizir, who was surprised at her beauty, bowed low before her, and said respectfully, "Madam, we are three merchants who have lately arrived from Moussoul, and, owing to a misadventure which befel us this very night, only reached our inn to find that the doors were closed to us till to-morrow morning. Not knowing what to do, we wandered in the streets till we happened to pass your house, when, seeing lights and hearing the sound of voices, we resolved to ask you to give us shelter till the dawn. If you will grant us this favour, we will, with your permission, do all in our power to help you spend the time pleasantly."

Sadie answered the merchant that she must first consult her sisters; and after having talked over the matter with them, she returned to tell him that he and his two friends would be welcome to join their company. They entered and bowed politely to the ladies and their guests. Then Zobeida, as the mistress, came forward and said gravely, "You are welcome here, but I hope you will allow me to beg one thing of you—have as many eyes as you like, but no tongues; and ask no questions about anything you see, however strange it may appear to you."

"Madam," returned the vizir, "you shall be obeyed. We have quite enough to please and interest us without troubling ourselves about that with which we have no concern." Then they all sat down, and drank to the health of the new comers.

While the vizir, Giafar, was talking to the ladies the Caliph was occupied in wondering who they could be, and why the three Calenders had each lost his right eye. He was burning to inquire the reason of it all, but was silenced by Zobeida's request, so he tried to rouse himself and to take his part in the conversation, which was very lively, the subject of discussion being the many different sorts of pleasures that there were in the world. After some time the Calenders got up and performed some curious dances, which delighted the rest of the company.

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

Shortly after Amina entered carrying a seat, which she put down in the middle of the empty space. She next went over to the door of a closet and signed to the porter to follow her. He did so, and soon reappeared leading two black dogs by a chain, which he brought into the centre of the hall. Zobeida then got up from her seat between the Calenders and the Caliph and walked slowly across to where the porter stood with the dogs. "We must do our duty," she said with a deep sigh, pushing back her sleeves, and, taking a whip from Sadie, she said to the man, "Take one of those dogs to my sister Amina and give me the other."

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

The same ceremony was gone through with the second dog, and all the while the whole company looked on with astonishment. The Caliph in particular could hardly contain himself, and made signs to the vizir to ask what it all meant. But the vizir pretended not to see, and turned his head away.

Zobeida remained for some time in the middle of the room, till at last Sadie went up to her and begged her to sit down, as she also had her part to play. At these words Amina fetched a lute from

a case of yellow satin and gave it to Sadie, who sang several songs to its accompaniment. When she was tired she said to Amina, "My sister, I can do no more; come, I pray you, and take my place."

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

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

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

"We know no more than you," said the Calender to whom he had spoken.

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

"My lord," answered all the Calenders together, "we came here for the first time an hour before you."

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

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

"Is it true, gentlemen," asked Zobeida, drawing herself up, "that you have charged this man to put me that question?"

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

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

The seven culprits all thought their last hour had come, and the Caliph repented bitterly that he had not taken the vizir's advice. But they made up their minds to die bravely, all except the porter, who loudly inquired of Zobeida why he was to suffer for other people's faults, and declared that these misfortunes would never have happened if it had not been for the Calenders, who always brought ill-luck. He ended by imploring Zobeida not to confound the innocent with the guilty and to spare his life.

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

The Caliph, who was naturally very impatient, suffered far more than either of the others at feeling that his life was at the mercy of a justly offended lady, but when he heard her question he began to breathe more freely, for he was convinced that she had only to learn his name and rank for all danger to be over. So he whispered hastily to the vizir, who was next to him, to reveal their secret.

But the vizir, wiser than his master, wished to conceal from the public the affront they had received, and merely answered, "After all, we have only got what we deserved."

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

"No, madam," replied one, "we are no blood relations at all, only brothers by our mode of life."

"And you," she asked, addressing another, "were you born blind of one eye?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Then one of the Calenders, addressing himself to Zobeida as the principal lady, began his story.

The Story of the First Calender, Son of a King

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

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

Of course I did not dream of refusing him anything he asked, and gave the promise without the least hesitation. He then bade me wait an instant, and vanished, returning in a few moments with a richly dressed lady of great beauty, but as he did not tell me her name, I thought it was better not to inquire. We all three sat down to table and amused ourselves with talking of all sorts of indifferent things, and with drinking each other's health. Suddenly the prince said to me, "Cousin, we have no time to lose; be so kind as to conduct this lady to a certain spot, where you will find a dome-like tomb, newly built. You cannot mistake it. Go in, both of you, and wait till I come. I shall not be long."

