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Title: The Arabian Nights, vol. III

Date of first publication: 1819

Author: anonymous

Date first posted: May 27, 2014

Date last updated: May 27, 2014

Faded Page eBook #20140537

This eBook was produced by: Delphine Lettau, Paul Dring, Stephen Hutcheson & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

The
Arabian Nights

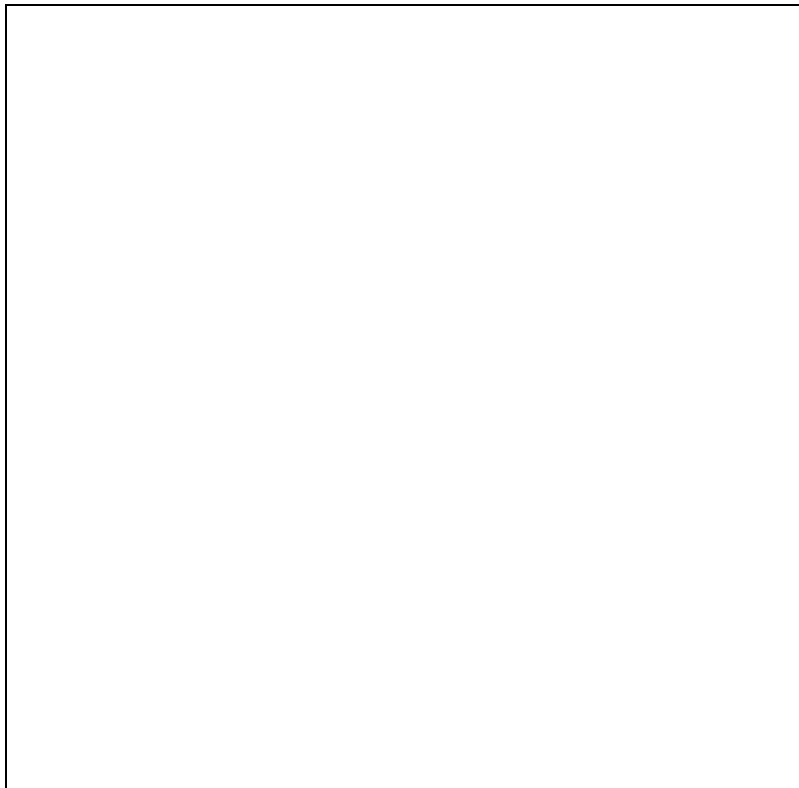


Volume III
Illustrated
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THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.

ILLUSTRATED
WITH ENGRAVINGS,
FROM DESIGNS
BY R. WESTALL, R.A.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.
VOL. III.

LONDON;
Printed for Rodwell & Martin; and the other Proprietors.
1819.

PRINTED FOR C. AND J. RIVINGTON; J. BOOKER; LONGMAN, HURST,
REES, ORME, AND CO.; BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY; RODWELL AND
MARTIN; G. B. WHITTAKER; SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL; AND HURST,
ROBINSON, AND CO.

1825.

PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVIDSON, WHITEFRIARS.

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**ARABIAN NIGHTS'
ENTERTAINMENTS.**

THE STORY OF NOUREDDIN AND THE FAIR PERSIAN.

Balsora was for many years the capital of a kingdom tributary to the caliphs of Arabia. The king who governed it in the days of caliph Haroun Alraschid was named Zinchi. They were both cousins, the sons of two brothers. Zinchi not thinking it proper to commit the administration of his affairs to one single vizier, made choice of two, Khacan and Saouy.

Khacan was of a sweet, generous, and affable temper, and took a wonderful pride in obliging those with whom he had any concern, to the utmost of his power, without the least hinderance or prejudice to justice, whenever it was demanded of him; so that he was universally respected both at court, in the city, and throughout the whole kingdom; and every body's mouth was full of the praises he so highly deserved.

Saouy was of a quite different character: he was always sullen and morose, and treated every body after a disrespectful manner, without any regard to their rank or quality; instead of making himself beloved and [2] admired for his riches, he was so perfect a miser, as to deny himself the necessaries of life. In short, nobody could endure him; and if ever any thing was said of him, to be sure it was something of ill. But what increased the people's hatred against him the more was his implacable aversion for Khacan; always interpreting in the worst sense the actions of that worthy minister, and endeavouring to do him all the ill offices imaginable with the king.

One day, after council, the king of Balsora diverted himself with his two viziers, and some other members of the council: they fell into discourse about the women slaves, that with us are daily bought and sold, and are almost reckoned in the same rank with our wives. Some were of opinion, that it was enough if the slave that one bought was beautiful and well shaped, to make us amends for the wives, which, very often, upon the account of alliance or interest in families, we are forced to marry, who are not always the greatest beauties, nor mistresses of any perfection, either of mind or body. Others maintained, and amongst the rest Khacan, that neither beauty, nor a thousand other charming perfections of the body, were the only things to be coveted in a mistress; but they ought to be accompanied with a great deal of wit, prudence, modesty, and agreeableness; and, if possible, abundance of sense and penetration. The reason they gave for it was, that nothing in the world could be more agreeable to persons on whom the management of important affairs depend, than, after having spent the day in that fatiguing employment, to have a companion in their retirement whose conversation is not only agreeable, but useful and diverting; for, in short, continued they, there is but little difference between brutes and those men who keep a mistress only to look upon her, and gratify a passion that we have in [3] common with them.

The king was entirely of their opinion who spoke last, and he quickly gave some demonstration of it, by ordering Khacan to buy him a slave, one that was a perfect beauty, mistress of all those qualifications they had just mentioned, and especially very ingenious.

Saouy, jealous of the honour the king had done Khacan, and vexed at his being of a contrary opinion, Sir, says he, it will be very difficult to find a slave so accomplished as to answer your majesty's demand; and, should they light upon such a one, (as I scarce believe they will,) she will be a cheap bargain at ten thousand pieces of gold. Saouy, replied the king, I perceive plainly you think it too great a sum: it may be so for you, though not for me. Then turning to the chief treasurer, he ordered him to send the ten thousand pieces of gold to the vizier's house.

Khacan, as soon as he came home, sent for all the courtiers who used to deal in women slaves, and strictly charged them, that, if ever they met with a slave that answered the description he gave them, they should come and acquaint him with it. The courtiers, partly to oblige the vizier, and partly for their own interest, promised to use their utmost endeavours to find out one to his liking. Accordingly there was scarce a day past but they

brought him one, yet he always found some fault or other with them.

One day as Khacan was getting on horseback very early in the morning to go to court, a courtier came to him, and, with a great deal of eagerness, catching hold of the stirrup, told him there was a Persian merchant arrived very late the day before, who had a slave to sell so surprisingly beautiful, that she excelled all women that his eyes ever beheld; and, as for her parts and learning, the merchant engaged she could cope with the finest wits and the most knowing persons of the age. [4]

Khacan, overjoyed at this news, which made him hope for a favourable reception at court, ordered him to bring the slave to his palace against his coming back, and so continued his journey.

The courtier failed not of being at the vizier's at the appointed hour; and Khacan, finding the lovely slave so much beyond his expectation, immediately gave her the name of the Fair Persian. As she had an infinite deal of wit and learning, he soon perceived by her conversation that it was in vain to search any farther for a slave that surpassed her in any of those qualifications required by the king, and therefore he asked the courtier at what rate the Persian merchant valued her.

Sir, replied the courtier, he is a man of few words in bargaining, and he tells me, that the very lowest rate he can part with her at, is ten thousand pieces of gold: he has also sworn to me, that without reckoning his pains and trouble from the time of his first taking care of her, he has laid out pretty near the sum upon her education, on masters to instruct and teach her, besides clothes and maintenance; and, as he always thought her fit for a king, so from her very infancy, in which he bought her, he has not been sparing in any thing that might contribute towards advancing her to that high honour. She plays on all sorts of instruments to perfection, she dances, sings, writes better than the most celebrated authors, understands poetry; and, in short, there is scarce any book but what she has read; so that there never was a slave of so vast a capacity heard of before. [5]

The vizier Khacan, who understood the merit of the Fair Persian better than the courtier, that only reported what he had heard from the merchant, was unwilling to drive off the bargain to another time; and therefore he sent one of his servants to look after the merchant, where the courtier told him he was to be found.

As soon as the Persian merchant came, It is not for myself, but the king, says the vizier Khacan, that I buy your slave; but, however, you must let him have her at a more reasonable price than what you have already set upon her.

Sir, replied the merchant, I should do myself an unspeakable honour in offering her as a present to his majesty, were I able to make him one of so inestimable a value. I barely ask no more than what her education and breeding up has cost me; and all I have to say is, that I believe his majesty will be extremely pleased with the purchase.

The vizier Khacan would stand no longer bargaining with the merchant, but paid him the money down immediately. Sir, says he to the vizier, upon taking his leave of him, since the slave is designed for the king's use, give me leave to tell you, that being extremely fatigued with our long journey together, you see her at a great disadvantage; and though she has not her equal in the world for beauty, yet if you please to keep her at your own house but for a fortnight, and strive a little to please and humour her, she will appear quite another creature: after that, you may present her to the king with abundance of honour and credit; for which, I doubt not but you will think yourself much obliged to me. The sun, you see, has a little tarnished her complexion; but after two or three times bathing, and when you have dressed her according to the fashion of your country, she will appear to your eyes infinitely more charming than now. [6]

Khacan was mightily pleased with the advice the merchant gave him, and was resolved to follow it. Accordingly the Fair Persian was lodged in a particular apartment near his lady's, whom he desired to invite her to an entertainment, and henceforth to treat her as a mistress designed for the king: he also entreated his lady to get the richest clothes for her that possibly could be had, and especially those that became her best. Before he took his leave of the Fair Persian, he says, Your happiness, madam, cannot be greater than what I am about to procure for you, since it is for the king himself I have bought you; and I hope he will be better pleased

with the enjoyment of you, than I am in discharging the trust his majesty has laid upon me: however, I think it my duty to warn you of my son, who, though he has a tolerable share of wit, yet is a young, wanton, forward youth; and therefore have a care how you suffer him to come near you. The Fair Persian thanked him for his good advice; and after she had given him an assurance of her intention to follow it, he withdrew.

Noureddin, for so the vizier's son was named, had all the liberty imaginable in his mother's apartment, with whom he usually ate: he was very genteel, young, agreeable, and bold; and being master of abundance of wit and readiness of expression, he had the art of persuading people to whatever he pleased. He saw the Fair Persian; and from their first interview, though he knew his father had bought her purposely for the king, and he himself had declared the same, yet he never used the least endeavour to put a stop to the violence of his passion. In short, he resigned himself wholly to the power of her charms, by which his heart was at first conquered: and being ravished with her conversation, he was resolved to employ his utmost endeavours to get her from the king. [7]

On the other hand, the Fair Persian had no dislike to Noureddin. The vizier, says she to herself, has done me a particular honour in buying me for the king of Balsora; but I should have thought myself very happy if he had designed me only for his son.

Noureddin was not backward in making use of the advantage of seeing, entertaining, and conversing with a beauty he was so passionately in love with; for he would never leave her until his mother forced him to do it. My son, she would say, it is not proper for a young man, as you are, to be always amongst the ladies; go mind your studies, that in time you may be worthy to succeed your father in his high posts and honours.

It being a great while since the Fair Persian had bathed, on account of her late fatiguing journey, the vizier's lady, five or six days after she was bought, ordered a private bath in her own house to be got ready purposely for her. She had a great many women slaves to wait upon her, who were charged by the vizier's lady, to be as careful of her as of her own person, and, after bathing, to put on her a very rich suit of clothes that she had provided for her; and all this pains and care was taken purely to ingratiate herself the more into her husband's affection, by letting him see how much she concerned herself in every thing that contributed to his pleasure.

As soon as she came out of the bath, the Fair Persian, a thousand times more beautiful than ever she appeared to Khacan when he bought her, went to make a visit to his lady, who at first sight hardly knew her. After having saluted her in a very graceful manner, Madam, says she, I know not how you like me in this dress you have been pleased to order for me; but your women, who tell me it becomes me so extremely well they should scarce know me, are such gross flatterers, that it is from you alone I expect to hear the truth: but, however, if what they say be really so, it is to you entirely, madam, that I owe the advantage it has given me. [8]

Oh! my daughter, cries the vizier's lady, quite transported with joy, you have no reason in the world to believe my women have flattered you: I am better skilled in beauty than they are; and, setting aside your dress, which becomes you admirably well, you appear so much handsomer than you did before your bathing, that I hardly knew you myself: if I thought the bath was yet hot enough, I would willingly take my turn, for I am now of an age that requires frequent use of it. Madam, replies the Fair Persian, I have nothing to say to the undeserved civilities you have been pleased to show me; but, as for the bath, it is wonderfully fine; and if you design to go in, you must be quick, for there is no time to be lost, as your women can inform you as well as I.

The vizier's lady, considering that she had not bathed for some days past, was willing to make use of that opportunity; and accordingly she acquainted her women with her intention, who immediately prepared all things necessary on such an occasion. The Fair Persian withdrew to her apartment; and the vizier's lady, before she went to bathe, ordered two little slaves to stay with her, with a strict charge, that if Noureddin came they should not give him admittance.

While the vizier's lady was bathing, and the fair slave alone in her apartment, in came Noureddin, and not finding his mother in her chamber, went directly to the Fair Persian's, where he found the two little slaves in the antechamber: he asked them where his mother was. They told him, in the bath. Where is the Fair Persian, then? replied Noureddin. In her chamber, answered the slaves; but we have positive orders from your mother [9]

not to let you go in.

The entrance into the Fair Persian's chamber being only covered with a piece of tapestry, Nouredin went to lift it up in order to go in, but was opposed by the two slaves, who clapped themselves just before it on purpose to stop his passage: he presently caught hold of both their arms, and thrusting them out of the antechamber, locked the door upon them. Away they immediately ran with a great outcry to the bath, and with weeping eyes told their lady that Nouredin, having driven them away by force, had got into the Fair Persian's chamber.

The vizier's lady received the astonishing news of her son's presumption with the greatest concern that could be: she immediately left off bathing, and dressing herself with all possible speed, came directly to the Fair Persian's chamber; but before she could get thither, Nouredin was fairly marched off.

The Fair Persian was extremely surprised to see the vizier's lady enter her chamber all in tears, and in the utmost confusion imaginable: Madam, says she to her, may I presume to ask you the occasion of your concern; and what accident has happened in the bath, that makes you leave it so soon?

What! cries the vizier's lady, can you so calmly ask that question, after your entertaining my son Nouredin alone in your chamber? or can there happen a greater misfortune either to him or me?

I beseech you, madam, says the fair slave, what injury can this action of Nouredin's do either to you or him? [10]

How! replied the vizier's lady, did not my husband tell you that you were designed for the king, and sufficiently caution you to have a care of Nouredin?

I have not forgot it, madam, replied the Fair Persian; but your son came to tell me the vizier his father had changed his mind, and, instead of reserving me for the king, as he first designed, has made him a present of my person. I easily believed him, madam; for oh! think how a slave as I am, accustomed from my infant years to the bonds of servitude, could have the heart and power to resist him! I must own I did it with the less unwillingness on account of a violent passion for him, which the freedom of conversation, and seeing one another daily, has raised in my soul. I could freely lose the hopes of ever being the king's, and think myself the happiest of creatures in spending my whole life with Nouredin.

At this discourse of the Fair Persian's, Would to God, cries the vizier's lady, that what you say were true! for then I should have no reason to be concerned: but, believe me, Nouredin is an impostor, and you are deceived; for it is impossible his father should ever make him the present you spoke of. Ah! wretched youth, how miserable hast thou made me, but more thy father, by the dismal consequences we must all expect to share with him! Neither my prayers nor tears will be able to prevail, or obtain a pardon for him; but, as soon as his father hears of his violence to you, he will inevitably sacrifice him to his just resentment. At the end of these words she fell a-weeping bitterly; and the slaves, who had as tender a regard for Nouredin as herself, bore her company.

A little after this, in came the vizier Khacan; and being mightily surprised to find his lady and her slaves all in tears, and the Fair Persian very melancholy, asked the reason of it; but they, instead of answering him, kept on weeping and making hideous lamentations. He was more astonished at this than he was before; at last, addressing himself to his wife, I command you, says he, to let me know the occasion of your tears, and to tell me the whole truth of the matter. [11]

The poor disconsolate lady being forced to satisfy her husband, Sir, says she, you shall first promise not to use me unkindly upon the discovery of what you are desirous to know, since I tell you beforehand that what has happened has not been occasioned by any fault of mine. While I was bathing with my women, continued she, your son, laying hold of that fatal opportunity to ruin us both, came hither, and made the Fair Persian believe that, instead of reserving her for the king, as you once designed, you had given her to him as a present: I do not say he has done this out of any ill design, but shall leave you to judge of it yourself. It is upon your account,

and his, for whom I want confidence to implore your pardon, that I am so extremely concerned.

It is impossible to express the vizier Khacan's distraction upon the hearing of the insolence of his son Noureddin: Ah! cried he, beating his breast, and tearing his beard, Miserable son! unworthy of life! hast thou at last thrown thy father from the highest pinnacle of happiness into a misfortune that must inevitably involve thee also in its ruin? Neither will the king be satisfied with thy blood nor mine, but will revenge himself after a more severe manner for the affront offered to his royal person.

His lady used her utmost endeavours to comfort and assuage his sorrow. Concern yourself no more [12] about the matter, my dear, said she; I will sell part of my jewels for ten thousand pieces of gold, with which you may buy another slave, handsomer, and more agreeable to the king's fancy than this.

Ah! replied the vizier, could you think me of so mean a spirit, as to be so extremely afflicted at the losing ten thousand pieces of gold? It is not that, nor the loss of all my goods, which I can easily part with; but the forfeiting of my honour, more precious than all the riches in the world, that torments and touches me so nearly. However, methinks, replied the lady, this can be no very considerable damage, since it is in the power of money to repair it.

How! cried the vizier, you know Saouy is my mortal enemy; and as soon as this affair comes to his knowledge, do you think he will not insult over me, and mock my misfortunes before the king? Your majesty, he will say to him, is always talking of Khacan's zeal and affection for your service: but see what a proof he has lately given of his being worthy the respect you have hitherto shown him. He has received ten thousand pieces of gold to buy a slave with; and, to do him justice, he has honourably performed that commission, in buying the most beautiful that ever eyes beheld; but, instead of bringing her to your majesty, he has thought it better to make a present of her to his son: Here, my son, said he, take this slave, since thou art more worthy of her than the king. Then, with his usual malice, will he go on: His son has her now entirely in his possession, and every day revels in her arms, without the least disturbance: this, sir, is the whole truth of the matter, that I have done myself the honour of acquainting you with; and if your majesty questions the truth of it, you may easily satisfy yourself. Do you not plainly see, my dear, continued the vizier, how, upon such a malicious insinuation [13] as this, I am every moment liable to have my house forced open by the king's guards, and the Fair Persian taken from me, besides a thousand other misfortunes that will unavoidably follow? Sir, said the vizier's lady to her husband, after he had finished his discourse, I am sensible the malice of Saouy is very great, and that, if he has had but the least intimation of this affair, he will certainly give it a turn very disadvantageous to your interest: but how is it possible that he or any body else should come to the knowledge of what has been privately transacted in your family? Suppose it comes to the king's ear, and he should ask you about it, cannot you say, that upon strict examination, you did not think the slave so fit for his majesty's use as you did at the first view; that the merchant has cheated you; that, indeed, she has a great deal of beauty, but is nothing near so witty or agreeable as she was reported to be? The king will certainly believe what you say, and Saouy be vexed to the soul to see all his malicious designs of ruining you eternally disappointed. Take courage, then, and, if you will follow my advice, send for all the courtiers, tell them you do not like the Fair Persian, and order them to be as expeditious as possible in getting another slave.

The vizier Khacan, highly approving of this advice, was resolved to make use of it; and though his passion began to cool a little, yet his indignation against his son Noureddin was not in the least abated.

Noureddin came not in sight all that day; and, not daring to hide himself among his companions, lest his father should search their houses for him, he went a little way out of town, and took sanctuary in a garden where he had never been before, and where his person was utterly unknown. It was very late when he came back, [14] being willing to stay till his father was a-bed, and then his mother's women opening the door very softly, let him in without any manner of noise. The next morning he went out before his father was stirring; and thus for a whole month was he put to his shifts, which was a terrible mortification to him. Indeed the women never flattered him, but told him plainly his father's anger was as great as ever, and if he came in his sight he would certainly kill him.