As I had promised I prepared to do as I was told, and giving my hand to the lady, I escorted her, by the light of the moon, to the place of which the prince had spoken. We had barely reached it when he joined us himself, carrying a small vessel of water, a pickaxe, and a little bag containing plaster.

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

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

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

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

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

You must know that all this time the king, my uncle, was absent on a hunting expedition, and as no one knew when he would be back, I at last decided to return home, leaving the ministers to make my excuses. I longed to tell them what had become of the prince, about whose fate they felt the most dreadful anxiety, but the oath I had sworn kept me silent.

On my arrival at my father's capital, I was astonished to find a large detachment of guards drawn up before the gate of the palace; they surrounded me directly I entered. I asked the officers in command the reason of this strange behaviour, and was horrified to learn that the army had mutinied and put to death the king, my father, and had placed the grand-vizir on the throne. Further, that by his orders I was placed under arrest.

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

My persecutor, however, did not stop here. He shut me up in a large case and ordered his executioner to carry me into a desert place, to cut off my head, and then to abandon my body to the birds of prey. The case, with me inside it, was accordingly placed on a horse, and the executioner, accompanied by another man, rode into the country until they found a spot suitable for the purpose. But their hearts were not so hard as they seemed, and my tears and prayers made them waver.

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

After all I had gone through, and my fear of being recognised by some enemy, I could only travel very slowly and cautiously, generally resting in some out-of-the-way place by day, and walking as far as I was able by night, but at length I arrived in the kingdom of my uncle, of whose protection I was sure.

I found him in great trouble about the disappearance of his son, who had, he said, vanished without leaving a trace; but his own grief did not prevent him sharing mine. We mingled our tears, for the loss of one was the loss of the other, and then I made up my mind that it was my duty to break the solemn oath I had sworn to the prince. I therefore lost no time in telling my uncle everything I knew, and I observed that even before I had ended his sorrow appeared to be lightened a little.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We reached the palace without anyone having noticed our absence, when, shortly after, a clashing of drums, and cymbals, and the blare of trumpets burst upon our astonished ears. At the same time a thick cloud of dust on the horizon told of the approach of a great army. My heart sank

when I perceived that the commander was the vizir who had dethroned my father, and was come to seize the kingdom of my uncle.

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

Persecuted by ill-fortune, and stricken with grief, there seemed to be only one means of safety left to me. I shaved my beard and my eyebrows, and put on the dress of a calender, in which it was easy for me to travel without being known. I avoided the towns till I reached the kingdom of the famous and powerful Caliph, Haroun-al-Raschid, when I had no further reason to fear my enemies. It was my intention to come to Bagdad and to throw myself at the feet of his Highness, who would, I felt certain, be touched by my sad story, and would grant me, besides, his help and protection.

After a journey which lasted some months I arrived at length at the gates of this city. It was sunset, and I paused for a little to look about me, and to decide which way to turn my steps. I was still debating on this subject when I was joined by this other calender, who stopped to greet me. "You, like me, appear to be a stranger," I said. He replied that I was right, and before he could say more the third calender came up. He, also, was newly arrived in Bagdad, and being brothers in misfortune, we resolved to cast in our lots together, and to share whatever fate might have in store.

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

This, madam, is my story.

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

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

The Story of the Second Calender, Son of a King

"Madam," said the young man, addressing Zobeida, "if you wish to know how I lost my right eye, I shall have to tell you the story of my whole life."

I was scarcely more than a baby, when the king my father, finding me unusually quick and clever for my age, turned his thoughts to my education. I was taught first to read and write, and then to learn the Koran, which is the basis of our holy religion, and the better to understand it, I read with my tutors the ablest commentators on its teaching, and committed to memory all the traditions respecting the Prophet, which have been gathered from the mouth of those who were his friends. I also learnt history, and was instructed in poetry, versification, geography, chronology, and in all the outdoor exercises in which every prince should excel. But what I liked best of all was writing Arabic characters, and in this I soon surpassed my masters, and gained a reputation in this branch of knowledge that reached as far as India itself.