Though the vizier's lady was informed by her women of Noureddin's lying every night in the house, yet she

durst not presume to entreat her husband to pardon him. At last, one day, says she to him; I have hitherto been silent, not daring to take the liberty of talking to you about your son; but now give me leave to ask you what you design to do with him. Indeed it is impossible for a son to be more criminal towards a father than Noureddin has been towards you; he has robbed you of the honour and satisfaction of presenting the king with a slave so accomplished as the Fair Persian: but, after all, are you absolutely resolved to destroy him; and, instead of a light evil, draw upon yourself a far greater than perhaps you imagine at present? Are you not afraid that the world, which spitefully inquires after the reason of your son's absconding, should find out the true cause which you are so desirous of keeping secret? and if that should happen, you would justly fall into a misfortune which it is so much your interest to avoid.

Madam, said the vizier, there is abundance of sound reasoning in what you have urged: however, I cannot think of pardoning Noureddin till I have humbled him a little more. He shall be sufficiently mortified, replied the lady, if you will put in execution what is just come into my mind. You must know, then, your son comes [15] hither every night after you are a-bed; he lies here, and steals out every morning before you are stirring: you shall wait for his coming in to-night; make as if you designed to kill him; upon which I will run to his assistance, and when he finds his life entirely owing to my prayers and entreaties, you may oblige him to take the Fair Persian on what condition soever you please. He loves her, and I am sensible the fair slave has no aversion for him.

Khacan was very willing to make use of this stratagem: so, when Noureddin came at the usual hour, before the door was opened, he placed himself behind it: as soon as ever he entered, he rushed suddenly upon him, and got him down under his feet. Noureddin, lifting up his head, saw his father with a dagger in his hand, ready prepared to stab him.

At that very instant, in came his mother, and, catching hold of the vizier's arm, Sir, cried she, what are you a-doing? Let me alone, replied the vizier, that I may kill this base unworthy son. You shall kill me first, cried the mother; nor will I suffer you to imbrue your hands in your own blood: speak to him, Noureddin, speak to him, and improve this tender moment. My father, cried he, with tears in his eyes, I implore your clemency and compassion; nor must you deny me pardon, since I ask it in His name before whom we must all appear at the last day.

Khacan suffered the poniard to be taken out of his hand; and as soon as Noureddin was released, he threw himself at his father's feet, and kissed them, to show how sincerely he repented of his having ever offended him. Noureddin, said he, return your mother thanks, since it is purely for her sake I pardon you. I design also to give you the Fair Persian, on condition that you will oblige yourself by an oath not to look upon her any [16] longer as a slave, but as your wife, that you will not sell her, nor ever be divorced from her; for, having abundance of wit and prudence, besides much better conduct than you, I am persuaded she will be able to moderate those rash sallies of youth which are enough to ruin you.

Noureddin, who little expected to be treated after so kind and indulgent a manner, returned his father a thousand thanks, with all the gratitude and sincerity imaginable; and, in the conclusion, the vizier, the Fair Persian, and he, were well pleased and satisfied with the match.

The vizier Khacan would not stay in expectation of the king's asking him about the order he had given him, but took particular care to mention it often, in representing to his majesty the many difficulties he met with in that affair, and how fearful he was of not acquitting himself to his majesty's satisfaction. In short, he managed the business with so much cunning and address, that the king insensibly forgot it; and, though Saouy had got some small information of the matter, yet Khacan was so much in the king's favour, that he was afraid to speak of it.

It was now above a year that this nice affair had been kept with greater secrecy than at first the vizier expected; when, being one day in the bath, and some important business obliging him to leave it all in a sweat, the air, which was then a little moist, struck a damp to his breast, caused a defluxion of rheum to fall upon his lungs, which threw him into a violent fever, and confined him to his bed. His illness growing every day worse, and perceiving he had but a few moments to live, he thus addressed himself to his son Noureddin, who never stirred from him during his whole sickness: My son, I know not whether I have made a good use of the riches

Heaven has blessed me with, but you see they are not able to save me from the hands of death: the last thing I desire of you, with my dying breath, is, that you would be mindful of the promise you made concerning the Fair Persian; and, with a certainty of that, I shall die pleased and well contented. [17]

These were the vizier's last words; who, dying a few moments after, left his family, the court, and the whole city in great affliction for his death. The king lamented him, as having lost a wise, zealous, and faithful minister; and the whole city wept for him as their protector and benefactor. Never was there a funeral at Balsora solemnized with greater pomp and magnificence; the viziers and emirs, and, in general, all the grandes of the court, strove for the honour of bearing his coffin, one after another, upon their shoulders to the place of burial; and both rich and poor accompanied him thither with tears.

Noureddin gave all the demonstration of a sorrow equal to the loss he had lately sustained, and lived a great while without ever seeing any company. At last, he admitted of a visit from an intimate friend of his. His friend endeavoured to comfort him all he could; and, finding him a little inclinable to hear reason, he told him, that, having paid what was due to the memory of his father, and fully satisfied all that custom and decency required of him, it was now high time to appear again in the world to converse with his friends, and maintain a character suitable to his birth and merit: For, continued he, we should sin both against the laws of nature and civility, and be thought insensible, if, upon the death of our fathers, we neglected to pay them what filial love and tenderness require at our hands; but having once performed that duty, and put it out of the power of any man to reproach us upon that account, we are obliged to return to our usual method of living. Dry up your tears then, and re-assume that wonted air of gaiety which always inspires with joy those that have the honour of your conversation. [18]

This advice seeming very reasonable to Noureddin, he was easily persuaded to follow it; and, if he had been ruled by his friend in every thing, he would certainly have avoided all the misfortunes that afterwards befell him. He treated him very nobly; and, when he took his leave, Noureddin desired him to come the next day, and bring three or four friends of their acquaintance. By this means he insensibly fell into the society of about ten young gentlemen, pretty near his own age, with whom he spent his time in continual feasting and entertainments; and scarce a day came over his head but he made every one of them some considerable present.

Sometimes, to oblige his friends after a more particular manner, Noureddin would send for the Fair Persian to entertain them; who, notwithstanding her obedience to his command, never approved of his extravagant way of living, and often took the liberty of speaking her mind freely. Sir, said she, I question not but your father has left you abundance of riches; but, how great soever they are, be not angry with your slave for telling you that, at this rate of living, you will quickly see an end of them. We may indeed sometimes afford to treat our friends, and be merry with them; but, to make a daily practice of it, is certainly the high road to ruin and destruction. Therefore, for your own honour and reputation, you would do much better to follow the footsteps of your deceased father, that, in time, you may rise to that dignity by which he acquired so much glory and renown.

Noureddin hearkened to the fair Persian's discourse with a smiling countenance; and, when she had done, My charmer, said he, with the same air of mirth, say no more of that; let us talk of nothing but mirth and pleasure. In my father's lifetime I was always under restraint, and I am now resolved to enjoy the liberty I so much sighed for before his death. It is time enough for me to think of leading a sober regular life; and a man of my age ought to taste the pleasures of youth. [19]

What contributed very much towards ruining Noureddin's fortune, was his unwillingness to reckon with his steward; for, whenever he brought in his accounts, he still sent him away without examining them. Go, go, said he, I trust wholly to your honesty; therefore only take care to let me have wherewith to make merry.

You are the master, sir, replied he, and I but the steward; however, you would do well to think upon the proverb, He that spends much and has but little, must at last insensibly be reduced to poverty. You are not contented with keeping an extravagant table, but you must lavish away your estate with both hands: and were your coffers as large as mountains, they would not be sufficient to maintain you. Begone, replied Noureddin; your grave lessons are needless; only take care to provide good eating and drinking, and trouble your head no

farther about the rest.

In the mean time Nouredin's friends were constant guests at his table, and never failed making some advantage of the easiness of his temper. They praised and flattered him, extolling his most indifferent actions to the very skies. But, above all, they took particular care to commend whatever belonged to him and his; and this, they found, turned to some account. Sir, says one of them, I came the other day by your estate that lies in such a place: certainly there is nothing so magnificent, or so handsomely furnished, as your house; and the garden belonging to it is a paradise upon earth. I am very glad it pleases you, says Nouredin. Here, [20] bring me pen, ink, and paper: but, without more words, it is at your service, and I make you a present of it. No sooner had others commended his house, baths, and some public buildings erected for the use of strangers, the yearly revenue of which was very considerable, than he immediately gave them away. The Fair Persian could not forbear letting him know how much injury he did himself; but, instead of taking any notice of it, he continued his extravagances, and, upon the first opportunity, squandered away the little he had left.

In short, Nouredin did nothing for a whole year together, but feasted and made himself merry, wasting and consuming, after a prodigal manner, the riches that his predecessors, and the good vizier his father, had, with so much pains and care, heaped together and preserved.

The year was but just expired, when somebody one day knocked at the hall door, where he and his friends were at dinner together by themselves, having sent away their slaves, that they might enjoy a greater liberty and freedom of conversation.

One of his friends offered to rise, but Nouredin stepped before him, and opened the door himself. It seems it was the steward; and Nouredin going a little out of the hall to know his business, left the door half open.

The friend that offered to rise from his seat, seeing it was the steward, and being somewhat curious to know what he had to say to Nouredin, placed himself between the hangings and the door, where he plainly overheard the steward's discourse to his master. Sir, said the steward, I ask a thousand pardons for my coming to disturb you in the height of your joys; but this affair is of such importance, that I thought myself bound [21] in duty to acquaint you with it. I come, sir, to make up my last accounts, and to tell you that what I all along foresaw, and have often warned you of, is at last come to pass. Behold, sir, says he, (showing him a small piece of money,) the remainder of all the sums I have received from you during my stewardship; the other funds you were pleased to assign me are all exhausted. The farmers, and those that owe you rent, have made it so plainly appear to me that you have assigned over to others whatever remains in their hands due to you, that it is impossible for me to get any more from them upon your account. Here are my books; if you please, examine them: and if you think fit to continue me in the place I am now in, order me some other funds, or else give me leave to quit your service. Nouredin was so astonished at this discourse, that he gave him no manner of answer.

The friend who had been listening all this while, and had heard every syllable of what the steward said, immediately came in and told the company what he had lately overheard. It is your business, gentlemen, says he, to make use of this caution; for my part, I declare it openly to you, this is the last visit I design to make Nouredin. Nay, replied they, if matters go thus, we have as little business here as you; and, for the future, shall take care not to trouble him with our company.

Nouredin returned presently after; yet, notwithstanding his carrying it pleasantly to his guests, by putting them into a merry humour again, he could not so handsomely dissemble the matter but they plainly perceived the truth of what they had been informed of. He was scarce sat down in his place, when one of his friends rose up, saying, Sir, I am sorry I cannot have the honour of your company any longer; and, therefore, I hope you will excuse my rudeness of leaving you so soon. What urgent affair have you, replied Nouredin, that obliges [22] you to be going? My wife, sir, said he, was brought to bed to-day, and upon such an occasion, you know a husband's company is very acceptable; so, making a very low bow, away he went. A minute afterwards, a second took his leave upon another sham excuse; and so one after another, till at last not one of those ten friends that had hitherto kept Nouredin company, was left in the room.

As soon as they were gone, Noureddin, little suspecting the resolution they had made of never visiting him, went directly to the Fair Persian's apartment, to whom, in private, he related all the steward had told him, and seemed extremely concerned at the ill posture of his affairs. Sir, said the Fair Persian to him, you would never take my advice, but always managed your concerns after your own way, and now you see the fatal consequences of it. I find I was not mistaken, when I presaged to what a miserable condition you would bring yourself at last; but what afflicts me the more, is, that at present you do not see the worst of your misfortunes. Whenever I presumed freely to impart my thoughts to you, Let us be merry, said you, and in pleasures improve the time that fortune has kindly given us; perhaps she will not always be so prodigal of her favours. But was I now to blame in telling you that we are the makers or undoers of our own fortunes, by a prudent or foolish management of them? You indeed would never hearken to me; so, at last, much against my will, I was forced to desist, and let you alone.

I must own, replied Noureddin, I was extremely in the wrong in not following the advice that you, out of your abundance of prudence and discretion, was pleased to give me. It is true I have spent my estate; but do you not consider it is among friends of a long acquaintance, who, I am persuaded, have more generosity and [23] gratitude in them than to abandon and forsake me in distress? Sir, replied the Fair Persian, if you have nothing but the gratitude of your friends to depend on, you are in a desperate condition; for, believe me, that hope is vain and ill-grounded, and you will tell me so yourself in a very little time.

To this Noureddin replied, Charming Persian, I have a much better opinion of my friends' generosity than you. To-morrow I design to make a visit to them all, before the usual time of their coming hither, and you shall see me return with a vast sum, that they will raise among them to support me. I am resolved to change my way of living, and, with the money they lend me, set up for a merchant.

The next morning, Noureddin failed not to visit his ten friends, who lived in the very same street. He knocked at the first door he came at, where one of the richest of them lived. A slave came to the door; but, before he would open it, he asked who was there? Go to your master, says he to the slave, and tell him it is Noureddin, the late vizier's son. Upon this the slave opens the door, and shows him into a hall, where he left him to go and tell his master, who was in an inner room, that Noureddin was come to wait on him. Noureddin! cried he, in a disdainful tone, loud enough for Noureddin to hear it with surprise. Go, tell him I am not at home; and whenever he comes hither, be sure you give him the same answer. The slave came back, and told Noureddin he thought his master was within, but he was mistaken.

Noureddin came away in the greatest confusion in the world. Ah! base, ungrateful wretch! said he to himself, to treat me so basely to-day, after the vows and protestations of love and friendship that you made me yesterday! From thence he went to another door, but that friend ordered his slaves also to say he was gone out. He had the same answer at the third; and, in short, all the rest denied themselves, though every one of [24] them was at home at the same time.

It was now that Noureddin began in earnest to reflect with himself, and be convinced of the folly of his too credulous temper, in relying so much upon the vows and protestations of amity, that his false friends in the time of his prosperity had solemnly made him. It is very true, said he to himself, that a fortunate man, as I was, may be compared to a tree laden with fruit, which, as long as there is any remaining on its boughs, people will be crowding round; but, as soon as it is stripped of all, they immediately leave it, and go to another. He smothered his passions as much as possible while he was abroad; but, no sooner was he got home, than he gave loose to his sorrow, and resigned himself wholly to it.

The Fair Persian, seeing him so extremely concerned, fancied he had not found his friends so ready to assist him as he expected. Well, sir, said she, are you now convinced of the truth of what I told you? Ah! cried he, my dear, thou hast been too true a prophetess; for not one of them would so much as know me, see me, or speak to me. Oh! who could ever have believed that persons so highly obliged to me as they are, and on whom I have spent my estate, could ever have used me so barbarously? I am distracted, and I fear committing some dishonourable action, below myself, in the deplorable condition I am reduced to, without the aid and assistance of your prudent advice. Sir, replied the Fair Persian, I see no other way of supporting yourself in your misfortunes, but selling off your slaves and moveables, and living upon the money, till Heaven shall find

out some other means to deliver you from your present misery.

Noureddin was very loath to make use of this expedient; but what could he do in the necessitous circumstance he was in? He first sold off his slaves; those unprofitable mouths, which were a greater expense to him [25] than what his present condition could bear. He lived on the money for some time; and when all of it was spent, he ordered his goods to be carried into the market-place, where they were sold for half their worth; among which were several valuable things that cost immense sums. Upon this he lived for a considerable time: but that supply failing at last, he had nothing at all left by which he could raise any more money; of which he complained to the Fair Persian in the most tender expressions that sorrow could inspire.

Noureddin only waited to hear what answer this prudent creature would make. Sir, said she, at last, I am your slave, and you know that the late vizier your father gave ten thousand pieces of gold for me: perhaps I am a little sunk in value since that time, but I believe I shall sell for pretty near that sum yet. Let me entreat you then instantly to carry me to the market, and expose me to sale; and with the money that you get for me, which will be very considerable, you may turn merchant in some city where you are unknown, and by that means find a way of living, if not in splendour, yet with happiness and content.

**THE STORY OF NOUREDDIN AND THE FAIR PERSIAN
CONTINUED.**

Ah! lovely and adorable Persian, cried Noureddin, is it possible you can entertain such a thought of me? Have I given you such slender proofs of my love, that you should think me capable of so base an action? But suppose me so vile a wretch, could I do it without being guilty of perjury, after the oath I have taken never to sell you? No, I could sooner die than part with you, whom I love infinitely beyond myself; though by the [26] unreasonable proposition you have made me, it is plain your love is not so tender as mine.

Sir, replied the Fair Persian, I am sufficiently convinced that your passion for me is as violent as you say it is; and Heaven, who knows with what reluctance I have made this proposition that you dislike, is my witness, that mine is as great as yours; but, to silence reason at once, I need only bid you remember that necessity has no law. I love you to that degree, it is impossible for you to love me more: and be assured, that to what master soever I shall belong, my passion shall always continue the same: and if you are ever able to redeem me, as I hope you may, it will be the greatest pleasure in the world to be in your possession again. Alas! to what a fatal and cruel necessity are we driven! But I see no other way of freeing ourselves from the misery that involves us both.

Noureddin, who very well knew the truth of what the Fair Persian had spoken, and that there was no other way of avoiding a shameful poverty, was in the end forced to yield to her first request. Accordingly he led her to the market, where the women-slaves are exposed to sale, with a regret that cannot be easily expressed. He applied himself to a courtier named Hagi Hassan: Hagi Hassan, said he, here is a slave that I have a mind to sell; I pray thee to see what they will give for her. Hagi Hassan desired Noureddin and the Fair Persian to walk into a room; and when she had pulled off the veil that covered her face, Sir, said Hagi Hassan to Noureddin, in a great surprise, if I am not mistaken, this is the slave your father, the late vizier, gave ten thousand pieces of gold for? Noureddin assured him it was the same; and Hagi Hassan gave him some hopes of selling her at a good rate, and promised to use all his art and cunning to raise her price as high as it [27] would bear.

Hagi Hassan and Noureddin went out of the room, and locked the Fair Persian in; after which Hagi Hassan went to look after the merchants; but they being busy in buying slaves that came from different countries, he was forced to stay till the market was done. When their sale was over, and the greatest part of them got together, My masters, said he to them, with an air of gaiety in his looks and actions, every thing that is round is not a nut; every thing that is long is not a fig; all that is red is not flesh; and all eggs are not fresh. It is true you have seen and bought a great many slaves in your lives, but you never yet saw one comparable to her I am going to tell you of; in short, she is the very pearl of slaves. Come, follow me, and you shall see her yourselves, and by that judge at what rate I shall cry her.

The merchants followed Hagi Hassan into the chamber where the Fair Persian was; and, as soon as they beheld her, they were so surprised at her beauty, that at the first word they unanimously agreed that four thousand pieces of gold was the very lowest price that they could set upon her. The merchants then left the room, and Hagi Hassan, who came out with them, without going any farther, proclaimed with a loud voice, Four thousand pieces of gold for the Persian slave.

None of the merchants had yet offered any thing, and they were but just consulting together about what they might afford to give for her, when the vizier Saouy, perceiving Nouredin in the market, appeared. Said he to himself, Nouredin has certainly made some more money of his goods, (for he knew of his exposing them to sale,) and is come hither to buy a slave with it. Upon this he advanced forward just as Hagi Hassan [28] began to proclaim a second time, Four thousand pieces of gold for the Persian slave.

The vizier Saouy, concluding by the extravagance of the price, that she must be some extraordinary piece of beauty, had a longing desire to see her; so spurring his horse forward, he rode directly up to Hagi Hassan, who was in the very middle of the merchants. Open the door, said he, and let me see this slave. It was never the custom to show their slaves to any particular person, till after the merchants had seen her, and had the refusal: but Saouy being a person of so great authority, none of them durst dispute their right with him; and Hagi Hassan being forced to open the door, beckoned the fair slave to come forward, that Saouy might have a sight of her without the trouble of alighting from his horse.

The vizier was astonished at the sight of so beautiful a slave; and knowing the courtier's name, (having formerly dealt with him,) Hagi Hassan, said he, is it not at four thousand pieces of gold that you cry her? Yes, sir, answered he, it is but a moment since I cried her at that price, and the merchants you see gathered together here are come to bid money for her; and I question not but they will give a great deal more than that.

If nobody offers any higher, I will give that sum, replied Saouy, looking upon the merchants at the same time with a countenance that forbade them to advance any more. In short, he was so universally dreaded, that nobody durst speak a word, not so much as to complain of his encroaching upon their privilege.

The vizier Saouy having staid some time, and finding none of the merchants outbid him, What do you stay for? said he to Hagi Hassan: go, look after the seller, and strike a bargain with him at four thousand pieces of [29] gold, or more if he demands it; not knowing yet the slave belonged to Nouredin.

Hagi Hassan having locked the chamber-door, went to confer notes with Nouredin: Sir, said he to him, I am very sorry to bring you the ill news of your slave's being just going to be sold for nothing. How so? replied Nouredin. Why sir, said Hagi Hassan, you must know that the business at first went on rarely; for, as soon as the merchants had seen your slave, they ordered me to cry her at four thousand pieces of gold. Accordingly I cried her at the price; upon which the vizier Saouy came, and his presence has stopped the mouths of all the merchants, who seemed inclinable to raise her, at least to the same price your deceased father gave for her. Saouy will give no more than four thousand pieces, and it is much against my inclination that I am come to tell you the despicable price he offers. The slave indeed is your own; but I will not advise you to part with her upon those terms, since you and every body else are sensible of her being worth infinitely more: besides, he is base enough to contrive a way to trick you out of the money.

Hagi Hassan, replied Nouredin, I am highly obliged to thee for thy advice; but do not think I will ever sell my slave to an enemy of our family. My necessities indeed are at present very great, but I would sooner die in the most shameful poverty, than ever consent to the delivering her up to his arms. I have only one thing to beg of thee, who art skilful in all the turns and shifts of life, that thou wouldst put me in a way to prevent the sale of her.

Sir, said Hagi Hassan, there is nothing more easy: you must pretend, that, being in a violent passion with your slave, you swore to expose her in the market, and for the sake of your oath you have now brought her hither, without any manner of intention of selling her. This will satisfy every body, and Saouy will have nothing [30] to say against it. Come along with me then; and just as I am presenting her to Saouy, as if it were by your own consent, pull her to you, give her two or three blows, and send her home. I thank thee for thy counsel, said

Noureddin, and thou shalt see I will make use of it.

Hagi Hassan went back to the chamber, and having in two words acquainted the Fair Persian with their design, that she might not be surprised at it, he took her by the hand, and led her to the vizier Saouy, who was still, on horseback at the door: Sir, said he, here is the slave: she is yours; pray take her.

These words were scarce out of Hagi Hassan's mouth, when Noureddin, catching hold of the Fair Persian, pulled her to him, and giving her a box on the ear, Come hither, impertinence, said he, and get you home again; for though your ill humour obliged me to swear I would bring you hither, yet I never intended to sell you; I have business for you to do yet, and it will be time enough to part with you when I have nothing else left.

This action of Noureddin's put the vizier Saouy into a violent passion. Miserable debauchee, cried he, wouldst thou have me believe thou hast any thing else left to make money of but thy slave? And at the same instant, spurring his horse directly against him, endeavoured to have carried off the Fair Persian. Noureddin, nettled to the quick at the affront the vizier had put upon him, quits the Fair Persian, and, laying hold of his horse's bridle, made him run two or three paces backwards. Vile dotard, said he to the vizier, I would tear thy soul out of thy body this very moment, were it not for the crowd of people here present.

The vizier Saouy being loved by nobody, but, on the contrary, hated by all, there was not one among [31] them but was now pleased to see Noureddin mortifying him a little; and, by shrewd signs, they let him understand he might revenge himself upon him as much as he pleased, for nobody would meddle with their quarrel.

Saouy endeavoured all he could to make Noureddin quit the bridle; but he being a lusty vigorous man, and encouraged by those that stood by, pulled him off his horse, in the middle of a brook, gave him a thousand blows, and dashed his head against the stones till it was all of a gore of blood. The slaves that waited upon the vizier would fain have drawn their scimitars and fallen upon Noureddin, but the merchants interposing prevented them from doing it. What do you mean? said they to them; do not you see the one is a vizier, and the other a vizier's son? Let them dispute their quarrel themselves; perhaps they will be reconciled one time or other; whereas, if you had killed Noureddin, your master, with all his greatness, could not have been able to protect you against the law.

Noureddin having given over beating the vizier Saouy, left him in the middle of the brook, and taking the Fair Persian, marched home with her, being attended by the people with shouts and acclamations for the action he had performed.

The vizier Saouy, cruelly bruised with the strokes he had received, by the assistance of his slaves made shift to get up, and had the mortification to see himself besmeared all over with blood and dirt. He leaned upon the shoulders of two slaves, and in that condition went straight to the palace, in the sight of all the people, with so much greater confusion because nobody pitied him. As soon as he reached the king's apartment, he began to cry out, and call for justice, after a lamentable manner. The king ordered him to be admitted; and as soon as he came, he asked him who it was that had abused and put him into that miserable pickle. Sir, cried Saouy, [32] your majesty ought to afford me a large share of your favour, and to take into your royal consideration my late abuse, since it was chiefly upon your account that I have been so barbarously treated. Say no more of that, replied the king, but let me hear the whole story, simply as it is, and who the offender is; and if he is in the wrong, you may depend upon it he shall be severely punished.

Sir, said Saouy then, telling the whole matter to his own advantage, having an occasion for a cook-maid, I went to the market of women-slaves to buy me one. When I came thither, there was a slave just cried at four thousand pieces of gold: I ordered them to bring the slave before me, and I think my eyes never did, nor ever will, behold a more glorious creature than she is. I had not time to examine her beauty thoroughly: but, however, I immediately asked to whom she belonged; and upon inquiry I found that Noureddin, son to the late vizier Khacan, had the disposing of her.

Sir, you may remember that, about two or three years ago, you gave that vizier ten thousand pieces of gold,

strictly charging him to buy you a slave with it. The money indeed was laid out upon this very slave; but instead of bringing her to your majesty, thinking his son deserved her better, he made him a present of her. Nouredin, since his father's death, having wasted his whole fortune in riot and feasting, has nothing left but this slave, which he intended to part with, and therefore she was to be sold in his name. I sent for him, and without mentioning any thing of his father's baseness, or rather treachery, to your majesty, I very civilly said to him, Nouredin, the merchants, I perceive, have put your slave up at four thousand pieces of gold; and I question not but, in emulation of each other, they will raise the price considerably: let me have her for [33] the four thousand pieces; I am going to buy her for the king, our lord and master: this will be a handsome opportunity of making your court to him, and his favour will be worth a great deal more than the merchants can propose to give you.

Instead of returning me a civil answer, as in good manners he ought to have done, the insolent wretch beholding me with an air of fierceness, Decrepit villain, said he, I would rather sell my slave to a Jew for nothing than to thee for money. Nouredin, replied I, without any manner of passion, though I had some reason to be a little warm, you do not consider that in talking at this rate you affront the king, who has raised your father and me to the honours we have enjoyed.

This admonition, instead of moving him to a compliance, provoked him to a higher degree; so that, falling upon me like a madman, he pulled me off my horse, beat me as long as he could stand over me, and has put me into this miserable plight your majesty sees me in; and therefore I beseech you, sir, to consider me, since it is upon your account I have been so openly affronted. At the end of these words, he bowed his head, and turning about, wept a plentiful shower of tears.

The abused king, highly incensed against Nouredin by this relation, full of malice and artifice, discovered by his countenance the violence of his anger; and, turning to the captain of his guards that stood near him, Take forty of your soldiers, said he, and immediately go plunder Nouredin's house; and, having ordered it to be razed to the ground, bring him and his slave along with you.

The captain of the guards was not gone out of the king's presence, when a gentleman-usher belonging to the court, who overheard the order that had been given, got before him. His name was Sangiar, and he had [34] been formerly the vizier Khacan's slave, by whose favour he was brought into the court service, where by degrees he was advanced higher.

Sangiar, full of gratitude to his old master, and affection for Nouredin, with whom in his infancy he had often played, and being no stranger to Saouy's hatred to Khacan's family, could not hear the orders without concern and trembling. May be, said he to himself, this action of Nouredin's is not altogether so black as Saouy has represented it; but, however, the king is prejudiced against him, and will certainly put him to death without allowing him time to justify himself.

Sangiar made so much haste to Nouredin's house, as to get thither time enough to acquaint him with what had passed at court, and to desire him to provide for his own and the Fair Persian's safety. He knocked so violently loud at the door, that Nouredin, who had been a great while without any servant, ran immediately to open it: My dear lord, said Sangiar, here is no more staying for you in Balsora: if you design to save yourself, you must lose no time, but depart hence this very moment.

Why so? replied Nouredin; what is the reason I must be gone so soon? Ah! sir, said Sangiar, make haste away, and take your slave with you; for, in short, Saouy has been just now acquainting the king, after his own way of telling it, all that happened between you and him; and the captain of the guards will be here in an instant, with forty soldiers, and seize you and the Fair Persian. Here, sir, take these forty pieces of gold; it is all I have about me, to assist you in finding out some other place of safety. Excuse my not staying any longer with you: I leave you with a great deal of unwillingness; but I do it for the good of us both. I have so much interest with the captain of the guards, that he will take no notice of me. Sangiar gave Nouredin but just [35] time to thank him, and away he went.

Nouredin presently acquainted the Fair Persian with the absolute necessity of their going that moment. She

only staid to put on her veil, and then they both stole out of the house together, and were so very lucky, as not only to get clear of the city, without the least notice being taken of their escape, but also safely to arrive at the mouth of the Euphrates, where they embarked in a vessel that lay ready to weigh anchor.

They were no sooner on ship-board than the captain came upon deck amongst his passengers: My children, said he to them, are you all here? have any of you any more business to do in the city? or have you left any thing behind you? They answered him they were all there, and ready prepared; so that he might set sail as soon as he pleased. When Nouredin came aboard, the first question he asked was, whither the ship was bound? and being told for Bagdad, he greatly rejoiced at it. And now the captain having weighed anchor, set sail, and the vessel with a very favourable wind lost sight of Balsora.

But now let us see how matters went at Balsora, in the mean time, while Nouredin and the Fair Persian made their escape from the fury of the enraged king.

The captain of the guards came to Nouredin's house and knocked at the door, but nobody coming to open it, he ordered his soldiers to break it down, who immediately obeyed him, and in they rushed in a full body. They searched every hole and corner of the house, but neither he nor the Fair Persian were to be found. The captain of the guards made them inquire of the neighbours, and he asked himself if they had seen them lately: it was all in vain; for, though they had seen him go out of his house, so universally beloved was Nouredin, that [36] not one of them would have said the least word that might be injurious to him. As soon as they had rifled the house and levelled it to the ground, they went to acquaint the king with the news. Look for them, said he, in some other places, for I am resolved to have them found.

The captain of the guards made a second search after them; and the king dismissed the vizier Saouy with a great deal of honour. Go home, said he to him; trouble yourself no farther with Nouredin's punishment; for with my own hand I will revenge the insolence he has offered your person.

Without any farther delay, the king ordered the public criers to proclaim throughout the whole city a reward of a thousand pieces of gold for any person that should apprehend Nouredin and the Fair Persian, with a severe punishment upon whomsoever should conceal them. But after all this pains and trouble, there was no news to be heard of them; and the vizier Saouy had only the comfort of seeing the king espouse his quarrel.

In the mean time, Nouredin and the Fair Persian, after a prosperous voyage, landed safe at Bagdad. As soon as the captain came within sight of that city, pleased that his voyage was at an end, Children, cried he to the passengers, cheer up, and be merry! look, yonder is that great and wonderful city, where there is perpetual concourse of people from all parts of the world: there you shall meet with innumerable crowds every day, and never feel the extremity of cold in winter, nor the excess of heat in summer; but enjoy an eternal spring, always crowned with flowers, and the delicious fruits of autumn.

When the vessel came to anchor a little below the city, the passengers got ashore, and every body went to the place they designed to lie at that night. Nouredin gave the captain five pieces of gold for his passage, [37] and went ashore also with the Fair Persian; but being a perfect stranger in Bagdad, he was at a loss for a lodging. They rambled a considerable time about the gardens that bordered on the Tigris; and, keeping close to one of them that was enclosed with a very high wall, at the end of it they turned into a street finely paved, where they perceived a garden door, and a charming fountain near it.

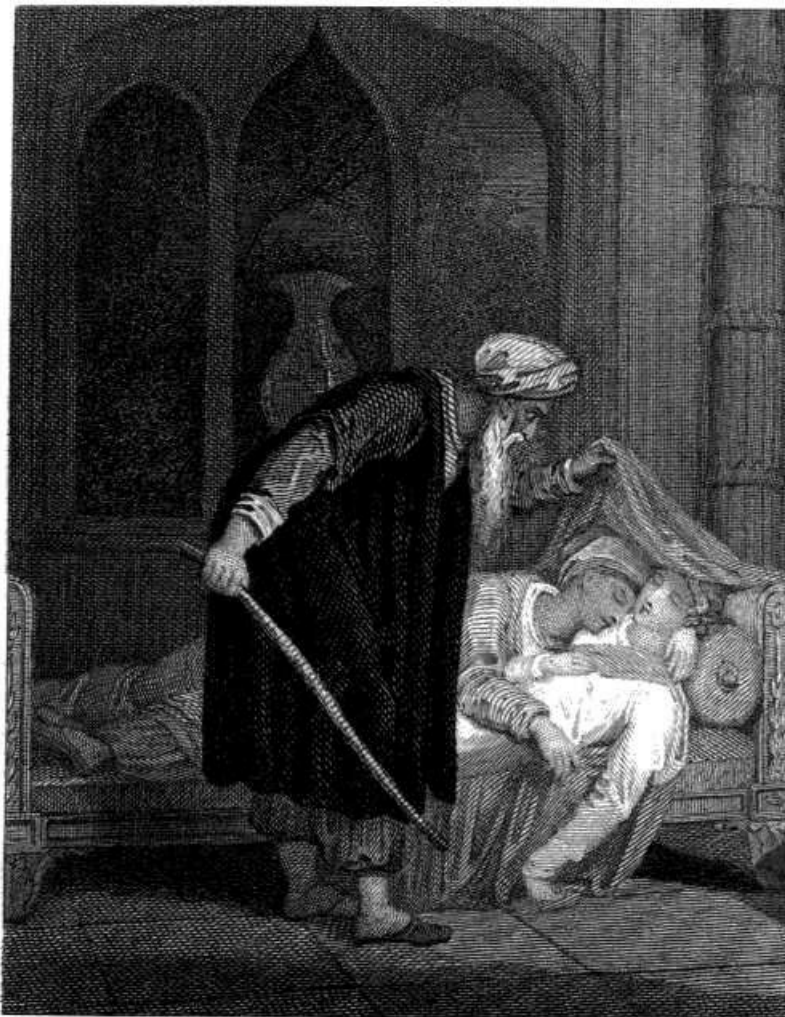
The door, which was very magnificent, happened to be shut, but the porch was open, in which there stood a sofa on each side. This is a very convenient place for us, said Nouredin to the Fair Persian: night comes on apace; and though we have eaten nothing since our landing, yet I believe we must even lie here to-night, and to-morrow we shall have time enough to get a lodging; what say ye to it, my dear? Sir, replied the Fair Persian, you know very well I am never against what you propose; therefore let us go no farther, since you are willing to stay here. Each of them having drunk a draught of water at the fountain, they laid themselves down upon one of the sofas; and, after a little chat, being invited by the agreeable murmur of the water, they fell fast asleep.

The garden, it seems, belonged to the caliph; and in the middle of it there was a pavilion, called the Pavilion of Pictures, because its chief ornament was pictures, after the Persian manner, drawn by the most celebrated limners in Persia, whom the caliph sent for on purpose. The stately hall beneath this pavilion was adorned with fourscore windows, and in every window a branched candlestick. The candles were never lighted but when the caliph came thither to spend the evening, which was never but when the weather was so very calm that not a breath of air was stirring. Then, indeed, they made a glorious illumination, and could be plainly discerned at a vast distance in the country on that side, and by the greatest part of the city.

[38]

There was but one person that had the charge of this fine garden, and the place was at this time enjoyed by a very ancient officer, named Scheich Ibrahim, whom the caliph himself, for some important service, put into that employment, with a strict charge not to let all sorts of people in, but especially to suffer nobody either to sit or lie down on the sofas that stood at the outward door, that they might always be clean and handsome; and whenever he found any body there, to punish them severely.

Some business had obliged this officer to go abroad, and he was not as yet returned. When he came back, there was just daylight enough for him to discern two persons asleep upon one of the sofas, with both their heads under a piece of linen cloth, to secure them from the gnats. Very well, said Scheich Ibrahim to himself, here are brave people, to disobey the caliph's orders; but I shall take care to pay them handsomely what they deserve. Upon this, he opens the door very softly, and a moment after returns with a swinging cane in his hand, and his sleeve tucked up to the elbow. He was just going to lay on them with all his force; but, withholding his arm, he began to reason with himself after this manner: Thou wast going to strike, without any consideration that these perhaps are strangers, destitute of a lodging, and utterly ignorant of the caliph's order; for that reason, it would be advisable in thee to know first who they are. Upon this, he gently lifts up the linen that covered their heads, and being wonderfully astonished to see two persons so mightily beautiful and well-shaped, waked Nouredin, with pulling him softly by the feet.



Noureddin presently lifting up his head, and seeing an old man with a long white beard standing at his feet, got up, and throwing himself upon his knees, Good father, said he, Heaven preserve you! What do you want, my son? replied Scheich Ibrahim: who are you, and from whence came you? We are strangers newly arrived, answered Noureddin, and we would fain tarry here till to-morrow. This is not a proper place for you, said Scheich Ibrahim: but come in with me, and I will find one fitter for you to sleep in than this; and I fancy the sight of the garden, which is very fine, will please you, when you see it to-morrow by daylight. Is this garden your own? said Noureddin. Yes, replied Scheich Ibrahim; it is an inheritance left me by my father: pray walk in, for I am sure you will not repent your seeing it. [39]

Noureddin rose up to thank Scheich Ibrahim for the civility he had shown them, and afterwards the Fair Persian and he went into the garden. Scheich Ibrahim locked the door, and going before, led them to an eminence, from whence at one look they might almost take a view of the grandeur, order, and beauty of the whole garden.

Noureddin had seen very fine gardens in Balsora, but never any comparable to this. Having satisfied his curiosity in looking upon every thing worth taking notice of, as he was walking in one of the alleys, he turned about to the officer that was with him, and asked what his name was. As soon as he told him it was Scheich Ibrahim; Scheich Ibrahim, said he to him, I must confess this is a charming garden indeed. Heaven send you long to enjoy the pleasures of it; and we cannot sufficiently thank you for the favour of showing us a place so worthy our seeing. However, it is but just that we should make you some amends for your kindness: therefore, here are two pieces of gold; take them, and get us something to eat, that we may be merry together before we part.

At the sight of the two pieces of gold, Scheich Ibrahim, who was a great admirer of that metal, laughed in his sleeve: he took them, and leaving Noureddin and the Fair Persian by themselves, went to provide what he was sent about. As soon as he was alone, said he to himself with abundance of joy, These are generous people; I should highly have injured myself, if, through imprudence or rashness, I had abused or driven them hence: the tenth part of the money will treat them like princes, and the rest I will keep for my pains and trouble. [40]

While Scheich Ibrahim was gone to fetch something for his own supper, as well as for his guests, Noureddin and the Fair Persian took a walk in the garden, sometimes in one place and sometimes in another, till at last they came to the pavilion of pictures that was in the middle of it. They stood a pretty while to admire its wonderful structure, beauty, and loftiness; and, after taking a full view of it on every side, they went up a great many steps of fine white marble, to the hall door, which they found locked.

They were but just got to the bottom of the steps as Scheich Ibrahim returned, loaded with provisions. Scheich Ibrahim, said Noureddin in a great surprise, did you not tell us that this was your garden? I did, replied Scheich Ibrahim, and do so still. And does this magnificent pavilion also belong to you? said Noureddin. Scheich Ibrahim was put to a nonplus, and would not hearken to any more questions: For, said he to himself, if I should say it is none of mine, he will presently ask me how I can be the master of the garden and not the pavilion? So, being willing to make them believe the garden was his, he said the same of the pavilion. My son, said he, the pavilion is not distinct from the garden, but they both belong to me. If so, said Noureddin, since you are willing to let us be your guests to-night, do us the favour to show us the inside of it; for, if we may judge by the outward appearance, it must certainly be very splendid and magnificent. [41]

It would have been a great piece of incivility in Scheich Ibrahim to have refused Noureddin that favour, after the returns he had made him: moreover, he considered that the caliph not having given any notice, according to the usual custom, it was likely he would not be there that night, and therefore resolved to treat his guests, and sup with them in that room. He laid the provisions upon the first step, while he went to his chamber to fetch the key. He soon returned with a light, and opened the door.