Now the Sultan of the Indies, curious to see a young prince with such strange tastes, sent an ambassador to my father, laden with rich presents, and a warm invitation to visit his court. My father, who was deeply anxious to secure the friendship of so powerful a monarch, and held besides that a little travel would greatly improve my manners and open my mind, accepted gladly, and in a short time I had set out for India with the ambassador, attended only by a small suite on account of the length of the journey, and the badness of the roads. However, as was my duty, I took with me ten camels, laden with rich presents for the Sultan.

We had been travelling for about a month, when one day we saw a cloud of dust moving swiftly towards us; and as soon as it came near, we found that the dust concealed a band of fifty robbers. Our men barely numbered half, and as we were also hampered by the camels, there was no use in fighting, so we tried to overawe them by informing them who we were, and whither we were going. The robbers, however, only laughed, and declared that was none of their business, and, without more words, attacked us brutally. I defended myself to the last, wounded though I was, but at length, seeing that resistance was hopeless, and that the ambassador and all our followers were made prisoners, I put spurs to my horse and rode away as fast as I could, till the poor beast fell dead from a wound in his side. I managed to jump off without any injury, and looked about to see if I was pursued. But for the moment I was safe, for, as I imagined, the robbers were all engaged in quarrelling over their booty.

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

I wandered about for a whole month without knowing where I was going, till at length I found myself on the outskirts of a beautiful city, watered by winding streams, which enjoyed an eternal spring. My delight at the prospect of mixing once more with human beings was somewhat damped at the thought of the miserable object I must seem. My face and hands had been burned nearly black; my clothes were all in rags, and my shoes were in such a state that I had been forced to abandon them altogether.

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

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

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

In a few days I had quite recovered from the hardships I had undergone, and then the tailor, knowing that it was the custom for the princes of our religion to learn a trade or profession so as to provide for themselves in times of ill-fortune, inquired if there was anything I could do for my living. I replied that I had been educated as a grammarian and a poet, but that my great gift was writing.

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

This counsel was very distasteful to me, but I thought I could not do otherwise than adopt it. So the next morning I set out with a company of poor wood-cutters, to whom the tailor had introduced me. Even on the first day I cut enough wood to sell for a tolerable sum, and very soon I became more expert, and had made enough money to repay the tailor all he had lent me.

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

To save her all the trouble possible, I hastened towards her, and bowed low.

"Who are you? Who are you?" she said. "A man or a genius?"

"A man, madam," I replied; "I have nothing to do with geni." "

"By what accident do you come here?" she asked again with a sigh. "I have been in this place now for five and twenty years, and you are the first man who has visited me."

Emboldened by her beauty and gentleness, I ventured to reply, "Before, madam, I answer your question, allow me to say how grateful I am for this meeting, which is not only a consolation to me in my own heavy sorrow, but may perhaps enable me to render your lot happier," and then I told her who I was, and how I had come there.

"Alas, prince," she said, with a deeper sigh than before, "you have guessed rightly in supposing me an unwilling prisoner in this gorgeous place. I am the daughter of the king of the Ebony Isle, of whose fame you surely must have heard. At my father's desire I was married to a prince who was my own cousin; but on my very wedding day, I was snatched up by a genius, and brought here in a faint. For a long while I did nothing but weep, and would not suffer the genius to come near me; but time teaches us submission, and I have now got accustomed to his presence, and if clothes and jewels could content me, I have them in plenty. Every tenth day, for five and twenty years, I have received a visit from him, but in case I should need his help at any other time, I have only to touch a talisman that stands at the entrance of my chamber. It wants still five days to his next visit, and I hope that during that time you will do me the honour to be my guest."

I was too much dazzled by her beauty to dream of refusing her offer, and accordingly the princess had me conducted to the bath, and a rich dress befitting my rank was provided for me. Then a feast of the most delicate dishes was served in a room hung with embroidered Indian fabrics.

Next day, when we were at dinner, I could maintain my patience no longer, and implored the princess to break her bonds, and return with me to the world which was lighted by the sun.

"What you ask is impossible," she answered; "but stay here with me instead, and we can be happy, and all you will have to do is to betake yourself to the forest every tenth day, when I am

expecting my master the genius. He is very jealous, as you know, and will not suffer a man to come near me."