Noureddin and the Fair Persian entered the hall; and finding it so extravagantly surprising, could not forbear

admiring the beauty and richness of the place. Indeed, without saying anything of the pictures, which were admirably well drawn, the sofas were very noble and costly; and, besides the branched candlesticks that were fixed to every window, there was a silver spring between each cross bar, with a wax candle in it. Noureddin could not behold those glorious objects, which put him in mind of his former greatness, without sighing.

In the mean time, Scheich Ibrahim was getting supper ready; and the cloth being laid upon a sofa, and every thing in order, Noureddin and the Fair Persian and he sat down and ate together. When supper was done, and they had washed their hands, Noureddin opened the casement, and calling the Fair Persian to him, Come hither, my dear, said he, and with me admire the charming prospect and beauty of the garden by moonlight; for certainly nothing can be more agreeable. She came to him, and they both together diverted themselves with that lovely object, while Scheich Ibrahim was busy in taking away the cloth.

When Scheich Ibrahim came to his guests again, Noureddin asked him whether he had any good liquor in his lodgings to treat them with. What liquor would you have? replied Scheich Ibrahim. Sherbet, I have the best in the world; but sherbet, you know, my son, is never drunk after supper. [42]

I know that very well, said Noureddin; it is not sherbet, but another sort of liquor that we ask you for; and I am surprised at your not understanding me. It is wine that I perceive you speak of, said Scheich Ibrahim. You have hit right, replied Noureddin; and if you have any, pray let us have a bottle: you know a bottle after supper is a very proper companion to spend the hours with till bed-time.

Heaven defend me from keeping wine in my house, cried Scheich Ibrahim, and from ever coming to a place where any is to be sold! A man as I am, who has been a pilgrimage four times to Mecca, has renounced wine for ever.

However, said Noureddin, you would do us a singular kindness in getting us a little for our own drinking: and if it be not too much trouble, I will put you in a way how you may do it, without ever going into the inn, or so much as laying your hand upon the vessel that contains it. Upon that condition, I will do it, replied Scheich Ibrahim; therefore pray let me know how I am to manage it.

Why then, said Noureddin to him, we just now saw an ass tied at the entrance of the garden, which certainly must be yours, and which you may make use of in this extremity. Here are two pieces of gold more; take them, and lead your ass with the panniers towards the next inn: you may stand at as great a distance as you please; only give something to the next passenger that comes by, and desire him to go with your ass to the inn, there load him with two pitchers of wine, one in one pannier and another in another, which he must pay for out of the money we have given you; and so let him bring the ass back to you: you will have nothing to do but drive the beast hither before you; for we will take the wine out of the panniers; and by this means you will act nothing but what you may do without any scruple at all. [43]

The two last pieces of gold that Scheich Ibrahim was going to receive, wrought wonderfully upon his temper. Ah! my son, cried he, after Noureddin had done speaking, you have contrived the matter rarely; and had it not been for your invention, I should never have found out a way of getting you some wine, without a little scruple of conscience. Away he went to execute the orders he had received; and upon his return, which was in a little time, Noureddin went down stairs, and taking the wine out of the panniers, carried it into the hall.

Scheich Ibrahim having led the ass back to the place from whence he took him, came back again. Scheich Ibrahim, said Noureddin to him, we cannot enough thank you for the trouble we have already given you; but, my friend, we want something yet. What is that? replied Scheich Ibrahim; is it anything that I can be farther serviceable to you in? Why, said Noureddin, we have no cups to drink out of; and a little choice fruit, if you have any, would be very acceptable to us. Do but say what you have a mind to, replied Scheich Ibrahim, and you shall have every thing to your heart's content.

Down went Scheich Ibrahim, and in a short time spread a table for them with porcelain dishes, full of all sorts of delicious fruits, besides a great number of gold and silver cups to drink out of; and having asked them if they wanted any thing else, he withdrew, though they pressed him earnestly to stay.

Noureddin and the Fair Persian sat down again, and after a cup a-piece, they were mightily pleased with the wine. Well, my dear, said Noureddin to the Fair Persian, are we not the most fortunate persons in the world, after so many dangers, to meet with so charming and agreeable a place? come, let us be merry, and think no more on the hardships of our voyage. Can my happiness be greater in this world, than to have you on one side of me, and my bottle on the other? They took off their cups pretty heartily, and diverted themselves very agreeably, in singing each of them a song. [44]

Both of them having very fine voices, but especially the Fair Persian, Scheich Ibrahim, who had stood hearkening a great while on the steps without discovering himself, was perfectly charmed with their songs. He could contain himself no longer; but, thrusting his head in at the door, Courage, sir, said he to Noureddin, whom he took to be quite drunk; I am overjoyed to see you so merry.

Ah! Scheich Ibrahim, cried Noureddin, turning to him, you are a glorious man, and we are extremely obliged to you. We dare not ask you to drink a cup; but pray walk in, and let us have the honour at least of your company. Excuse me, sir, said Scheich Ibrahim; the pleasure of hearing your songs is sufficient for me. Upon this, he immediately retired.

The Fair Persian perceiving Scheich Ibrahim, through one of the windows, standing upon the steps without the door, told Noureddin of it. Sir, said she, you see what an aversion he has for wine; yet I question not in the least to make him drink some, if you would do as I would have you. Noureddin asked her what it was. Do but say the word, replied he, and I am ready to do what you please. Prevail with him, then, only to come in and bear us company: some time after, fill up a bumper, and give it him; if he refuses it, drink it off, feign yourself to be asleep, and leave the rest to me.

Noureddin quickly finding out the drift of the Fair Persian's design, called to Scheich Ibrahim, who came again to the door: Scheich Ibrahim, said he, we are your guests; you have entertained us after the most obliging manner in the world; and will you now refuse us the honour of bearing us company? We do not ask you to drink, but only the favour of seeing you. [45]

Scheich Ibrahim being at last prevailed upon, came into the hall, and sat down upon the edge of a sofa that stood the nearest to the door. You do not sit well there, said Noureddin; besides, you are too far off for us to converse with you: pray come nearer, and sit down by the lady, since she will have it so. I will obey you, replied Scheich Ibrahim; so, coming forward with a simpering countenance, to think he should be seated near so beautiful a creature, he placed himself at some distance from the Fair Persian. Noureddin desired a song of her, upon the account of the honour that Scheich Ibrahim had done them; and she sang one that charmed him to an ecstasy.

When the Fair Persian had ended her song, Noureddin poured out a cup of wine, and presented it to Scheich Ibrahim; Scheich Ibrahim, said he, here, drink this to our healths. Sir, replied he, starting back, as if the very sight of the wine had put him into a horror and confusion, I beseech you to excuse me; I have already told you, that I have forsworn the use of wine these many years. Then positively you will not drink our healths, said Noureddin; however, give me leave to drink yours.

While Noureddin was drinking, the Fair Persian cut a piece of apple, and presented it to Scheich Ibrahim. Though you refused drinking, said she, yet I believe you will not refuse eating this piece of apple, since it is a very good one. Scheich Ibrahim had no power to refuse it from so fair a hand; but taking it with a very low bow, kissed it, and put it in his mouth. She said a great many amorous things upon that occasion; and Noureddin tumbling back upon a sofa, pretended to fall fast asleep. The Fair Persian presently advanced towards Scheich Ibrahim; and speaking in a very low voice, See, said she, the sleepy sot! thus, in all our merry bouts, he constantly serves me; and no sooner has he drunk a cup or two, than he falls asleep, and leaves me alone; but I hope you will have the goodness to keep me company till he awakes. [46]

At this, the Fair Persian took a cup, and filling it to the brim with wine, offered it to Scheich Ibrahim: Here, said she, drink off this to my health: I am going to pledge you. Scheich Ibrahim made a great many difficulties of the matter at first, and begged her to excuse him from drinking; but, at last, overcome by her charms and

entreaties, he took the cup, and drank every drop of the wine off.

The good old man loved a cheruping cup to his heart, but was ashamed to drink among strangers. He often went to the tavern in private, as abundance of people do; and now his hand being once in, without any more ceremony, or round-about ways, as Nouredin had instructed him, he goes directly to the next inn, where he was very well known, and fetches some more wine (the night serving him instead of a cloak) with the money that Nouredin had ordered him to give the messenger that went for the first.

As soon as Scheich Ibrahim had taken off his cup, and made an end of the piece of apple, the Fair Persian filled him out another, which he received with less difficulty than the former, but made none at all at the third. In short, he drank four times before ever Nouredin discovered his pretended sleeping; but then bursting out into a violent fit of laughter, he rose up, and looking upon him, Ha! ha! said he, Scheich Ibrahim, are you caught at last? did you not tell me you had forsworn wine? and now you have drank it all up from me.

Scheich Ibrahim, not expecting to be surprised after that manner, blushed a little: however, that did not [47] spoil his draught: but when he had done, Sir, said he to Nouredin, laughing, if there is any crime in what I have done, it lies at this fair lady's door, not mine; for who could possibly resist so many charms?

The Fair Persian, who knew well enough what Nouredin would be at, took Scheich Ibrahim's part: Let him talk, said she; Scheich Ibrahim, take no notice of him; but let us drink on, and be merry. A while after, Nouredin fills out a cup for himself and the Fair Persian; but when Scheich Ibrahim saw that Nouredin had forgot him in his turn, he took his cup, and presenting it to the Fair Persian, Madam, said he, do I pretend I cannot drink now?

At these words of Scheich Ibrahim's, Nouredin and the Fair Persian were ready to split their sides with laughing. Nouredin poured him out some wine; and there they sat laughing, chatting, and drinking, till pretty near midnight. About that hour, the Fair Persian began to take notice of there being but one candle upon the table. Scheich Ibrahim, said she to the good old officer, methinks you might have afforded us another candle, since there are so many wax-lights yonder: pray do us the favour to light some of them, that we may see a little better what we are doing here.

Scheich Ibrahim making use of the liberty that wine gives a man, when it gets up into the crown-office, and not caring to be interrupted in his discourse with Nouredin, bid the Fair Persian light them herself: It is fitter for you to do it than me, said he: but, hark ye, be sure not to light above five or six; for this is enough. Up rose the Fair Persian immediately, and taking a wax-candle in her hand, lights it with that which stood upon the table; and, without any regard to Scheich Ibrahim's orders, set fire to the whole fourscore.

By and by, while Scheich Ibrahim was entertaining the Fair Persian with some other discourse, [48] Nouredin took his turn to desire him to light up some of the candles in the branched candlesticks, not taking notice that all the wax-lights were already in a blaze: Certainly, replied Scheich Ibrahim, you are lazier, or less vigorous, than I am, that you are not able to light them yourself: get you gone; but be sure you light no more than three. To work he went; but, instead of that number, he lighted them all, and opened the shutters of the fourscore windows, before Scheich Ibrahim, who was deeply engaged with the Fair Persian, knew any thing of the matter.

The caliph Haroun Alraschid being not yet gone to bed, was in a parlour at his palace by the river Tigris, from whence he could take a side-view both of the garden and pavilion. By chance, he opened the casement, and seeing the pavilion was illuminated, was mightily surprised at it; and at first, by the greatness of the light, thought the city was on fire. The grand vizier Giafar was still with him, who only waited for his going to rest, and then designed to go home too. The caliph, in a great rage, called the vizier to him: Careless vizier, said he, come hither, look upon the pavilion of pictures, and tell me the reason of its being illuminated, now I am not there.

The grand vizier Giafar, upon this news, fell into a violent trembling, fearing something else was the matter; but, when he came nearer, and with his own eyes saw the truth of what the caliph had told him, he was more

astonished than before. However, being obliged to make some excuse to appease the caliph's anger, he said, Commander of the true believers, all that I can say to your majesty about this matter is, that about five or six days ago, Scheich Ibrahim came to acquaint me, that he had a design to call an assembly of the ministers of his mosque, to assist at a ceremony he was ambitious of performing in your majesty's auspicious reign. I [49] asked him if I could be any way serviceable to him in this affair; upon which he entreated me to get leave of your majesty to perform the ceremony in the pavilion. When he left me, I told him he might do it, and I would take care to acquaint your majesty with it; but indeed I had quite forgot it, and I heartily ask pardon. Scheich Ibrahim, continued he, has certainly made choice of this day for the ceremony; and, after treating the ministers of his mosque, he was willing to divert them with the sight of this illumination.

Giafar, said the caliph, with a tone that plainly showed his anger was a little mollified, according to thy own words, thou hast committed three faults that are unpardonable: the first, in giving Scheich Ibrahim leave to perform his ceremony in my pavilion; for a person in so mean an office as his, is not worthy of so great an honour: the second, in not acquainting me with it: and the third, in not diving into the bottom of the good old man's intention. For my part, I am persuaded he only did it to try if he could get any money towards bearing the charge of it; but perhaps that never came into thy head: and sure I shall not wrong him, in forgiving him the expense of the night's illumination, which will be some amends for thy presenting him with nothing.

The grand vizier Giafar, overjoyed to hear the caliph put the matter upon that foot, very willingly owned the faults he reproached him with, and freely confessed he was to blame in not giving Scheich Ibrahim a few pieces of gold. Since the case is so, added the caliph, it is just that thou shouldst be punished for thy mistakes; but thy punishment shall be light: thou shalt spend the remainder of the night as I do, with these honest souls, whose company I am very well pleased with; and while I am putting on a citizen's habit, go thou and [50] disguise thyself, with Mesrour, and come both of you along with me. The vizier Giafar told him it was late, and that all the company would be gone before he could get thither; but the caliph said he would positively go. The vizier, who knew that not a syllable of what he said before was true, began to be in great consternation; but there was no reply to be made, and go he must.

The caliph then, disguised like a citizen, with the grand vizier Giafar, and Mesrour, chief of the eunuchs, stole out of the palace together. They rambled through the streets of Bagdad, till at last they came to the garden: the door, through the carelessness of Scheich Ibrahim, was open, having forgot to shut it when he came back from buying the wine. The caliph was very angry at it: Giafar, said he to the grand vizier, what excuse have you for the door's being open at this unseasonable hour? Is it possible that Scheich Ibrahim makes a custom of leaving it thus all night? No; I rather believe the hurry of the feast has been the occasion of this neglect.

The caliph went into the garden; and when he came to the pavilion, resolving not to go into the hall till he knew what they were doing there, he consulted with the grand vizier, whether it was not his best way to climb up into one of the trees that was near it, to make a discovery. The grand vizier at last casting his eye upon the door, perceived it stood half open, and told the caliph of it. It seems Scheich Ibrahim had left it so, when he was prevailed upon to come in and bear Nouredin and the Fair Persian company.

The caliph laying aside his first design, stole softly up to the hall-door, which standing half-open, he had the conveniency of seeing all the company that were within, without being discovered himself.

Never was any person so surprised as he, when he saw a lady of an incomparable beauty, and a young, [51] handsome, fine-shaped man, sitting at the table, with Scheich Ibrahim by them. Scheich Ibrahim had just then got a cup in his hand: My dear creature, said he to the Fair Persian, a right toper never drinks without singing a brisk tune first. If you please to hear, I will give you one of my best songs.

Scheich Ibrahim sang; and the caliph wondered at it more, because till that very moment he never knew any thing of his drinking wine, but always took him for a grave solid man, as he seemed to be to outward appearance. The caliph retired from the door with the same caution as he made his approach to it; and coming to the grand vizier Giafar, who was standing upon the steps a little lower, Come up, said he to him, and see if those within yonder are the ministers of the mosque, as you would fain have me believe.

By the tone of the voice in which the caliph spoke these last words, the vizier understood that things went ill on his side: however, he went up the steps; but when he had peeped in at the door, and saw them all three sitting, and in that condition, he fell a-trembling for fear of his life. He went back to the caliph, but in so great a confusion, that he had not a word to say to him. What riotous doings are here? said the caliph to him: who are those people that have presumed to take the liberty of diverting themselves in my garden and pavilion? and how durst Scheich Ibrahim give them admittance, and partake of the diversion with them? However, I must confess, I never saw two persons more beautiful, or better paired, in my life; and therefore, before I discover my anger, I will inform myself a little better, and inquire who they are, and the reason of their being here. He went to the door again, to observe them more narrowly; and the vizier who followed, stood behind him, and fixed his eyes upon them. They both of them plainly heard every word that Scheich Ibrahim spoke to the Fair Persian. Is there any thing, my charming lady, wanting to render the pleasures of this night complete? Nothing but a lute, replied the Fair Persian; and methinks, if you could get me one, all things would be very well. Can you play upon it? said Scheich Ibrahim. Fetch me one, replied the Fair Persian, and you shall hear whether I can or not. [52]

Scheich Ibrahim, without stirring very far from his place, pulled a lute out of a cupboard, and presented it to the Fair Persian, who began to put it in tune. The caliph, in the mean time, turning to the grand vizier; Giafar, said he, the young lady is going to play upon the lute; and if she performs well, I will forgive her, and the young man for her sake; but, as for thee, thou mayest go hang thyself. Commander of the true believers, replied the grand vizier, if that is your intention I wish she may play ill. Why so? said the caliph. Because, replied the grand vizier, the longer we live in this world, the more time we shall have to comfort ourselves with the hopes of dying in good social company. The caliph, who loved a jest dearly, began to laugh at this repartee; and putting his ear to the open side of the door, he listened to hear the Fair Persian play.

The Fair Persian made such artful flourishes upon the lute, that from the first moment of her touching it, the caliph perceived that she did it with a masterly hand. Afterwards, she began to sing; and suiting her voice, which was admirably fine, to the lute, she sang and played with so much skill and sweetness, that the caliph was quite ravished to hear her.

As soon as the Fair Persian had finished her song, the caliph went down the steps, and the vizier Giafar after him. When he came to the bottom, By my soul, said he to the vizier, I never heard a more charming voice, or a lute better touched in my life. Isaac ^[1], that hitherto I thought the most skilful player in the world, does not come up to her. In short, I am so charmed with her music, that I must hear her play before me; and therefore contrive some way how to bring it about. [53]

Commander of the true believers, said the grand vizier, if you should go in, and Scheich Ibrahim chance to know you, he would infallibly die with the fright. I should be extremely concerned at that, replied the caliph, and should be loath to be the occasion of his death, after so many years' service. But there is a thought just come into my head, how to compass my design: stay here with Mesrour, and wait for me in the next alley till I come.

The neighbourhood of the Tigris had given the caliph the conveniency of turning a sufficient quantity of water under a stately bridge, well terraced, into his garden, to make a fine canal, whither the choicest fish of the whole river used to retire. The fishermen knew it very well, and would have given the world to fish there; but the caliph had expressly charged Scheich Ibrahim not to suffer any of them to come near it. However, that very night, a fisherman passing by the garden door, which the caliph had left open as he found it, made use of this opportunity, and going in, went directly to the canal.

The fisherman immediately fell to work with his casting-nets, and was just ready to draw them, when the caliph, fearing what would be the effect of Scheich Ibrahim's negligence, but willing to make use of it, to bring his design about, came to the same place. The fisherman, in spite of his disguise, knew him, and throwing himself at his feet, humbly implored his pardon, and excused himself upon account of his poverty. Rise, saith the caliph, and be not afraid; only draw your nets, that I may see what fish you have got. [54]

The fisherman, recovered of his fright, quickly obeyed the caliph's orders. He drew out five or six very large fishes; and the caliph, choosing the two largest, tied them together by the head with a sprig of a tree. After this, said he to the fisherman, Give me thy clothes, and here take mine. The exchange was soon made; and the caliph being dressed like a fisherman, even to his boots and turban, Take thy nets, said he to the fisherman, and get thee about thy business.

When the fisherman, very well pleased with his good fortune, was gone, the caliph, taking the two fishes in his hand, went to look after the grand vizier Giafar and Mesrour. He made a full stop at the grand vizier, who, not knowing him, asked him what he wanted, and bade him go about his business. Upon this, the caliph fell a-laughing; by which the vizier finding it to be him, Commander of the true believers, said he, is it possible it can be you? I knew you not; and I ask a thousand pardons for my rudeness: you are so strangely disguised now, that without any fear of being discovered by Scheich Ibrahim, you may venture into the hall. Stay you here with Mesrour, said the caliph, while I go yonder and play my part.

The caliph went up to the hall, and knocked at the door. Nouredin hearing him first, told Scheich Ibrahim of it, who asked who was there. The caliph opened the door, and stepping a little way into the hall to show himself, Scheich Ibrahim, said he, I am the fisherman Kerim, who being informed of your design to treat [55] some of your friends, have brought two very large fishes, fresh caught, to see if you have any occasion for them.

Nouredin and the Fair Persian, mightily pleased to hear him name fish, Pray, said she to Scheich Ibrahim, let him come in, that we may look upon them. Scheich Ibrahim, by this time, was incapable of asking this counterfeit fisherman how or what way he came thither; but his whole design being only to oblige the Fair Persian, with much ado he turns his head towards the door, being quite drunk, and in a stammering tone, calling to the caliph, whom he took to be a fisherman, Come hither, thou nightly thief, said he, and let us see what thou hast got.

The caliph went forwards, and counterfeiting all the humours and actions of a fisherman to a nicety, presented them with the two fishes. These are very fine ones indeed, said the Fair Persian; and if they were well ordered, and delicately dressed, I should be glad to eat some of them. The lady is in the right, answered Scheich Ibrahim; but what the plague can we do with your fish, unless it was dressed? Go, dress it thyself, and bring it to us; thou wilt find every thing necessary for thee in my kitchen.

The caliph went back to the grand vizier: Giafar, said he, I have been very well received; but they want the fish to be dressed. I will take care to dress it myself, said the grand vizier, and they shall have it in a moment. Nay, replied the caliph, so eager am I to accomplish my design, that I will take abundance of pains about it too; for since I have personated the fisherman so well, sure I can play the cook for once: besides, in my younger days, I dealt a little in cookery, and always came off with flying colours. In saying these words, he went directly towards Scheich Ibrahim's lodgings, and the grand vizier and Mesrour followed him. [56]

All three of them presently fell to work, and though Scheich Ibrahim's kitchen was not very large, yet there was every thing in it that they wanted. The fish was quickly cooked, and the caliph served it up, putting to every one's plate a lemon to squeeze, if they thought it proper, into the sauce. They all ate very heartily, but especially Nouredin and the Fair Persian; and the caliph sat down with them at the lower end of the table.

As soon as the repast was over, Nouredin looking upon the caliph, Fisherman, said he, never were better fish eaten, and you have done us the greatest favour in the world. At the same time putting his hand into his bosom, and pulling out a purse of thirty pieces of gold, the remainder of the forty that Sangiar, gentleman-usher to the king of Balsora, had given him just upon his departure; Here, said he to him, take that, and if I had any more, thou shouldst have it: had I known thee in my prosperity, I would have taken care of securing thee from ever wanting: do not refuse the small present I make thee, but accept of it as kindly as if it was much greater.

The caliph took the purse, and perceiving by the weightiness that it was all gold, Sir, said he, I cannot enough thank you for your liberality, and I think myself very fortunate in having to do with a person of your generosity; but before I take my leave, I have a favour to ask, which I beg you not to deny me. Yonder is a lute, which

makes me believe that the lady understands playing upon it; and if you can prevail with her to play but one tune, I shall go away the best satisfied in the world: a lute, sir, is an instrument I greatly admire.

Fair Persian, said Nouredin, immediately addressing himself to her, I ask that favour of you, and I hope [57] you will not refuse me. She took up the lute without more entreaties, and putting it presently in tune, played and sang with such an air as charmed the very soul of the caliph with its harmony. Afterwards she played upon the lute without singing, but with so much skill and softness that it transported him into an ecstasy of joy.

When the Fair Persian had given over playing, the caliph cried out, What a voice! What a hand! What skill is here! Was there ever finer singing, or better playing upon the lute? Never was there any heard or seen like it.

Nouredin, who was a person of breeding, and always returned the compliment that was made him; Fisherman, said he, I find thou hast some taste for music, since thou art delighted with her performance; and if thou likest her she is thine; I make thee a present of her. At the same time he rose up, and taking his robe, which he had laid by, was for going away and leaving the pretended fisherman in possession of the Fair Persian.

The Fair Persian was extremely surprised at Nouredin's liberality; she took hold of him, and looking very wishfully at him, Whither, sir, are you going? said she; sit down in your place, I entreat you, and hearken to the song I am going to sing and play. He did as she desired him, and then the Fair Persian touching her lute, and looking upon him with tears, sang some verses that she had made *extempore* to reproach him with his indifference, and the easiness as well as cruelty of resigning her to Kerim. She only hinted, without explaining herself any farther to the fisherman, for she was ignorant of his being the caliph, as well as Nouredin. When she had done playing, she put the lute down by her, and clapped a handkerchief to her face to hide the tears she could not help shedding.

Nouredin made no answer to all these reproaches, but by his silence seemed to declare he did not [58] repent of what he had done. The caliph surprised at what he had newly heard, Sir, said he, as far as I see, this beautiful lady, that so generously you have made me a present of just now, is your slave, and you are her master. It is very true, Kerim, replied Nouredin, and thou wouldst be more surprised than thou art now, should I tell thee all the misfortunes that have happened to me on her account. Ah! I beseech you, sir, replied the caliph, still behaving himself like a fisherman, oblige me so far as to let me hear part of your story.

Nouredin, who had already obliged him in several things of a higher nature than this, was so complaisant as to relate the whole story to him. He began with his father's buying the Fair Persian for the king of Balsora, and omitted nothing of what he had done, or what had happened to him, from that time to their arrival at Bagdad, and since, to that very moment he was talking to him.

When Nouredin had ended his story, Whither are you going now? said the caliph. Even where Heaven shall direct me, answered Nouredin. Believe me, replied the caliph, you shall go no farther, but on the contrary, return to Balsora: I will go and write a short letter, which you shall give the king in my name; and you shall see upon the reading of it, he will give you a very handsome reception, and nobody will dare to speak against you.

Kerim, said Nouredin, what thou hast told me is very unaccountable and singular: didst thou ever hear that a poor fisherman, as thou art, had any correspondence with a king? Be not astonished at that, replied the caliph; you must know then, that we both studied together under the same masters, and were always the best friends in the world. It is true, fortune has not been equally favourable to us both; she has made him a king, and me [59] but a fisherman. However, this inequality has not at all lessened our friendship: he has often expressed a readiness and desire to advance my fortune, but I always refused it; and am better pleased with the satisfaction of knowing that he never will deny me whatever I ask for the service and advantage of my friends. Let me do it then, and you shall see the success.

Nouredin consented to what the caliph had proposed; and there being every thing necessary for writing in the

hall, the caliph wrote a letter to the king of Balsora; at the top of which, pretty near the edge of the paper, he placed this set form, in three small characters: 'In the name of the most merciful God,' to show he would be absolutely obeyed.

**THE LETTER OF CALIPH HAROUN ALRASCHID TO THE
KING OF BALSORA**

'Haroun Alraschid, son of Mandi, sends this letter to Mohammed Zinchi, his cousin, greeting. As soon as Nouredin, son to the late vizier Khacan, the bearer, has delivered you this letter and you have read it, pull off the royal mantle, put it on his shoulders, and place him in thy seat: fail not. So farewell.'

The caliph folded up the letter, and sealed it, and giving it to Nouredin, without saying any thing of what was in it, Go, said he, and embark immediately in a vessel that is ready to go off, (as there did constantly every day at the same hour), and you may sleep when you are aboard.

Nouredin took the letter, and away he went with the little money he had about him when Sangiar gave him his purse; and the Fair Persian, distracted with grief at his departure, retired by herself to one of the sofas, and fell a-weeping bitterly. [60]

Nouredin was scarce gone out of the hall, when Scheich Ibrahim, who had been silent during the transaction of this affair, looking steadfastly upon the caliph, whom he still believed to be a fisherman: Hark you, said he, Kerim, thou hast brought us two fishes that are worth twenty pieces of leather or more, and thou hast got a purse and a slave: but dost thou think to have it all for thyself? I here declare that I will go halves with thee in the slave; and as for the purse, show me what is in the inside: if it is silver, thou shalt have one piece for thyself; but if it is gold, I will have it all, and in exchange, give thee some pieces of leather I have in my pocket.

(For the better understanding of what follows, said Scheherazade, interrupting herself here, we must observe to you, that the caliph, before his serving up the fish, had despatched the grand vizier Giafar to his palace, with orders to get four slaves with a rich habit, and to wait on the other side of the pavilion till he gave a signal with his finger against the window. The grand vizier receiving his commission, he, Mesrour, and the four slaves, waited at the appointed place, expecting the sign).

The caliph, still personating the fisherman, answered Scheich Ibrahim very boldly, I know not what there is in the purse, gold or silver: whatever it is, you shall freely go my halves; but, as to the slave, I will have her all to myself; and if you will not accept of these conditions, you shall have nothing at all.

Scheich Ibrahim, enraged to the last degree at this insolence, considering him only as a fisherman, snatched up one of the china dishes, and flung it at the caliph's head. The caliph easily avoided the blow, being thrown by a person in drink; but the dish striking against the wall, was dashed into a thousand pieces. Scheich Ibrahim having missed his aim, grew more enraged, and catching up the candle that stood upon the table, rose from his seat, and staggering along, went down a back pair of stairs to look for a cane. [61]

The caliph made use of this opportunity, and striking his hands against the window, the grand vizier, Mesrour, and the four slaves were with him in a trice, who quickly pulled off the fisherman's clothes, and put on him the habit they had brought. They had not quite dressed the caliph, (who had seated himself upon the throne that was in the hall), but they were very busy about him, when Scheich Ibrahim, spurred on by interest, came back, with a swinging cane in his hand, with which he designed to pay the pretended fisherman soundly; but, instead of finding him, he saw his clothes in the middle of the hall, and the caliph upon his throne, with the grand vizier and Mesrour on each side of him. He stood a while gazing upon this unexpected sight, doubting whether he was awake or asleep. The caliph fell a-laughing at his astonishment; and, calling to him, Scheich Ibrahim, said he, what dost thou want? whom dost thou look after?

Scheich Ibrahim, no longer doubting that it was the caliph, immediately threw himself at his feet, with his face to the ground: Commander of the true believers, cried he, your vile slave has offended you; but he implores your clemency, and asks a thousand pardons for his offence. As soon as the slaves had made an end of dressing him, he came down from his throne, and advancing towards him, Rise, said he; I forgive thee. [62]

Afterwards the caliph addressed himself to the Fair Persian, who had suspended her sorrow, as soon as she understood that the garden and pavilion belonged to that prince, and not to Scheich Ibrahim, as he had all along made her believe, and that it was he himself disguised in the fisherman's clothes. Fair Persian, said he, rise and follow me: by what you have lately seen, you ought to know who I am, and to believe that I am above taking any advantage of Nouredin's humour, who, with a generosity not to be paralleled, has made me a present of your person. I have sent him to Balsora to be king there; and when I have despatched some business necessary for his establishment, you shall also go thither and be a queen. In the mean time, I am going to order an apartment for you in my palace, where you shall be treated according to your desert.

This discourse put the Fair Persian in heart again, and comforted her after a very sensible manner. The joy of Nouredin's advancement, whom she passionately loved, to so high an honour, made her sufficient amends for her affliction. The caliph kept his promise, and recommended her to the care of his lady Zobeide, whom he acquainted with the esteem he had lately entertained for Nouredin.

Nouredin's return to Balsora was more fortunate and speedier by some days than he could have expected. Upon his arrival, without visiting any of his friends or relations, he went directly to the palace, where the king at that time was giving public audience. He pressed through the crowd with the letter held up in his hand, who presently made way for him to come forward and deliver it. The king took and opened it; and his colour changed in reading it: he kissed it thrice, and was just about to obey the caliph's orders, when he bethought himself of showing it to the vizier Saouy, Nouredin's irreconcilable enemy. [63]

Saouy, who had discovered Nouredin, and began to think with himself, with a great deal of uneasiness, what might be the design of his coming, was no less surprised than the king, at the order contained in the letter; and being as much concerned in it, he thought upon a way that very moment how to evade it. He pretended not to have read the letter quite through, and therefore desired a second view of it; he turned himself a little on one side, as if he wanted a better sight, and without being perceived by any body, dexterously tore off the set form that showed the caliph would be absolutely obeyed, from the top of it, and putting it into his mouth, swallowed it down.

After this notorious piece of villany, Saouy turned to the king, and giving him the letter, Sir, said he to him, in a low voice, what does your majesty intend to do? What the caliph has commanded me, replied the king. Have a care, sir, said the wicked vizier, what you do: it is true, this is the caliph's hand; but the set form is not to it. The king had observed that very well, but in the confusion he was in, he thought his eyes deceived him, when he saw it was gone.

Sir, continued the vizier, we have no reason to doubt, but that the caliph upon the complaints he has made against your majesty and me, has granted him this letter purely to get rid of him, not with any intention of having the order contained in it executed. Besides, we must consider, he has sent no express with a patent: and without that, the order is of no force: and since a king of your majesty's grandeur was never deposed without that formality, let who will bring such a letter as this, it ought not to be put in execution. Your majesty may depend upon what I have said; and how dangerous soever the consequence of disobeying this order may be, I will take it all upon myself. [64]

King Zinchi, easily persuaded by this pernicious counsel, left Nouredin entirely to the discretion of the vizier Saouy, who led him to his house after a very insulting manner; where, after causing him to be bastinadoed till he was almost dead, he ordered him to a prison, where he commanded him to be put in the darkest dungeon, with a strict charge to the gaoler to give him nothing but bread and water.

When Nouredin, sadly bruised with the strokes, came to himself, and found what a nasty dungeon he was in, he bewailed his misfortunes after the most pathetic manner imaginable. Ah! fisherman, cried he, how hast thou

cheated me; and how easy have I been in believing thee! Could I, after the civility I showed thee, expect so inhuman and barbarous usage! However, may Heaven reward thee: for I cannot persuade myself, that thy intention was so base, and I will with patience wait the end of my afflictions.

The poor disconsolate Nouredin remained six whole days in this miserable condition, and Saouy did not forget that he had confined him there, but being resolved to put him to a shameful death, and not daring to do it by his own authority, to accomplish his villanous design, he ordered some of his slaves to prepare some very rich presents, which he, at the head of them, went and presented to the king, saying, Behold, sir, what the new king hath sent you upon his accession to the crown, and begs your majesty to accept of it.

The king taking the matter just as Saouy intended it, What! replied he, is the wretch still living? I thought you had put him to death already. Sir, I have no power, answered the vizier, to take any person's life away; [65] that only belongs to your majesty. Go, said the king, behead him instantly; I give you full authority. Sir, replied the vizier Saouy, I am infinitely obliged to your majesty for the justice you do me; but, since Nouredin has publicly affronted me, I humbly beg the favour that his execution may be performed before the palace, and, that the criers may publish it in every quarter of the city, that every body may be satisfied that he has made sufficient reparation for the affront. The king granted the request, and the criers, in performing their office, diffused a universal sorrow through the whole city. The memory of his father's virtues being yet fresh among them, there was no one could hear of the ignominious death the son was going to suffer, through the villany and instigation of the vizier Saouy, without horror and indignation.

Saouy went in person to the prison, accompanied with twenty slaves, his ministers of cruelty, who took Nouredin out of his dungeon, and put him on a shabby horse without a saddle. When Nouredin saw himself in the hands of his enemy, Thou triumphest now, said he, but thou abusest thy power. Yet, I have still some confidence in the truth of what is written in one of our books: 'You judge unjustly, and in a little time you shall be judged yourself.' The vizier Saouy, who really triumphed in his heart, What! insolent, said he, darest thou insult me yet? but go, I pardon thee, and care not whatever happens to me, so I have the pleasure of seeing thee lose thy head in the public view of all Balsora. Thou oughtest also to remember what another of our books says: 'What signifies dying the next day the death of his enemy?'

The vizier, still implacable and full of malice, surrounded by one part of his slaves in arms, ordered [66] Nouredin to be conducted by the other towards the palace. The people were ready to fall upon him as they went along; and, if any body had set them the example, they would certainly have stoned him to death. When he had brought him to the place of suffering, which was in sight of the king's apartment, he left him in the executioner's hands, and went straight to the king, who was in his closet ready to glut his eyes with the bloody spectacle he had prepared.

The king's guard and the vizier's slaves, who made a circle round Nouredin, had much ado to withstand the people, who made all the efforts possible, but in vain, to break through them and carry him off by force. The executioner coming up to him, Sir, said he, I hope you will forgive me; I am but a slave, and cannot help doing my duty. If you have no occasion for any thing, I beseech you prepare yourself, for the king is just going to give me orders to strike the blow.

The poor unfortunate Nouredin, at that cruel moment, looked round upon the people: Will no charitable body, cried he, bring me a little water to quench my thirst? which immediately they did, and handed it up to him upon the scaffold. The vizier Saouy, perceiving this delay, called out to the executioner from the king's closet window, where he had planted himself, Strike, what dost thou stay for? At these barbarous and inhuman words the whole palace echoed with loud imprecations against him; and the king, jealous of his authority, made it appear, by ordering him to stay a while, that he was angry at his presumption. But there was another reason; for the king that very moment casting his eyes up into a large street that faced him and joined to the place of execution, saw about the middle of it a troop of horsemen coming with full speed towards the palace. [67] Vizier, said the king immediately, look yonder, what is the meaning of those horsemen? Saouy, who knew not what it might be, earnestly pressed the king to give the executioner the sign. No, replied the king, I will first see who these horsemen are. It was the vizier Giafar and his train, who came in person from Bagdad by the caliph's order.

To make the occasion of this minister's coming to Balsora a little plainer, we must observe, that after Nouredin's departure with the caliph's letter, the caliph the next day, nor several days after, ever thought of sending the patent that he mentioned to the Fair Persian. He happened one day to be in the inner palace, which was the women's, and passing by the apartment, he heard the sound of a fine voice: he listened to it, and he had no sooner heard the words of one complaining for the absence of somebody, than he asked the officer of his eunuchs that attended him, who that woman was that belonged to that apartment. The officer told him that it was the young stranger's slave, whom he had sent to Balsora to be king in the room of Mohammed Zinchi.

Ah! poor Nouredin, cried the caliph presently, I had forgot thee; but haste, said he to the officer, and bid Giafar come to me. The vizier was with him in an instant. As soon as he came, Giafar, said he, I have hitherto neglected sending the patent to Nouredin, which was to confirm him king of Balsora; but we have no time now to draw up one, therefore immediately take post-horses, and, with some of your servants, make what haste you can to Balsora. If Nouredin is dead, and put to death by them, order the vizier Saouy to be hanged; but, if he be living, bring him to me with the king and the vizier.

The grand vizier staid no longer than just the time of getting on horseback, and being attended by a great train of officers belonging to his house, he set forward for Balsora, where he arrived after the manner, and at [68] the time above mentioned. As soon as he came to the palace-yard the people cleared the way for him, crying out, A pardon for Nouredin! and with his whole train he rode into the palace, even to the very stairs, where he alighted.

The king of Balsora knowing him to be the caliph's chief minister, went to meet him, and received him at the entrance of his apartment. The first question the vizier asked was, if Nouredin was living; and, if he was, that he might be sent for. The king made answer, He was alive, and gave orders to have him brought in. Accordingly he soon made his appearance as he was, tied, and bound with cords. The grand vizier Giafar caused him to be untied, and setting him at liberty, ordered the vizier Saouy to be seized, and bound with the same cords.

The grand vizier Giafar lay but one night in Balsora. The next day he set out again for Bagdad; and, according to the order he had received, carried Saouy, the king of Balsora, and Nouredin along with him. As soon as he came to Bagdad, he presented them all to the caliph; and after he had given him an account of his journey, and particularly of the miserable condition he found Nouredin in, and that all his ill usage was purely by the advice and malice of Saouy, the caliph desired Nouredin to behead the vizier himself. Commander of the true believers, said Nouredin, notwithstanding the injury this wicked man has done me, and the mischief he endeavoured to do my deceased father, I should think myself the basest of mankind if I had stained my hands with his blood. The caliph was extremely pleased with his generosity, and ordered justice to be done by the executioner's hand.

The caliph would fain have sent Nouredin back to Balsora to have been king there; but Nouredin humbly begged to be excused from accepting the offer, saying, Commander of the true believers, the city of [69] Balsora, after the misfortunes that have happened to me there, is so much my aversion, and will always continue to be so, that I beseech your majesty to give me leave to keep the oath I have made of never returning thither again: and I shall think it my greatest glory to do you some services near your royal person, if you are pleased to do me the honour. The caliph consented to it; and placing him among the number of those courtiers who were his greatest favourites, restored the Fair Persian to him again. To all these favours he added a plentiful fortune; and he and the Fair Persian lived together to their dying day, with all the satisfaction they could both desire.

As for the king of Balsora, the caliph contented himself with only letting him see how careful he ought to be in the choice of his viziers, and so sent him back into his kingdom.

THE STORY OF BEDER, PRINCE OF PERSIA, AND GIAHAURE, PRINCESS OF SAMARCAND.