"Princess," I replied, "I see it is only fear of the genius that makes you act like this. For myself, I dread him so little that I mean to break his talisman in pieces! Awful though you think him, he shall feel the weight of my arm, and I herewith take a solemn vow to stamp out the whole race."

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

Hardly had my foot touched the talisman when the air became as dark as night, a fearful noise was heard, and the palace shook to its very foundations. In an instant I was sobered, and understood what I had done. "Princess!" I cried, "what is happening?"

"Alas!" she exclaimed, forgetting all her own terrors in anxiety for me, "fly, or you are lost."

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

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

"A pain in my heart," she replied hastily, "obliged me to seek the aid of this little bottle. Feeling faint, I slipped and fell against the talisman, which broke. That is really all."

"You are an impudent liar!" cried the genius. "How did this hatchet and those shoes get here?"

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

The tailor, who had been uneasy at my long absence, was, delighted to see me; but I kept silence about my adventure, and as soon as possible retired to my room to lament in secret over my folly. While I was thus indulging my grief my host entered, and said, "There is an old man downstairs who has brought your hatchet and slippers, which he picked up on the road, and now restores to you, as he found out from one of your comrades where you lived. You had better come down and speak to him yourself." At this speech I changed colour, and my legs trembled under me. The tailor noticed my confusion, and was just going to inquire the reason when the door of the room opened, and the old man appeared, carrying with him my hatchet and shoes.

"I am a genius," he said, "the son of the daughter of Eblis, prince of the genii. Is not this hatchet yours, and these shoes?" Without waiting for an answer-which, indeed, I could hardly have given him, so great was my fright-he seized hold of me, and darted up into the air with the quickness of lightning, and then, with equal swiftness, dropped down towards the earth. When he touched the ground, he rapped it with his foot; it opened, and we found ourselves in the enchanted palace, in the presence of the beautiful princess of the Ebony Isle. But how different she looked from what she was when I had last seen her, for she was lying stretched on the ground covered with blood, and weeping bitterly.

"Traitor!" cried the genius, "is not this man your lover?"

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

"What!" exclaimed the genius, "you owe all your sufferings to him, and yet you dare to say he is a stranger to you!"

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

"Very well," said the genius, drawing his sword, "take this, and cut off his head."

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

"You condemn yourself by your refusal," said the genius; then turning to me, he added, "and you, do you not know her?"

"How should I?" I replied, resolved to imitate the princess in her fidelity. "How should I, when I never saw her before?"

"Cut her head off," then, "if she is a stranger to you, and I shall believe you are speaking the truth, and will set you at liberty."

"Certainly," I answered, taking the sabre in my hands, and making a sign to the princess to fear nothing, as it was my own life that I was about to sacrifice, and not hers. But the look of gratitude she gave me shook my courage, and I flung the sabre to the earth.

"I should not deserve to live," I said to the genius, "if I were such a coward as to slay a lady who is not only unknown to me, but who is at this moment half dead herself. Do with me as you will- I am in your power-but I refuse to obey your cruel command."

"I see," said the genius, "that you have both made up your minds to brave me, but I will give you a sample of what you may expect." So saying, with one sweep of his sabre he cut off a hand of the princess, who was just able to lift the other to wave me an eternal farewell. Then I lost consciousness for several minutes.

When I came to myself I implored the genius to keep me no longer in this state of suspense, but to lose no time in putting an end to my sufferings. The genius, however, paid no attention to my prayers, but said sternly, "That is the way in which a genius treats the woman who has betrayed him. If I chose, I could kill you also; but I will be merciful, and content myself with changing you into a dog, an ass, a lion, or a bird-whichever you prefer."

I caught eagerly at these words, as giving me a faint hope of softening his wrath. "O genius!" I cried, "as you wish to spare my life, be generous, and spare it altogether. Grant my prayer, and pardon my crime, as the best man in the whole world forgave his neighbour who was eaten up with envy of him." Contrary to my hopes, the genius seemed interested in my words, and said he would like to hear the story of the two neighbours; and as I think, madam, it may please you, I will tell it to you also.

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

In a town of moderate size, two men lived in neighbouring houses; but they had not been there very long before one man took such a hatred of the other, and envied him so bitterly, that the poor man determined to find another home, hoping that when they no longer met every day his enemy would forget all about him. So he sold his house and the little furniture it contained, and moved into the capital of the country, which was luckily at no great distance. About half a mile from this city he bought a nice little place, with a large garden and a fair-sized court, in the centre of which stood an old well.