Persia is a country of so vast extent, that their ancient monarchs have, not without some colour of reason, assumed the haughty title of king of kings. For, not to mention those nations subdued by their arms, there are whole kingdoms and provinces whose kings are not only tributary, but also in as great subjection to them as petty governors in other nations are to kings.

Some ages ago one of these kings, who, in the beginning of his reign, had signalized himself by many glorious and successful conquests, enjoyed so profound and lasting a peace and tranquillity as rendered him the happiest of monarchs. The only thing in which he could be termed unfortunate was, that amongst all his mistresses not one of them ever brought him a son; and being now far advanced in years, he was desirous of an heir to succeed him after his death. However, he had above a hundred ladies all lodged in separate apartments, after a magnificent manner, with women slaves and eunuchs to wait upon and take care of them. Yet, notwithstanding all his endeavours to please and humour them in every thing, there was not one that answered his expectation. He had women very often brought him from the most remote countries, and if they pleased him, he not only gave the merchants their full price at the first word, but treated them with all respect and civility imaginable, and by considerable presents obliged them still to bring others, flattering himself, that at last [71] he might be so happy as to meet with one by whom he might have a son. There was scarce any act of charity but what he performed, fancying by that means to prevail with Heaven. He gave immense sums to the poor, besides large donatives to the religious of his own persuasion, building for their use many noble colleges richly endowed, in hopes of obtaining by their prayers what he earnestly desired.

One day, according to the custom of his royal predecessors, during their residence in the capital city, he gave his mistresses a ball, at which all the ambassadors and strangers of quality about the court were present; and where they not only entertained one another with talking of news and politics, but also of learning, history, poetry, and whatever else was capable of diverting the understanding after the most agreeable manner. It was upon that day that an eunuch came to acquaint him with the arrival of a certain merchant from a far country, who, having brought a slave along with him, desired leave to show her to his majesty. Give him admittance instantly, says the king, and after the ball is done I will talk with him: the merchant was introduced, and seated in a convenient place, from whence he might easily have a full view of the king, and hear him talk with abundance of familiarity to those that stood near his person. The king was extremely civil in his conversation with strangers, with a design, that by degrees they might grow acquainted with him; so that when they saw with what freedom and civility he addressed himself to the whole assembly, they took courage and began to discourse with him also, without being the least surprised at the dazzling pomp and splendour of his appearance, which was enough to deprive those of their power of speech that were not used to such glorious sights. He treated the ambassadors also after the same manner: first he ate with them, and during the [72] repast, he asked them several questions concerning their health, of their voyage, and the affairs of their country; and, after they had been encouraged by his generous entertainment, he gave them audience.

When the ball was over, all the company retired; the merchant, who was the only person left, fell prostrate before the king's throne with his face to the earth, wishing his majesty an accomplishment of all his desires. As soon as he rose up, the king asked him if the news of his having brought a slave for him was true, and whether she was handsome.

Sir, replied the merchant, I doubt not in the least but your majesty has very beautiful women, since you search every corner of the earth for them; but I may boldly affirm, without overvaluing my merchandise, that you never saw a woman that could stand in competition with her for shape and beauty, besides a thousand other agreeable qualifications that she is mistress of. Where is she? says the king; bring her to me instantly. Sir,

replied the merchant, I have delivered her into the hands of one of your chief eunuchs, and your majesty may send for her at your pleasure.

The fair slave was immediately brought in, and no sooner had the king cast his eyes on her, than the gentleness of her mien and shape charmed him. He went presently into his closet, whither the merchant, with a few eunuchs, followed him. The slave wore a red satin veil, striped with gold, over her face; and when the merchant had taken it off, the king of Persia beheld a lady that surpassed in beauty, not only his present mistresses, but even all that ever he had before; in short, he immediately fell passionately in love with her, and bade the merchant name his price.

Sir, said he, I gave a thousand pieces of gold to the persons of whom I bought her, and in my three years' journey to your court, I have spent as much: but I shall forbear setting any price to so great a monarch; and, therefore, if your majesty likes her, I humbly beg you would accept of her as a present. I am highly obliged to you, replied the king; but it is never my custom to treat merchants, who come hither purely for my pleasure, after so ungenerous a manner. I am going to order thee ten thousand pieces of gold; therefore speak, whether thou art pleased with that sum or not. Sir, answered the merchant, though I should have esteemed myself very happy in your majesty's acceptance of her for nothing, yet I dare not refuse so generous an offer. I shall take care to publish it, not only in my own country, but also in every place through which I pass. The money was presently paid him; and, before he stirred out of his presence, the king made him put on a rich suit of cloth of gold. [73]

The king caused the fair slave to be lodged in the finest apartment next his own, and gave particular orders to the matrons and to the women slaves appointed to attend her, that after bathing they should dress her in the richest clothes the kingdom afforded. He also commanded them to carry her some pearl-necklaces, with abundance of diamonds, and other precious stones, that she might have the liberty of choosing those she liked best.

The officious matrons, whose only care it was to please the king, were astonished with admiration at her beauty; and being well skilled in that affair, they told his majesty, that, if he would allow them but three days, they would engage to make her so much handsomer than she was at present, that he should scarce know her again. The king at first was very loath to defer the pleasure of enjoyment so long; but at last he consented, upon condition they would be as good as their word.

The king of Persia's capital was situated in an island, and his palace, which was very magnificent, was built upon the sea-shore: his apartment looked upon that element; and the fair slave's, which was pretty near it, had also the same prospect; and it was the more agreeable upon the account of the sea beating almost against the foot of the wall. [74]

At the three days' end, the fair slave, gloriously dressed and set off, was alone in her chamber, sitting upon a sofa, and leaning against one of the windows that faced the sea, when the king, being informed that he might visit her, came in. The slave hearing somebody walk in the room, with an air quite different from that of the women slaves who had hitherto attended her, immediately turned her head about to see who it was. She knew him to be the king; but without discovering the least surprise, or so much as rising from her seat to salute or receive him, as if he had been the meanest person in the world, she put herself in the same posture again.

The king of Persia was extremely surprised to see a slave of so beautiful a form so ignorant of the world. He attributed this piece of ill breeding to the narrowness of her education, and the little care that was taken of instructing her at first in the rules of civility and good manners. He went to her at the window, where, notwithstanding the coldness and indifferency with which she had just now received him, she suffered herself to be admired, caressed, and embraced, as much as he pleased.

In the midst of these amorous embraces and tender endearments, this monarch paused a while to gaze upon, or rather to devour her with his eyes: My goddess! my angel! my charmer! cried the king; whence came you? and where do those happy parents live that brought into the world so surprising a masterpiece of nature as you are? Ah! how I adore you! and my passion shall continue the same. Never did I feel for a woman what I now [75]

suffer for you: and though I have seen, and do see every day, a vast number of beauties, yet never did my eyes behold so many charms in one single person, which have so transported me out of myself, that I am no longer at my own, but entirely at your disposal. My dearest life, continued he, you neither answer me, nor by any visible token give me the least reason to believe that you are sensible of the many demonstrations I have given you of the violence of my passion; neither will you turn your eyes on me, to afford mine the pleasure of meeting them with an amorous glance, and to convince you that it is impossible to love more than I do you. Why will you still keep this obstinate silence, which freezes me to death? and whence proceeds the seriousness, or rather sorrow, that torments me to the soul? Do you mourn for your country, your friends, or your relations? Alas! is not the king of Persia, who loves and adores you, capable of comforting and making you amends for the loss of every thing in the world?

What protestations of love soever the king of Persia made the fair slave to oblige her to speak to him, she continued her astonishing reservedness, and keeping her eyes still fixed on the ground, would not so much as open her lips.

The king of Persia, charmed with the purchase he had made of a slave that pleased him so well, pressed her no farther, in hopes that, by treating her civilly, he might prevail upon her to change her mind. He presently gave the usual sign to the women that waited in an outward room; and as soon as they entered, he commanded them to bring in supper. When it was on the table, My dear, said he to the slave, come hither and sup with me. She rose up from her seat, and being placed over against the king, his majesty helped her before he began [76] eating himself; and so he did of every dish during the whole supper. The slave ate with downcast eyes, and without speaking one word, though he often asked her how she liked the entertainment, and whether it was dressed to her taste.

The king, willing to change the discourse, asked her what her name was, how she liked the clothes and the jewels she had on, what she thought of her apartment and the rich furniture, and whether the prospect of the sea was not very agreeable and charming. But to all these questions she answered not a word; so that the king was at a loss what to think of her silence. He imagined at first, that perhaps she might be dumb: But then, said he to himself, can it be possible that Heaven should form a creature so beautiful, so perfect, and so accomplished, and yet at the same time with so great an imperfection? However, I cannot love with less passion than I do.

When the king of Persia rose from the table, he washed his hands on one side, while the fair slave washed hers on the other. He took that time to ask the women that held the basin and the towel, if ever they had heard her speak. One of them presently made answer, Sir, we have neither seen her open her lips, nor heard her speak, any more than your majesty has just now: we have taken care of her in the bath, we have combed and dressed her head, put on her clothes, and waited upon her in her chamber; but she has never opened her lips, so much as to say, That is well, or, I like this. We have often asked her, Madam, do you want any thing? let us know what you would have; do but ask, and we are ready to get it for you: but we have never been able to draw a word from her; so that we cannot tell whether her silence proceeds from pride, sorrow, stupidity, or [77] dumbness; and this is all we can inform your majesty.

The king of Persia was more astonished at hearing this than he was before: however, believing the slave might have some reason for her sorrow, he was willing to endeavour to divert it, and make her merry. Accordingly, he made a very splendid ball, to which all the fine ladies of the court came, and those who were skilful in playing upon musical instruments showed their parts, while others sang or danced, or did both together: in short, they played at a great many sorts of games, which mightily diverted the king. The fair slave was the only person that took no pleasure in those diversions: she never stirred out of her place, but with her eyes still fixed on the ground, without taking any notice of the entertainment, behaved herself with so much indifferency that all the ladies were no less surprised at it than the king. After the ball was done, every one retired to her apartment; and the king, who was left alone with the fair slave, lay with her that night.

The next morning, the king of Persia arose more pleased than he had been with all the women he had ever seen, and more enamoured with the fair slave than he was before. Indeed, he soon made it appear, by resolving henceforth to keep constant to her; and he performed his resolution. On the very same day he dismissed all his other women, giving every one of them their jewels and other valuable things, besides a considerable fortune,

with free leave to marry whom they thought fit, and only kept the matrons, and a few other old women, to wait upon and attend the fair slave. However, for a whole year together, she never afforded him the pleasure of one single word; yet the king took abundance of pains to please her, and, with all complaisance imaginable, [78] to give her the most signal proofs of his violent passion.

The year was now expired, when the king, sitting one day by his mistress, protested to her that his love, instead of being diminished, grew every day more violent: My queen, said he, I cannot conceive what your thoughts are; but, however, nothing is more true, and I swear to you the same, that in having the happiness of possessing you, there remains nothing for me to desire: I esteem my kingdom, great as it is, less than an atom, when I have the pleasure of beholding your eyes, and of telling you a thousand times how I adore you. You see I have given you some other proofs of my affection than bare words; and therefore surely you can never doubt of it, after the vast number of women I have sacrificed to your beauty. You may remember, it is about a year since I sent them away from my court; and I repent of it as little even now I am talking with you, as I did the first moment of their departure, and I believe I never shall. Nothing would be wanting to complete my happiness, and crown my joys for ever, would you speak but one single word to me, by which I might be assured that you thought yourself in some measure obliged to me. But how can you speak to me if you are dumb? and alas! how fearful I am lest it should be true! yet what reason have I to doubt of it, since you still torment me with silence, after a whole year's entreating you every hour to speak to me! However, if it is impossible for me to obtain that consolation, may Heaven, at least, grant me the blessing of a son by you to succeed me after my death. I find myself growing old every day, and I begin to want one to assist me in bearing the weight of a crown. But still I cannot refrain from the desire I have of hearing you speak; for methinks something within me tells me you are not dumb; and, therefore, dear madam, I beseech, I conjure you, to [79] break through this obstinate humour, and speak but one word to me; and after that, I care not how soon I die.

At this discourse, the fair slave, who, according to her usual custom, had hearkened to the king with downcast eyes, and had given him cause to believe, not only that she was dumb, but that she never had laughed in her life, began to look up and smile a little. The king of Persia perceived it with a surprise that made him break forth into an exclamation of joy; and no longer doubting but that she was going to speak, he waited for that happy moment with an eagerness and attention that cannot be easily expressed.

At last, the fair slave, breaking her long silence, thus addressed herself to the king: Sir, said she, I have so many things to say to your majesty, that, having once broke silence, I know not where to begin. However, in the first place, I think myself obliged in duty to thank your majesty for all the favours and honours you have been pleased to confer upon me, and to implore the gods to bless and prosper you, to prevent the wicked designs and intentions of your enemies, and that they would not suffer you to die after hearing me speak, but grant you a long and happy reign. After this, sir, I cannot give you a greater satisfaction than acquainting you with my being with child; and I wish, as you do, it may be a son. Had it never been my fortune to have been breeding, I was resolved (I beg your majesty to pardon the sincerity of my intention) never to have loved you, as well as to have kept an eternal silence; but now I love and respect you as I ought to do.

The king of Persia, ravished to hear the fair slave not only speak, but at the same time tell him news in which he was so nearly concerned, embraced her tenderly: Shining light of my eyes, said he, it is impossible [80] for me to receive a greater joy than what you have now given me: you have spoken to me, and declared your being with child; so that I am fully satisfied in myself, that after these two signal occasions of joy, I ought to expect no other.

The king of Persia, in the transport of joy he was in, said no more to the fair slave. He left her; but after such a manner as made her perceive his intention was speedily to return; and being willing that the occasion of his joy should be made public, he declared it to his officers, and sent in all haste for the grand vizier. As soon as he came, he ordered him to distribute a thousand pieces of gold among the holy men of his religion, who had made vows of poverty; as also among the hospitals and the poor, by way of returning thanks to Heaven; and his will was obeyed, by the direction of that minister.

After the king of Persia had given this order, he came to the fair slave again: Madam, said he, pardon me for

leaving you so abruptly, since you have been the occasion of it; but I hope you will entertain me some other time, since I am desirous to know of you several things of a much greater consequence. However, in the mean time, tell me, I beseech you, my dearest charmer, what were the powerful reasons that induced you to persist in that obstinate silence for a whole year together, though every day you saw me, heard me talk to you, ate and drank with me, and every night lay with me? I shall pass by your not speaking; but how you could carry yourself after such an indifferent manner, that I could never discover whether you were sensible of what I said to you, or no, I must confess it surpasses my understanding: and I cannot yet comprehend, how you could contain yourself so long: therefore I must conclude the occasion of it to be very extraordinary.

To satisfy the king of Persia's curiosity, this fair person replied, Think whether or no to be a slave, far [81] from my own country, without any hopes of ever seeing it again, to have a heart torn with grief, for being separated from my mother, my brother, my friends, and my acquaintance, are not sufficient reasons for my keeping a silence your majesty has thought so strange and unaccountable. The love of our native country is as natural to us as that of our parents; and the loss of liberty is unsupportable to every one, who is not wholly destitute of sense and reason, and knows how to set a value on it. The body indeed may be enslaved, and under the subjection of a master who has the power and authority in his hands; but the will can never be conquered or domineered over, but still remains free and unconfined, depending on itself alone, and your majesty has found an example of it in me; and it is a wonder that I have not followed the example of abundance of unfortunate wretches, whom the loss of liberty has reduced to the mournful resolution of procuring their own deaths a thousand ways, rather than survive it, and wear out a wretched life in shameful slavery.

Madam, replied the king, I am now convinced of the truth of what you say; but till this moment I was of opinion, that a person beautiful, well-shaped, with a great deal of wit and good sense, such as yourself, whom her rigorous stars had destined to be a slave, ought to think herself very happy in meeting with a king for her master.

Sir, replied the fair slave, whatever the slave is, supposing her to be such as I have already mentioned to your majesty, there is no king on earth can tyrannize over her will. But, however, when you speak of a slave, mistress of charms enough to captivate a monarch, and make him adore her, provided she is of a rank infinitely below him, I am of your opinion she ought to think herself happy in her misfortune; but what happiness [82] can it be when she considers herself only as a slave, torn from her parents' arms, and perhaps a lover's, for whom she has a passion that death only can extinguish? But when this very slave is nothing inferior to the king that bought her, your majesty shall then judge yourself of the rigour of her destiny, of her misery, and of her sorrow, and to what desperate attempts the anguish of despair may drive her.

The king of Persia, astonished at this discourse, said, Madam, can it be possible that you are of royal blood, as by your words you seem to intimate? Explain the whole secret to me, I beseech you, and no longer augment my impatience. Ah! let me instantly know who are the happy parents of so great a prodigy of beauty, who are your brothers, your sisters, and your relations; but above all, what your name is.

Sir, said the fair slave, my name is Gulnare of the sea; and my father, who is now dead, was one of the most potent monarchs of the ocean. When he died, he left his kingdom to a brother of mine, named Saleh, and to the queen my mother, who is also a princess, the daughter of another puissant monarch of the sea. We enjoyed a profound peace and tranquillity through the whole kingdom, till a neighbouring prince, an enemy to our repose, invaded our dominions with a mighty army; and, penetrating as far as our capital, made himself master of it: and we had but just time enough to save ourselves in a steep inaccessible place, with a few trusty officers, who were so generous as not to forsake us in our distress.

In this retreat, my brother was not negligent in contriving all manner of ways to drive the unjust invader from our dominions. While this affair was in agitation, one day taking me into his closet, Sister, said he, the events of the least undertakings in this world are always dubious. As, for my own part, I am willing to die in [83] the attempt I design to make to re-establish myself in my kingdom; and I shall be less concerned for my own disgrace, than for what may possibly happen to you; and therefore to prevent it, and to secure you from whatever accident may befall you, I would fain see you married first. But in the miserable condition that our affairs are at present, I see no probability of matching you to any of the princes of the sea; and therefore I

should be very glad if you would resolve to be of my opinion, and think of marrying to some of the princes of the earth. I am ready to contribute all that lies in my power towards it, and I am certain there is not one of them, considering the beauty you are mistress of, but would be proud of your accepting of their crown.

At this discourse of my brother's, I fell into a violent passion. Brother, said I, you know that I am descended, as well as you, by both father and mother's sides, from the kings and queens of the sea, without any mixture of alliance with those of the earth; therefore I do not design to marry below myself, any more than they did: and I took an oath of it, as soon as I had understanding to inquire into the nobleness and antiquity of our family. The condition to which we are reduced shall never oblige me to alter my resolution; and if you perish in the execution of your design, I am prepared to fall with you, rather than follow the advice I so little expected from you.

My brother, who was still earnest for the marriage, endeavoured to make me believe that there were kings of the earth who were no ways inferior to those of the sea. This put me again into a violent passion, which occasioned him to speak several bitter reflecting things that nettled me to the quick. At last he left me, as much dissatisfied with myself as he could possibly be; and in this peevish mood, I gave a spring from the bottom of the sea, directly up to the island of the moon. [84]

Notwithstanding the violent discontent that made me cast myself upon that island, I lived pretty easy in a by-corner of it, where I retired for conveniency and safety. But, alas! this happiness lasted not long; for, in spite of all my endeavours to lie concealed in my beloved obscurity, a certain person of distinction and figure, attended by his servants, surprised me sleeping, and carried me to his own house. He made violent love to me, and omitted nothing which he thought might reasonably induce me to make a return to his passion. When he saw that fair means would prevail nothing upon me, he attempted to make use of force; but I soon made him repent of his insolence. So at last, finding that there was nothing to be done with me, he resolved to part with me, which he did to that very merchant who brought me hither and sold me to your majesty. He was a very prudent, courteous, obliging person; and during the whole journey, which was somewhat tedious, he never gave me the least reason to complain of his usage.

As for your majesty, sir, continued the princess Gulnare, if you had not shown me all the respect you have hitherto paid (for which I am extremely obliged to your goodness) and given me such undeniable marks of your affection, that I could no longer doubt of it; if you had not immediately sent away your women; give me leave to tell you plainly, sir, that I was positively resolved not to have lived with you: I would have thrown myself into the sea, out of this very window, where your majesty first saw me when you came into this apartment; and I would have gone in search after my mother, my brother, and the rest of my relations. I still persisted in that design, and I would infallibly have put it in execution, if, after a certain time, I had found myself deceived in the hopes of being with child: but now, in the condition I am in, I shall take care what I do. [85] Should I tell my mother or my brother that I have been a slave, even to a king as mighty as you are, they would never believe it, but would for ever upbraid me with the crime I have committed against my honour, since it was a voluntary act of my own. However, sir, be it a prince or a princess that I bring into the world, it will be a pledge to engage me never to be parted from your majesty; and therefore I hope you will no longer look upon me as a slave, but as a princess worthy of your alliance.