In order to live a quieter life, the good man put on the robe of a dervish, and divided his house into a quantity of small cells, where he soon established a number of other dervishes. The fame of his virtue gradually spread abroad, and many people, including several of the highest quality, came to visit him and ask his prayers.

Of course it was not long before his reputation reached the ears of the man who envied him, and this wicked wretch resolved never to rest till he had in some way worked ill to the dervish whom he hated. So he left his house and his business to look after themselves, and betook himself to the new dervish monastery, where he was welcomed by the founder with all the warmth imaginable. The excuse he gave for his appearance was that he had come to consult the chief of the dervishes on a private matter of great importance. "What I have to say must not be overheard," he whispered; "command, I beg of you, that your dervishes retire into their cells, as night is approaching, and meet me in the court."

The dervish did as he was asked without delay, and directly they were alone together the envious man began to tell a long story, edging, as they walked to and fro, always nearer to the well, and when they were quite close, he seized the dervish and dropped him in. He then ran off triumphantly, without having been seen by anyone, and congratulating himself that the object of his hatred was dead, and would trouble him no more.

But in this he was mistaken! The old well had long been inhabited (unknown to mere human beings) by a set of fairies and genii, who caught the dervish as he fell, so that he received no hurt. The dervish himself could see nothing, but he took for granted that something strange had happened, or he must certainly have been dashed against the side of the well and been killed. He lay quite still, and in a moment he heard a voice saying, "Can you guess whom this man is that we have saved from death?"

"No," replied several other voices.

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

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

"She has fallen into the power of the genius Maimoum, the son of Dimdim," replied the first voice. "But it would be quite simple for this holy chief of the dervishes to cure her if he only knew! In his convent there is a black cat which has a tiny white tip to its tail. Now to cure the princess the dervish must pull out seven of these white hairs, burn three, and with their smoke perfume the head of the princess. This will deliver her so completely that Maimoum, the son of Dimdim, will never dare to approach her again."

The fairies and genii ceased talking, but the dervish did not forget a word of all they had said; and when morning came he perceived a place in the side of the well which was broken, and where he could easily climb out.

The dervishes, who could not imagine what had become of him, were enchanted at his reappearance. He told them of the attempt on his life made by his guest of the previous day, and then retired into his cell. He was soon joined here by the black cat of which the voice had spoken, who came as usual to say good-morning to his master. He took him on his knee and seized the opportunity to pull seven white hairs out of his tail, and put them on one side till they were needed.

The sun had not long risen before the Sultan, who was anxious to leave nothing undone that might deliver the princess, arrived with a large suite at the gate of the monastery, and was received by the dervishes with profound respect. The Sultan lost no time in declaring the object of his visit, and leading the chief of the dervishes aside, he said to him, "Noble scheik, you have guessed perhaps what I have come to ask you?"

"Yes, sire," answered the dervish; "if I am not mistaken, it is the illness of the princess which has procured me this honour."

"You are right," returned the Sultan, "and you will give me fresh life if you can by your prayers deliver my daughter from the strange malady that has taken possession of her."

"Let your highness command her to come here, and I will see what I can do."

The Sultan, full of hope, sent orders at once that the princess was to set out as soon as possible, accompanied by her usual staff of attendants. When she arrived, she was so thickly veiled that the dervish could not see her face, but he desired a brazier to be held over her head, and laid the seven hairs on the burning coals. The instant they were consumed, terrific cries were heard, but no one could tell from whom they proceeded. Only the dervish guessed that they were uttered by Maimoum the son of Dimdim, who felt the princess escaping him.

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

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

They all replied with one accord that he deserved the hand of the princess.

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

Shortly after these events, the grand-vizir died, and his post was given to the dervish. But he did not hold it for long, for the Sultan fell a victim to an attack of illness, and as he had no sons, the soldiers and priests declared the dervish heir to the throne, to the great joy of all the people.

One day, when the dervish, who had now become Sultan, was making a royal progress with his court, he perceived the envious man standing in the crowd. He made a sign to one of his vizirs, and whispered in his ear, "Fetch me that man who is standing out there, but take great care not to frighten him." The vizir obeyed, and when the envious man was brought before the Sultan, the monarch said to him, "My friend, I am delighted to see you again." Then turning to an officer, he added, "Give him a thousand pieces of gold out of my treasury, and twenty waggon-loads of merchandise out of my private stores, and let an escort of soldiers accompany him home." He then took leave of the envious man, and went on his way.

Now when I had ended my story, I proceeded to show the genius how to apply it to himself. "O genius," I said, "you see that this Sultan was not content with merely forgiving the envious man for the attempt on his life; he heaped rewards and riches upon him."

But the genius had made up his mind, and could not be softened. "Do not imagine that you are going to escape so easily," he said. "All I can do is to give you bare life; you will have to learn what happens to people who interfere with me."

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

Then he stooped and gathered a handful of earth, and murmured some words over it, after which he threw the earth in my face, saying as he did so, "Quit the form of a man, and assume that of a monkey." This done, he vanished, and I was in the likeness of an ape, and in a country I had never seen before.

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

The deck was full of people, who watched my progress with interest, but when I seized a rope and swung myself on board, I found that I had only escaped death at the hands of the genius to perish by those of the sailors, lest I should bring ill-luck to the vessel and the merchants. "Throw him into the sea!" cried one. "Knock him on the head with a hammer," exclaimed another. "Let me shoot him with an arrow," said a third; and certainly somebody would have had his way if I had not flung myself at the captain's feet and grasped tight hold of his dress. He appeared touched by my action and patted my head, and declared that he would take me under his protection, and that no one should do me any harm.

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

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

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

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

As soon as the monarch saw my writing he did not so much as look at the samples of the merchants, but desired his officials to take the finest and most richly caparisoned horse in his stables, together with the most magnificent dress they could procure, and to put it on the person who had written those lines, and bring him to court.

The officials began to laugh when they heard the Sultan's command, but as soon as they could speak they said, "Deign, your highness, to excuse our mirth, but those lines were not written by a man but by a monkey."

"A monkey!" exclaimed the Sultan.

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

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

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

"He is the master," said the good man, and desired that I should be sent for.

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

All the way along the streets I had been the object of curiosity to a vast crowd, which had filled every doorway and every window, and it was amidst their shouts and cheers that I was ushered into the presence of the Sultan.

I approached the throne on which he was seated and made him three low bows, then prostrated myself at his feet to the surprise of everyone, who could not understand how it was possible that a monkey should be able to distinguish a Sultan from other people, and to pay him the respect due to his rank. However, excepting the usual speech, I omitted none of the common forms attending a royal audience.

When it was over the Sultan dismissed all the court, keeping with him only the chief of the eunuchs and a little slave. He then passed into another room and ordered food to be brought, making signs to me to sit at table with him and eat. I rose from my seat, kissed the ground, and took my place at the table, eating, as you may suppose, with care and in moderation.

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

Supper being over chessmen were brought, and the Sultan signed to me to know if I would play with him. I kissed the ground and laid my hand on my head to show that I was ready to show myself worthy of the honour. He beat me the first game, but I won the second and third, and seeing that this did not quite please I dashed off a verse by way of consolation.

The Sultan was so enchanted with all the talents of which I had given proof that he wished me to exhibit some of them to other people. So turning to the chief of the eunuchs he said, "Go and beg my daughter, Queen of Beauty, to come here. I will show her something she has never seen before."

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

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

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

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

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

"Sire," replied Queen of Beauty, "the old lady who took care of me in my childhood was an accomplished magician, and she taught me seventy rules of her art, by means of which I could, in the twinkling of an eye, transplant your capital into the middle of the ocean. Her art likewise teaches me to recognise at first sight all persons who are enchanted, and tells me by whom the spell was wrought."

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

"Sire," replied the princess, "there are many out-of-the-way things it is as well to know, but one should never boast of them."

"Well," asked the Sultan, "can you tell me what must be done to disenchant the young prince?"

"Certainly; and I can do it."

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

"As your Highness pleases," replied the princess.

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

When the circle and the writing were finished she stood in the middle of it and repeated some verses from the Koran. Slowly the air grew dark, and we felt as if the earth was about to crumble away, and our fright was by no means diminished at seeing the genius, son of the daughter of Eblis, suddenly appear under the form of a colossal lion.

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

"And you," retorted the lion, "have not feared to break our treaty that engaged solemnly we should never interfere with each other."