It was after this manner that the princess Gulnare finished her story she had been telling the king of Persia. My charming and adorable princess, cried he, what wonders have I heard! and what an ample subject have you afforded my curiosity, of asking a thousand questions concerning those strange and unheard-of things which you have related to me! But, in the first place, I ought to thank you for your goodness and patience in making a trial of the truth and constancy of my passion. I must confess, I thought it impossible for me to love you more than I did; but since I know you to be so great a princess, I love you a thousand times more. What! did I say princess? Madam, you are no longer so; but you are my queen, the queen of Persia; and by that title you shall soon be proclaimed throughout the whole kingdom. Tomorrow the ceremony shall be performed in my capital, with a pomp and magnificence that was never yet beheld; which will plainly show, that you are both my queen and lawful wife. This should have been done long ago, had you sooner convinced me of my error; for, from the first moment of my seeing you, I have been of the same opinion as now, to love you for ever, and never to place my affection on any other. [86]

However, I am pleased with myself for having, in the mean time, paid you all the respect and civility I ought, that is due to your merit; and therefore, madam, I beseech you to inform me in a more particular manner, of the kingdoms and people of the sea, which are altogether unknown to me. I have heard much talk indeed of the inhabitants of the sea; but I always looked upon it as nothing but a pleasant tale or fable: however, by what you have told me, I am convinced there is nothing more true; and I have a very good proof of it in your own person, who are one of them, and are pleased to condescend to be my wife; which is an honour no other inhabitant on the earth can boast of besides myself. There is one thing yet, madam, which puzzles me a little, therefore I must beg the favour of you to explain it; that is, I cannot comprehend how it is possible for you to move, breathe, and walk up and down in the water, without being drowned. There are but few amongst us who have the art of staying under water; but they would surely perish there, if after a certain space of time, which is according to their skill, and constitution of their bodies, they did not come up again.

Sir, replied the queen Gulnare, I shall take a great deal of pleasure in satisfying the king of Persia in any thing that lies in my power. You must know, then, that we can walk at the bottom of the sea with as much ease as you can upon the dry land; and can breathe in the water as well as you do in the air; so that instead of suffocating us, as it does you, it is absolutely necessary for the preservation of our lives. What is yet more remarkable is, that it never wets our clothes: so that when we have a mind to visit your upper world, we have no occasion of drying them. Our vulgar language is the same in which the writing upon the seal of the great prophet [87] Solomon, the son of David, was engraven.

I must not forget to tell you, that the water does not in the least hinder us from seeing in the sea; for we can open and shut our eyes when we please, without any manner of inconveniency; and as we have generally a very quick, piercing sight, so we can discern any object as clearly in the deepest part of the sea, as upon land. We have also a succession there of day and night; the moon affords us her light, and even the planets and the stars appear very visible to us. I have already spoken of their kingdoms; but as the sea is a great deal larger than the earth, so there are a greater number of them, and of vaster extent. They are divided into provinces, and in every province there are several great cities, well peopled; and, in short, there are an infinite number of nations, differing in manners and customs, as well as upon the earth.

The palaces of the kings and princes are very sumptuous and magnificent. There are some of them of marble of various colours; others of rock-crystal, mother-of-pearl, coral, and of other materials more valuable; gold, silver, and all sorts of precious stones, are more plentiful there than with you. I say nothing of the pearls, since the largest that ever was seen upon the earth would not be valuable amongst us; and none but the very lowest rank of citizens would wear them.

As we have a marvellous and almost incredible agility of transporting ourselves whither we please in the twinkling of an eye, so we have no occasion for any coaches or horses: not but that every king has his stables, and his breed of sea-horses; but they seldom make use of them, but upon public feasts and rejoicing [88] days. After they have been well managed, they set riders upon their backs, who show their skill and dexterity in the art of riding: others are put to chariots of mother-of-pearl, adorned with an infinite number of shells of all sorts, of the liveliest colours in the world. These chariots are open; and in the middle there is a throne on which the king sits, and exposes himself to the public view of his subjects. The horses are trained up to draw by themselves, so that there is no occasion for a coachman to guide them. I pass over a thousand other particulars relating to these sea-countries, full of wonder and curiosity, which would be very entertaining to your majesty; but I believe, sir, you will be pleased I should defer it, to speak of something of much greater consequence; which is, that the method of delivering, and the way of managing the women of the sea in their lying-in, is quite different from those of the women of the earth; and I am afraid to trust myself in the hands of the midwives of this country. Therefore, sir, since my safe delivery is a thing which equally concerns us both, with your majesty's permission, I think it proper to send for my mother and my cousins to assist at my labour; at the same time to desire my brother's company, to whom I have a great desire to be reconciled. They will be very glad to see me again, after I have related my story to them, and when they understand that I am wife to the mighty king of Persia. I beseech your majesty to give me leave to send for them: I am sure they will be proud to pay their respects to you; and I dare say you will be extremely pleased to see them.

Madam, said the king of Persia, you are mistress, and so do whatever you please; I will endeavour to receive

them with all the honours they deserve. But I would fain know how you would acquaint them with what you desire, and when they will arrive; that I may make some preparation for their reception, and go myself in person to meet them. [89]

Sir, replied the queen Gulnare, there is no need of any of these ceremonies; they will be here in a moment: and if your majesty will be pleased but to step into the closet and look through the lattice, you shall see the manner of their arrival.

As soon as the king of Persia was gone into the closet, the queen Gulnare ordered one of her women to bring her a perfuming-pan, with a little fire in it. After that, she bade her retire, and shut the door. When she was alone, she took a little piece of aloes out of a box, and put it into the perfuming-pan. As soon as she saw the smoke arise, she repeated some mystical words, utterly unknown to the king of Persia, who observed with great attention what she was doing. She had no sooner ended her charm, than the sea began to be disturbed. The closet that the king was in was so contrived, that looking through the lattice, on the same side with the windows that faced the sea, he could plainly perceive it.

In short, the sea opened at some distance; presently there appeared a tall handsome young man, with whiskers of a sea-green colour; a little behind him, a lady well in years, but of a stately majestic air, attended by five young ladies, nothing inferior in beauty to queen Gulnare.

The queen Gulnare immediately came to one of the windows, and saw the king her brother, the queen her mother, and the rest of her relations, who at the same time perceived her also. The company came forward, not walking, but carried, as it were, upon the surface of the waves. When they came to the brink of the sea, they nimbly, one after another, leaped in at the window, from whence the queen Gulnare was retired, to make room for them. The king Saleh, the queen her mother, and the rest of her relations, embraced her tenderly, with tears in their eyes, upon their first entrance. [90]

After the queen Gulnare had received them with all the honour imaginable, and placed them upon a sofa, the queen her mother addressed herself to her after a very tender manner. Daughter, said she, I am overjoyed to see you again, after so long an absence; and I am confident that your brother and your relations are no less so than I. Your leaving us, without acquainting any body with it, put us into an inexpressible concern; and it is impossible to tell you how many tears we have shed upon that account. We know of no other reason that could induce you to take such a surprising resolution, but the discourse that passed between your brother and you, of which he afterwards informed me. The advice he gave you seemed very advantageous to him at that time, for settling you handsomely in the world; and was then very suitable to the posture of our affairs. However, if you had not approved of his proposals, you ought not to have been so much alarmed; and give me leave to tell you, you took the thing quite otherwise than you ought to have done. But no more of this discourse, which serves only to renew the occasion of our sorrows and complaints, that we and you ought to bury for ever in oblivion. Give us now a relation of all that has happened to you since you left us, and also an account of the present circumstances you are in; but especially let us know if you are pleased and contented.

The queen Gulnare immediately threw herself at her mother's feet, and after rising up and kissing her hand, said, Madam, I own I have been guilty of a very great crime, and I shall be indebted to your goodness for the pardon which I hope you will be pleased to grant me. What I am going to say, in obedience to your commands, will soon convince you, that it is very often in vain for us to have an aversion for some certain things: I have experienced it myself; and the only thing I had an abhorrence to, either justly, or by the malice of my stars, has happened to me here. She began to relate the whole story of what had befallen her since her quitting the sea, in a violent passion, for the earth. As soon as she had made an end, and had acquainted them with her having been sold to the king of Persia, in whose palace she was at present; Sister, cried the king her brother, you have been mightily wronged in having so many affronts offered you; but you can blame nobody but yourself: you have it in your power now to free yourself; and I cannot but admire your patience, that you could endure so long a slavery. Rise, and return with us into my kingdom, that I have reconquered, and taken from the proud usurper that was once master of it. [91]

The king of Persia, who heard these killing words from the closet where he stood, was in the utmost confusion

imaginable. Ah! said he to himself, I am ruined and undone; and if my queen, my angel, leaves me, I shall surely die, for it is impossible for me to live without her: and will they be so barbarous as to deprive me of her? But the queen Gulnare soon put him out of his fears, and eased the sorrow of his heart.

Brother, said she, and smiled, what I have just now heard, gives me a greater proof than ever I had of the sincerity of your friendship for me; but as heretofore I could not brook your proposing a match between me and a prince of the earth, so now I can scarce forbear being angry with you, for advising me to break the engagement I have made with the most puissant and most renowned monarch in the world. I do not speak here of an engagement between a slave and her master; if that were all, it would be easy to return the ten thousand pieces of gold that I cost him; but I speak now of a contract between a woman and her husband, who has never given her the least reason to complain or be discontented: besides, he is a king, wise, temperate, religious, and just, and has given me the most essential demonstrations of his love that possibly he could. What can be a greater instance of the violence of his passion, than sending away all his women (of which he had a great number) immediately upon my arrival, and confining himself only to me? I am now his wife, and he has lately declared me queen of Persia; and I am to sit with him in the council: besides, I am breeding; and if Heaven shall be pleased to favour me with a son, that shall be another motive to engage my affections to him the more. So, brother, continued the queen Gulnare, instead of following your advice, you see I have all the reason in the world, not only to love the king of Persia as passionately as I do, but also to live and die with him, more out of gratitude than duty. I hope, then, neither my mother, nor you, nor any of my cousins, will disapprove of the resolution and alliance I have made, which will be an equal honour to the kings of both the sea and earth. I ask a thousand pardons for giving you the trouble of coming hither from the bottom of the deep to partake of it; and I return you thanks for the pleasure of seeing you after so long a separation. [92]

Sister, replied king Saleh, the proposition I made you of going back with us into my kingdom, upon the recital of your adventures, (which I could not hear without concern,) was to let you see what a particular love and honour I had for you, and that nothing in the world was so dear to me as your welfare and happiness. Upon the same account, then, for my own part, I cannot condemn a resolution so reasonable, and so worthy of yourself, after what you have told me of the king of Persia your husband, and the many obligations you have to him; and I am persuaded that the queen our mother will be of the same opinion. [93]

The queen confirmed what her son had just spoken, and addressing herself immediately to her daughter, said, My dear, I am very glad to hear you are pleased; and I have nothing else to add to what your brother has already said to you. I should have been the first that would have condemned you, if you had not expressed all the gratitude you were capable of for a monarch that loves you so passionately, and has done such mighty things to oblige you.

As the king of Persia, who was still in the closet, had been extremely concerned for fear of losing his beloved queen, so now he was transported with joy at her resolution never to forsake him; and having no room to doubt of her love, after so open a declaration, he began to love her more than ever, and was resolved within himself to give her all the outward proofs of it, after the most sensible manner he possibly could.

While the king was entertaining himself with a pleasure that cannot easily be imagined, the queen Gulnare clapped her hands aloud, and presently in came some of her slaves, whom she had ordered to bring in a collation. As soon as it was served up, she invited the queen her mother, the king her brother, and her cousins, to sit down and take part of it. They began to consider, that, without ever asking leave, they were got into the palace of a mighty king, who had never seen or heard of them, and were all of the same opinion, that it would be a great piece of rudeness and incivility to eat at his table without him. This reflection raised a blush in their faces, and their eyes glowing with the concern they were in, they breathed nothing but flames at their mouths and nostrils.

This unexpected sight put the king of Persia, who was perfectly ignorant of the cause of it, into a most dreadful consternation. The queen Gulnare fancying that his majesty might be a little surprised at it, and finding her relations desirous of the honour of seeing him, rose from her seat, and told them she would be back in a moment. She went directly to the closet, and by her presence recovered the king of Persia from his [94]

surprise: Sir, said she, I doubt not but that your majesty is well pleased with the acknowledgment I have lately made of the many favours that I am still indebted to your goodness for. It was wholly in my power to have complied with my relations, who would fain have persuaded me to have forsaken you, and gone back with them into their dominions; but alas! I am not capable of being guilty of such ingratitude as I should have condemned in another. Ah! my queen, cried the king of Persia, speak no more of your obligations to me, for indeed you have none; it is I that am your debtor so much, that I am afraid I shall never be able to repay, or return you thanks equal to the favour you have done me; for I never thought it possible you could have loved me so tenderly as you do, and as you have made it appear to me, after the most signal manner in the world. Ah! sir, replied the queen Gulnare, could I do less than I have done? I rather fear I have not done enough, considering all the honours and favours that your majesty has heaped upon me; and it is impossible for me to remain insensible of your passion, after so many convincing proofs as you have given me. But let us drop this, and give me leave to assure you of the sincere friendship that the queen my mother, and the king my brother, are pleased to honour you with; they earnestly desire to see you, and tell you themselves. I intended to have discoursed with them a little before I introduced them to your majesty, and accordingly I have ordered a banquet for them; but they are very impatient to pay their respects to you, and therefore I desire your majesty would be pleased to walk in, and honour them with your presence. [95]

Madam, said the king of Persia, I should be very glad to salute persons that have the honour to be so nearly related to you; but I am afraid of the flames that they breathe at their mouths and nostrils. Sir, replied the queen, laughing, you need not in the least be afraid of those flames, which are nothing but a sign of their unwillingness to eat in your palace without your honouring them with your presence, and eating with them.

The king of Persia taking heart at these words, went into his chamber with his queen Gulnare. She presented him to the queen her mother, to the king her brother, and to her other relations, who instantly threw themselves at his feet, with their faces to the ground. The king of Persia ran to them, and lifting them up, embraced them one after another after a very tender manner. After they were all seated, king Saleh began his speech: Sir, said he to the king of Persia, we are at a loss for words to express our joy, to think that the queen my sister, after all her hardships and affronts, should have the happiness of falling under the protection of so powerful a monarch as your majesty. We can assure you, sir, she is not unworthy of the high honour that you have been pleased to raise her to; and we have always had so much love and tenderness for her, that we could never think of parting with her, even to the most puissant princes of the sea, who have often demanded her in marriage before she came of age: but Heaven has reserved her for you, sir; and we have no better way of returning thanks for the favour it has done her, than beseeching it to grant your majesty a long and happy life with her, and to crown your days with content and satisfaction.

Certainly, replied the king of Persia, Heaven reserved her purely for me, as you were pleased to observe; and I love her with so tender and violent a passion, that it is plain I never loved any woman till I saw her. Oh! how I am blessed and transported with her charms! and I cannot sufficiently thank either the queen her mother, or you, prince, or your whole family, for the matchless generosity with which you have consented to receive me into so glorious an alliance as yours. At the end of these words, he invited them to take part of the collation, and he and his queen sat down at his table with them. After the collation was over, the king of Persia entertained them with discourse till it was very late; and when they thought it convenient to retire, he waited upon them himself to the several apartments he had ordered to be prepared for them. [96]

The king of Persia treated his illustrious guests for a great many days together; during which time, he omitted nothing that might show his court in its greatest splendour and magnificence, and insensibly prevailed with them to stay there till the queen was brought to bed. When the time of her lying-in drew near, he gave particular orders to get every thing in readiness that was necessary upon such an occasion. At last there was a son born, to the great joy of the queen his mother, who, as soon as he was dressed in swaddling-clothes, which were very rich and costly, went and presented him to the king.

The king of Persia received the present with a joy easier to be imagined than expressed. The young prince being of a beautiful countenance, and all over charms, he thought no name so proper for him as that of Beder, which, in the Arabian language, signifies the Full Moon. By way of thanks to Heaven, he was very liberal in his alms to the poor, and caused the prison-doors to be set open, and gave all the prisoners of both sexes [97]

their liberty. He distributed vast sums among the priests and the holy men of his religion. He also gave large donatives to his courtiers, besides a great deal that was thrown amongst the people; and, by a proclamation, ordered several rejoicing days to be kept publicly through the whole city.

One day after the queen's up-sitting, as the king of Persia, queen Gulnare herself, the queen her mother, king Saleh her brother, and the princesses their relations, were discoursing together in her majesty's bed-chamber, the nurse chanced to come in with the young prince Beder in her arms. King Saleh no sooner saw him, than he ran to embrace him, and taking him in his arms, fell a kissing and caressing him after a mighty rate. He took several turns with him about the room, dancing and dandling him about, when all of a sudden, through a transport of joy, the window being open, he leaped out, and plunged with him into the sea.

The king of Persia, who expected no such sight, set up a hideous cry, verily believing he should either see the dear prince his son no more, or that he should see him drowned; nay, he was like to give up the ghost amidst his so great grief and affliction. Sir, quoth queen Gulnare, with a quiet and undisturbed countenance, (the better to comfort him,) let your majesty fear nothing; the young prince is my son as well as yours, and I do not love him less than you do. You see I am not alarmed at the loss of him; neither in truth ought I to be so. In short, he runs no risk, and you will soon see the king his uncle appear with him again, who will return him to you safe and sound. Although he be born of your blood as well as mine, he will not fail to have the same advantage his uncle and I have, of living equally in the sea and upon the land. The queen his mother, and the princesses his relations, confirmed the same thing: yet all was no great consolation to the king; he could not possibly [98] recover from his fright till he saw prince Beder appear again as before.

The sea at length became troubled, when immediately king Saleh arose, with the young prince in his arms, and dancing and dandling him about, re-entered at the same window he went out at. The king of Persia, overjoyed to see prince Beder again, became as calm as before he lost sight of him. Then king Saleh said, Sir, was not your majesty in a great fright, when you first saw me plunge into the sea with the prince my nephew? Alas! prince, answered the king of Persia, I cannot express my concern: I thought him lost from that very moment, and you now restore life to me by bringing him again. I thought as much, replied king Saleh, though you had not the least reason to apprehend any danger; for before I plunged into the sea with him, I pronounced certain mysterious words over him, which were engraven on the seal of the great Solomon the Son of David. We practise the like in relation to all those children that are born in the regions at the bottom of the sea, by virtue whereof they receive the same privileges that we have over those people who inhabit the earth. Now, from what your majesty has observed, you may easily see what advantage your son prince Beder has acquired on the part of his mother queen Gulnare my sister; for as long as he lives, and as often as he pleases, it shall be free for him to plunge into the sea, and traverse the vast empires it contains at its bottom.

Having so spoken, king Saleh, who had restored prince Beder to his nurse's arms, opened a box he had fetched from his palace in that little time he had disappeared, which was filled with three hundred diamonds, as large as pigeons' eggs; a like number of rubies, of extraordinary size; as many emerald wands, of half a foot [99] long; and with thirty strings of necklaces of pearl, consisting each of ten pieces. Sir, said he to the king of Persia, presenting him with this box, when I was first summoned by the queen my sister, I knew not what part of the earth she was in, or that she had the honour to be married to so great a monarch as I now find; wherefore I came empty-handed: but now I understand how much we have been both obliged to your majesty, I beg you therefore to accept of this small token of gratitude, in acknowledgment of the many particular favours you have been pleased to do us, and whereof I am not less sensible than she.

It cannot be imagined how greatly the king of Persia was surprised at the sight of so much riches enclosed in so little compass. What! prince, cried he, do you call so inestimable a present a small token of your gratitude, when you never have been indebted to me? I declare you have never been in the least obliged to me, neither you nor the queen your mother; I esteem myself but too happy in the consent you have been pleased to give to the alliance I have contracted with you. Madam, continued he, turning to Gulnare, the king your brother has put me into the greatest confusion in the world; and I would beg of him to retain his present, were it not that I fear to disoblige him. Do you therefore endeavour to obtain his leave, that I may be dispensed with on this occasion.