"Accursed genius!" exclaimed the princess, "it is you by whom that treaty was first broken."

"I will teach you how to give me so much trouble," said the lion, and opening his huge mouth he advanced to swallow her. But the princess expected something of the sort and was on her guard. She bounded on one side, and seizing one of the hairs of his mane repeated two or three words over it. In an instant it became a sword, and with a sharp blow she cut the lion's body into two pieces. These pieces vanished no one knew where, and only the lion's head remained, which was at once changed into a scorpion. Quick as thought the princess assumed the form of a serpent and gave battle to the scorpion, who, finding he was getting the worst of it, turned himself into an eagle and took flight. But in a moment the serpent had become an eagle more powerful still, who soared up in the air and after him, and then we lost sight of them both.

We all remained where we were quaking with anxiety, when the ground opened in front of us and a black and white cat leapt out, its hair standing on end, and miauling frightfully. At its heels was a wolf, who had almost seized it, when the cat changed itself into a worm, and, piercing the skin of a pomegranate which had tumbled from a tree, hid itself in the fruit. The pomegranate swelled till it grew as large as a pumpkin, and raised itself on to the roof of the gallery, from which it fell into the court and was broken into bits. While this was taking place the wolf, who had transformed himself into a cock, began to swallow the seed of the pomegranate as fast as he could. When all were gone he flew towards us, flapping his wings as if to ask if we saw any more, when suddenly his eye fell on one which lay on the bank of the little canal that flowed through the court; he hastened towards it, but before he could touch it the seed rolled into the canal and became a fish. The cock flung himself in after the fish and took the shape of a pike, and for two hours they chased each other up and down under the water, uttering horrible cries, but we could see nothing. At length they rose from the water in their proper forms, but darting such flames of fire from their mouths that we dreaded lest the palace should catch fire. Soon, however, we had much greater cause for alarm, as the genius, having shaken off the princess, flew towards us. Our fate would have been sealed if the princess, seeing our danger, had not attracted the attention of the genius to herself. As it was, the Sultan's beard was singed and his face scorched, the chief of the eunuchs was burned to a cinder, while a spark deprived me of the sight of one eye. Both I and the Sultan had given up all hope of a rescue, when there was a shout of "Victory, victory!" from the princess, and the genius lay at her feet a great heap of ashes.

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

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

Suddenly the princess shrieked, "I burn, I burn!" and death came to free her from her torments.

I have no words, madam, to tell you of my feelings at this terrible sight. I would rather have remained a monkey all my life than let my benefactress perish in this shocking manner. As for the Sultan, he was quite inconsolable, and his subjects, who had dearly loved the princess, shared his grief. For seven days the whole nation mourned, and then the ashes of the princess were buried with great pomp, and a superb tomb was raised over her.

As soon as the Sultan recovered from the severe illness which had seized him after the death of the princess he sent for me and plainly, though politely, informed me that my presence would always remind him of his loss, and he begged that I would instantly quit his kingdom, and on pain of death never return to it. I was, of course, bound to obey, and not knowing what was to become of me I shaved my beard and eyebrows and put on the dress of a calender. After wandering aimlessly through several countries, I resolved to come to Bagdad and request an audience of the Commander of the Faithful.

And that, madam, is my story.

The other Calender then told his story.

The Story of the Third Calender, Son of a King

My story, said the Third Calender, is quite different from those of my two friends. It was fate that deprived them of the sight of their right eyes, but mine was lost by my own folly.

My name is Agib, and I am the son of a king called Cassib, who reigned over a large kingdom, which had for its capital one of the finest seaport towns in the world.

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

For forty days wind and weather were all in our favour, but the next night a terrific storm arose, which blew us hither and thither for ten days, till the pilot confessed that he had quite lost his bearings. Accordingly a sailor was sent up to the masthead to try to catch a sight of land, and reported that nothing was to be seen but the sea and sky, except a huge mass of blackness that lay astern.

On hearing this the pilot grew white, and, beating his breast, he cried, "Oh, sir, we are lost, lost!" till the ship's crew trembled at they knew not what. When he had recovered himself a little, and was able to explain the cause of his terror, he replied, in answer to my question, that we had drifted far out of our course, and that the following day about noon we should come near that mass of darkness, which, said he, is nothing but the famous Black Mountain. This mountain is composed of adamant, which attracts to itself all the iron and nails in your ship; and as we are helplessly drawn nearer, the force of attraction will become so great that the iron and nails will fall out of the ships and cling to the mountain, and the ships will sink to the bottom with all that are in them. This it is that causes the side of the mountain towards the sea to appear of such a dense blackness.

As may be supposed-continued the pilot-the mountain sides are very rugged, but on the summit stands a brass dome supported on pillars, and bearing on top the figure of a brass horse, with a rider on his back. This rider wears a breastplate of lead, on which strange signs and figures are engraved, and it is said that as long as this statue remains on the dome, vessels will never cease to perish at the foot of the mountain.

So saying, the pilot began to weep afresh, and the crew, fearing their last hour had come, made their wills, each one in favour of his fellow.

At noon next day, as the pilot had foretold, we were so near to the Black Mountain that we saw all the nails and iron fly out of the ships and dash themselves against the mountain with a horrible noise. A moment after the vessels fell asunder and sank, the crews with them. I alone managed to grasp a floating plank, and was driven ashore by the wind, without even a scratch. What was my joy on finding myself at the bottom of some steps which led straight up the mountain, for there was not another inch to the right or the left where a man could set his foot. And, indeed, even the steps themselves were so narrow and so steep that, if the lightest breeze had arisen, I should certainly have been blown into the sea.

When I reached the top I found the brass dome and the statue exactly as the pilot had described, but was too wearied with all I had gone through to do more than glance at them, and, flinging myself under the dome, was asleep in an instant. In my dreams an old man appeared to me and said, "Hearken, Agib! As soon as thou art awake dig up the ground underfoot, and thou shalt find a bow of brass and three arrows of lead. Shoot the arrows at the statue, and the rider shall tumble into the sea, but the horse will fall down by thy side, and thou shalt bury him in the place from which thou tookest the bow and arrows. This being done the sea will rise and cover the mountain, and on it thou wilt perceive the figure of a metal man seated in a boat, having an oar in each hand. Step on board and

let him conduct thee; but if thou wouldest behold thy kingdom again, see that thou takest not the name of Allah into thy mouth."

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

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

Next morning I dressed myself and began to look about me. There seemed to be no one but myself on the island, which was covered with fruit trees and watered with streams, but seemed a long distance from the mainland which I hoped to reach. Before, however, I had time to feel cast down, I saw a ship making directly for the island, and not knowing whether it would contain friends or foes, I hid myself in the thick branches of a tree.

The sailors ran the ship into a creek, where ten slaves landed, carrying spades and pickaxes. In the middle of the island they stopped, and after digging some time, lifted up what seemed to be a trapdoor. They then returned to the vessel two or three times for furniture and provisions, and finally were accompanied by an old man, leading a handsome boy of fourteen or fifteen years of age. They all disappeared down the trapdoor, and after remaining below for a few minutes came up again, but without the boy, and let down the trapdoor, covering it with earth as before. This done, they entered the ship and set sail.

As soon as they were out of sight, I came down from my tree, and went to the place where the boy had been buried. I dug up the earth till I reached a large stone with a ring in the centre. This, when removed, disclosed a flight of stone steps which led to a large room richly furnished and lighted by tapers. On a pile of cushions, covered with tapestry, sat the boy. He looked up, startled and frightened at the sight of a stranger in such a place, and to soothe his fears, I at once spoke: "Be not alarmed, sir, whoever you may be. I am a king, and the son of a king, and will do you no hurt. On the contrary, perhaps I have been sent here to deliver you out of this tomb, where you have been buried alive."

Hearing my words, the young man recovered himself, and when I had ended, he said, "The reasons, Prince, that have caused me to be buried in this place are so strange that they cannot but surprise you. My father is a rich merchant, owning much land and many ships, and has great dealings in precious stones, but he never ceased mourning that he had no child to inherit his wealth.

"At length one day he dreamed that the following year a son would be born to him, and when this actually happened, he consulted all the wise men in the kingdom as to the future of the infant. One and all they said the same thing. I was to live happily till I was fifteen, when a terrible danger awaited me, which I should hardly escape. If, however, I should succeed in doing so, I should live to a great old age. And, they added, when the statue of the brass horse on the top of the mountain of adamant is thrown into the sea by Agib, the son of Cassib, then beware, for fifty days later your son shall fall by his hand!

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.