Sir, replied king Saleh, I am not at all surprised that your majesty thinks this present so extraordinary: I know you are not accustomed upon earth to see such and so many fine stones; but if you knew, as I do, the mines from whence these jewels were taken, and that it is in my power to heap up a treasure, much larger than those, of all the things of the earth, you would, it may be, wonder I should have the boldness to make you a present of so small a value. I beseech you therefore not to regard it in that respect, but on account of the sincere [100] friendship I am obliged to offer to you, which I hope you will not give me the mortification to refuse. These engaging expressions obliged the king of Persia to accept the present, for which he returned many thanks, both to king Saleh and the queen his mother.

A few days after, king Saleh gave the king of Persia to understand that the queen his mother, the princesses his relations, and himself could have no greater pleasure than to spend their whole lives at his court; but that having been absent from their own kingdom for some time, where their presence was absolutely necessary, they begged of him not to take it ill, if they took leave of him and queen Gulnare. The king of Persia assured them he was very sorry that it was not in his power to come and visit them in their dominions; but added, As I am verily persuaded you will not forget queen Gulnare, but come and see her now and then, I hope I shall have the honour to kiss your hands again many times before I die.

Many tears were shed on both sides upon their separation. King Saleh departed first; but the queen his mother, and the princesses his relations, were fain to force themselves, in a manner, from the embraces of queen Gulnare, who could not prevail with herself to let them go. This royal company were no sooner out of sight, than the king of Persia said to queen Gulnare, Madam, I should have looked upon that person as one who would have imposed on my credulity in the grossest manner, that had pretended to palm those wonders upon me for true, which I myself have been an eye-witness of from the time I have been honoured with your illustrious family at my court: but I cannot escape conviction of this kind; and shall remember it as long as I live, and be always ready to bless Heaven for directing you to me, rather than to any other prince.

Young prince Beder was brought up and educated in the palace, under the care of the king and queen of [101] Persia, who both saw him grow and increase in beauty, to their great satisfaction. He gave them yet greater pleasure as he advanced in years, by his continued sprightliness, by his agreeable ways in whatever he did, and by the justness and vivacity of his wit in whatever he said; and they were the more sensible of this satisfaction, by reason king Saleh his uncle, the queen his grandmother, and the princesses his relations, came from time to time to take part of it.

He was easily taught to read and write, and was instructed with the same facility in all the sciences that became a prince of his rank.

When he arrived at fifteen, he acquitted himself of all his exercises with infinitely better address, and good grace, than any of his masters. He was withal very wise and prudent. The king, who had almost from his cradle discovered in him virtues so necessary for a monarch, and who moreover began to perceive the infirmities of old age coming upon himself, would not stay till death gave him the possession of his throne, but purposed to resign it to him immediately. He had no great difficulty to make his council consent to it; and the people heard this resolution with so much the more joy, as they conceived prince Beder worthy to govern them. In a word, as the king had not for a long time appeared in public, they had all the opportunity in the world to observe he had not that disdainful, proud, and crabbed air, which most princes, who look upon all below them with scorn and contempt, have. They saw, on the contrary, he treated all mankind with that goodness which invited them to approach him, that he heard favourably all who had any thing to say to him; that he answered every body with a goodness that was peculiar to him; and that he refused nobody any thing that had the least [102] appearance of reasonableness.

The day for the ceremony was appointed, when in the midst of the whole assembly, which was then more numerous than ordinary, the king of Persia, then sitting on his throne, came down from it, took the crown off his head, put it on that of prince Beder; and having seated him in his place, kissed his hand, as a token that he resigned his authority to him: after which, he ranged himself among the crowd of viziers and emirs.

Hereupon the viziers, emirs, and other principal officers, came immediately and threw themselves at the new

king's feet, taking each the oath of fidelity, according to their degrees. Then the grand vizier made a report of divers important matters; on which the young king gave judgment with that admirable prudence and sagacity that surprised all the council. He next turned out divers governors convicted of mal-administration, and put others in their room; which he did with that wonderful and just discernment as excited the acclamations of every body, which were so much the more honourable, as flattery had no share in them. He at length left the council, accompanied by the late king his father, and went to wait on his mother queen Gulnare, at her apartment. The queen no sooner saw him coming with the crown upon his head, than she ran to embrace him with a great deal of tenderness, wishing him a long and prosperous reign.

The first year of his reign, king Beder acquitted himself of all his royal functions with great assiduity. Above all, he took care to instruct himself in affairs of state, and all that might any way contribute towards the happiness of his people. Next year, having left the administration to his council, under the direction of [103] the old king his father, he went out of his capital city, under pretence of diverting himself with hunting; but his real intention was to visit all the provinces of his kingdom, that he might reform all abuses there, establish good order and discipline every where, and deprive all ill-minded princes, his neighbours, of any opportunities of attempting any thing against the security and tranquillity of his subjects, by appearing and showing himself seasonably on his frontiers.

No less than a whole year sufficed this young king to put in practice a purpose so worthy of him. Soon after his return, the old king his father fell so dangerously ill, that he knew at first he should never recover. He waited for his last moment with great tranquillity, and his only care was to recommend to the ministers and other lords of his son's court to persist in the fidelity they had sworn to him; insomuch that there was not one but willingly renewed his oath as freely as at first. He died at length, to the great grief of king Beder and queen Gulnare, who caused his corpse to be carried to a stately mausoleum, worthy of his rank and dignity.

When the funeral obsequies were ended, king Beder found no difficulty to comply with that ancient custom in Persia to mourn for the dead a whole month, and not to be seen by any body during all that time. He had mourned the death of his father his whole life, had he hearkened to his excessive affliction, and had it been permitted to so great a prince as he was to amuse himself after that manner. During this interval, the queen, mother to queen Gulnare, and king Saleh, together with the princesses their relations, arrived at the Persian court, and shared in great part of their affliction, before they proposed any consolation.

Though the month was expired, the king could not prevail on himself to give admittance to the grand vizier and the other lords of his court, who all besought him to lay aside his mourning habit, to show himself to his subjects, and take upon him the administration of affairs as before. [104]

He showed so great unwillingness to their request, that the grand vizier took upon him to speak in the following manner: Sir, it would be needless to represent to your majesty that it belongs only to women to persist in perpetual mourning. We doubt not but you are sufficiently convinced of that, and that it is not your intention to follow their example. Neither our tears nor yours are capable of restoring life to the good king your father, though we should lament all our days. He has undergone the common fate of all men, which nobody can resist. Yet we cannot say absolutely that he is dead, since we see him reviving in the person of your sacred majesty. He did not himself doubt, when he was dying, but he should revive in you, and to your majesty it belongs to show that he was not deceived.

King Beder could no longer oppose such pressing instances. He laid aside his mourning habit that very moment; and after he had resumed the royal ornaments, he began to provide for the necessities of his subjects with the same assiduity as before his father's death. He acquitted himself with universal approbation; and, as he was exact in maintaining his predecessor's ordinances, the people perceived no alteration in their sovereign.

King Saleh, who was returned to his dominions in the sea, with the queen his mother and the princesses, no sooner saw that king Beder had resumed the government, than he came alone to visit him; and king Beder and queen Gulnare were overjoyed to see him. One day, as they rose from table, they fell to discoursing of several matters. King Saleh fell insensibly on the praises of the king his nephew, and the queen his sister, how [105]

glad he was to see him govern so prudently, which had acquired him so great reputation, not only among his neighbours, but more remote princes. King Beder, who could not bear to hear himself so well spoken of, and not being willing to interrupt the king his uncle, through good manners turned on one side, and seemed to be asleep, leaning his head against a cushion that was behind him.

From these commendations, which regarded only the wonderful conduct and surprising wit of king Beder, king Saleh came to speak of the perfections of his body, which he extolled after a mighty rate, as having nothing equal to them, either upon the earth, or the kingdoms under the waters, which he was well acquainted with.

Sister, said he in an ecstasy, so beautiful as he is, and of such excellent endowments, I wonder you have not thought of marrying him ere this: if I mistake not, he is at present in his twentieth year, and at that age no prince ought to be suffered to be without a wife. I will think of a match for him myself, since you will not, and marry him to some princess of our lower world, that may be worthy of him.

Brother, replied queen Gulnare, you call to my remembrance a thing, I must own, I have never thought of to this very moment. As he never discovered any inclination for marriage, I never thought of mentioning it to him; and I am glad you have now spoken of it to me. I like your proposing one of your princesses; and I desire you to name one who may be beautiful and well accomplished, that the king my son may be obliged to love her.

I know one that will be proper, replied king Saleh, softly; but before I will tell you who she is, let us [106] see if the king my nephew sleeps or not, and I will tell you afterwards why it is necessary we should take that precaution. Queen Gulnare then looked upon her son, and thought she had no reason to doubt but he was profoundly asleep, (king Beder nevertheless, very far from sleeping, redoubled his attention, as being unwilling to lose any thing the king his uncle said upon that subject.) There is no necessity for your speaking so low, said the queen to the king her brother; you may speak out with all freedom, without fear of being heard.

It is by no means proper, replied king Saleh, that the king my nephew should as yet have any knowledge of what I am going to say. Love, you know, sometimes enters the ear; and it is not necessary he should love this lady I am about to name, after that sort: in short, I see many difficulties to surmount in this case, not on the lady's part, as I hope, but on that of her father. I need only mention to you the princess Giahaure ^[2], and the king of Samarcand.

How, brother, replied queen Gulnare, is not the princess Giahaure yet married? I remember to have seen her a little before I left your palace; she was then about eighteen months old, and surprisingly beautiful, and must needs be the wonder of the world, if her charms have increased equal with her years. The few years she is older than the king my son, ought not to hinder our doing our utmost to bring the match about. Let me know but the difficulties that are to be surmounted, and I will warrant we will do well enough.

Sister, replied king Saleh, the greatest difficulty is, that the king of Samarcand is insupportably vain, looking upon all others as his inferiors: it is not likely we shall easily get him to enter into this alliance. For my [107] part, I will go to him in person, and demand the princess his daughter of him; and in case he refuses her, will address ourselves elsewhere, where we shall be like to be more favourably heard. For this reason, as you may perceive, added he, it is not proper for the king my nephew to know any thing of our design, lest he should fall in love with the princess Giahaure, and we afterwards not be able to obtain her for him. They discoursed a little longer upon this point, and before they parted, agreed that king Saleh should forthwith return to his own dominions, and demand the princess Giahaure of the king of Samarcand, her father, for the king of Persia, his nephew.

This done, queen Gulnare and king Saleh, who verily believed king Beder asleep, agreed to wake him; and he dissembled the matter so well, that he seemed to wake from a profound sleep. He had nevertheless heard every word they said; and the character they gave of the princess Giahaure had inflamed his heart with an unknown passion. He had conceived so bright an idea of her beauty, that he could not sleep a wink all night, but remained under continual inquietudes.

Next day king Saleh would needs take leave of queen Gulnare and the king his nephew. The young king, who

knew the king his uncle would not have departed so soon, but to go and promote his happiness, blushed when he heard him mention his departure. His passion was become so violent, it would not suffer him to wait so long for the sight of his mistress as would suffice to accomplish the marriage. He more than once resolved to desire his uncle to bring her away with him; but as he did not care to let the queen his mother understand he knew any thing of what had passed, he desired him only to stay with him a day or two, that they might hunt together, intending to make use of that occasion to discover his mind to him. [108]

The day for hunting was set, and king Beder had many opportunities to declare his mind to his uncle; but he had not the courage so much as once to open his mouth to acquaint him with what he designed.

In the midst of the chase, when not only king Saleh but all his attendants had left him, he alighted near a spring; and, having tied his horse to a tree that afforded a very plentiful shade, as did several others along the banks of the rivulet, he laid himself down on the grass, and gave a free course to his tears, which issued forth in great abundance, accompanied with many sobs and sighs. He remained in this condition, overwhelmed with thought, and not speaking so much as one word. King Saleh, in the mean time, missing the king his nephew, and not meeting with any one who could tell tidings of him, began to be much concerned to know what was become of him. He therefore left his company to go in search of him, and at length perceived him at a distance. He had observed the day before, and even more evidently that day, that he was not so merry as he used to be, that he was more pensive than ordinary, and that if he was asked a question, he either answered not at all, or nothing to the purpose: but he never so much as in the least suspected the cause of all this alteration, till he saw him lying in that disconsolate posture; when he immediately guessed he had not only heard what passed between him and the queen Gulnare, but was become passionately in love. He hereupon alighted, at some distance from him, and having tied his horse to a tree, took a compass, and came upon him so softly, that he heard him pronounce the following words:

Adorable princess of the kingdom of Samarcand, cried he out, I have no doubt had but an imperfect sketch of your incomparable beauty; yet I hold you to be preferable to all the princesses in the world in charms, and to excel them as much as the sun does the moon and stars. I would this moment go and offer you my heart, if I but knew where to find you: it belongs to you, dear princess, and nobody shall be the possessor of it but you. [109]

King Saleh would hear no more: he advanced immediately, and discovered himself to king Beder. From what I have understood, nephew, said he, you heard that which the queen your mother and I discoursed the other day of the princess Giahaure. It was not our intention you should have known any thing, and we verily thought you were asleep. My dear uncle, replied king Beder, I heard every word you said, and have sufficiently experienced the effect you foretold; which it was not in your power to prevent. I detained you on purpose to acquaint you with my love before your departure; but the confusion I had to let you know my weakness, if it be any to love so worthy a princess as this seems to be, altogether sealed my mouth. I beseech you then, by the friendship you profess for a prince that has the honour to be so nearly allied to you, that you would pity me, and not delay to procure me the consent of the king of Samarcand, that I may marry his daughter, the adorable Giahaure, with all speed, unless you have a mind to see me die with love before I have the sight of her.

These words of the king of Persia troubled king Saleh very much: he gave him to understand how difficult it was to give him the satisfaction he desired, and that he could not well do it without carrying him along with him; which might be of dangerous consequences, since his presence was so absolutely necessary in his kingdom, that the least absence might occasion his subjects to revolt. He conjured him, therefore, to moderate his passion till such time as he had put things into a better posture; assuring him he would use his utmost diligence to content him, and, when he had brought matters to bear, he would come to acquaint him. But these reasons were not sufficient to satisfy the king of Persia. Cruel uncle, said he, I find you do not love me so much as you pretended, and that you had rather see me die than grant the first request that ever I made you. [110]

I am ready to convince your majesty, replied king Saleh, that I would do any thing to serve you in reason; but as for carrying you along with me, I cannot do that till I have spoken to the queen your mother. What would she say if I should do this? If she consents, I am ready to do all you would have me. You cannot be ignorant, replied the king of Persia, that the queen my mother would never willingly part with me; and therefore this

excuse of yours does but yet farther convince me of the hardness of your heart. If you do really love me, as you would have me to believe you do, you must return to your kingdom immediately, and carry me along with you.

King Saleh, finding himself in a manner obliged to yield to his nephew's importunity, drew a ring off his finger, which was engraved with the same mysterious names of God that were upon Solomon's seal, that had wrought so many wonders by their virtue. Here, take this ring, said he, put it upon your finger, and fear neither the waters of the sea, nor their depth. The king of Persia took the ring, and when he had put it on his finger, king Saleh said unto him, Follow me; when, at the same time, they both mounted leisurely up into the air, and made towards the sea, which was not far off, whereinto they jointly plunged. [111]

The sea-king was not long in going to his palace with the king of Persia, whom he immediately carried to the queen's apartment, and presented him to her. The king of Persia kissed the queen his grandmother's hands, and she embraced him with great demonstrations of joy. I do not ask you how you do, said she to him, I see you are well enough, and I am rejoiced at it; but I desire to know how my daughter and your mother queen Gulnare does. The king of Persia took great care not to let her know he came without her consent; and therefore told her the queen his mother was in perfect health, and had enjoined him to pay her duty to her. Then the queen presented him to the princesses; and while he was in conversation with them, she left him, and went with king Saleh into a closet. He there told her how the king of Persia was fallen in love with the princess Giahaure, upon the bare relation of her beauty; and, contrary to his intention, that he had brought him along with him, without being able to hinder it, and that he was going to concert measures to procure the princess for him in marriage.

Although king Saleh was, to do him justice, perfectly innocent of the king of Persia's passion, yet the queen could hardly forgive his indiscretion, in mentioning the princess Giahaure before him. Your imprudence is beyond parallel, said she to him: can you think that the king of Samarcand, whose character is so well known, will have greater consideration for you than the many other kings he has refused his daughter to with scorn and contempt? Would you have him send you away with the same confusion he has done them? [112]

Madam, replied king Saleh, I have told you it was contrary to my intention that the king my nephew heard what I related of the beauty of the princess Giahaure to the queen my sister. The fault, if it be one, is already committed; and we must consider what a violent passion he has for this princess, and that he will die with grief and affliction if we do not speedily obtain her for him, with whatever trouble we are to do it. For my part, I shall omit nothing that may contribute to it, since I was, though innocently, the cause of the malady: I will therefore do all that I can to remedy it. I hope, madam, you will approve of my resolution, to go and wait upon the king of Samarcand, with a rich present of precious stones, and demand the princess his daughter of him for the king of Persia, your grandson and my nephew. I have some reason to believe he will not refuse me, nor neglect to ally himself with one of the greatest potentates of the earth.

It were to have been wished, replied the queen, that we had not been under a necessity of making this demand, since the success of our attempt is not so certain as we could desire; but since my grandson's quiet and content totally depend upon it, I freely give my consent to it. But, above all, I charge you, since you sufficiently know the humour of the king of Samarcand, that you take care to show him due respect, and not in any wise offend him by too presuming a behaviour.

The queen prepared the present herself, composing it of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and strings of pearl; all which she put into a box, very neat and very rich. Next morning, king Saleh took his leave of her majesty and the king of Persia, and departed with a chosen but small troop of officers and other attendants. He soon arrived at the capital and palace of the king of Samarcand, who did not scruple to afford him audience immediately upon his arrival. He rose from his throne as soon as he perceived king Saleh; who, being willing to forget his character for some moments, knowing whom he had to deal with, prostrated himself at his feet, wishing him an accomplishment of whatever he desired. The king of Samarcand immediately stooped to take him up; and, after he had placed him by him on his left-hand, he told him he was welcome, and asked him if there was any thing he could do to serve him. [113]

Sir, answered king Saleh, though I should have no other motive than that of rendering my respects to the most

potent and most prudent prince in the world, yet would I endeavour to convince your majesty, though poorly, how much I honour and adore you. Were it possible you could penetrate into my inmost soul, you would soon be convinced of the great veneration I have had for you, and the ardent desire I entertain to pay you my most humble acknowledgments. Having spoken these words, he took the box of jewels from one of his servants, and having opened it, presented it to the king, imploring him to accept of it for his sake.

Prince, replied the king of Samarcand, I hope you do not make me this present without requiring a proportional benefit from me. If there be any thing within the compass of my capacity, you may freely command it, and will do me signal honour in accepting it. Speak, and tell me frankly wherein I can serve you.

I must own ingenuously, replied king Saleh, I have a boon to ask of your majesty; but I shall take care to ask nothing but what is within your power to grant. The thing depends so absolutely on yourself, that it would be to no purpose to require it of any other. I ask it then with all possible earnestness, and I beg of you not to refuse it me. If it be so, replied the king of Samarcand, you have nothing to do but to acquaint me what it is, and you shall see after what manner I can oblige people of desert. [114]

Sir, then said king Saleh, after the confidence your majesty has been pleased to think I have put in your goodwill, I will not dissemble any longer, that I came to beg of you to honour our house with your alliance by marriage, and by that means to fortify the good understanding that has always hitherto been between our two crowns.

At these words, the king of Samarcand began to laugh heartily, falling back in his throne against a cushion that supported him; and soon after said, with an injurious and scornful air, to king Saleh; King Saleh, I have always hitherto thought you were a prince of great sense and wisdom; but now I find you just the contrary. Tell me, I beseech you, where was your wit or discretion, when you formed to yourself so great a chimera as you have just now proposed to me? Could you conceive a thought only of aspiring in marriage to so great a princess as my daughter? You ought to have considered better the great distance between us, and not to run the risk of losing in a moment the esteem I always had for your person.

King Saleh was extremely nettled at this affronting answer, and had much ado to restrain his just resentment: however he replied, with greater moderation than could be expected, God reward your majesty according as you deserve. I beg the honour to inform you, I do not demand the princess in marriage for myself: had I done so, your majesty, or the princess, ought to have been so far from being offended, that you might rather have taken it for an honour done to both. Your majesty knows well I am a king of the sea as well as yourself; that the kings my ancestors have no reason to yield in antiquity to any other royal families; and that the kingdom I inherit from them is no less potent and flourishing than it has ever been. If your majesty had not interrupted me, you had soon understood, that the favour I asked of you was not for myself, but for the young king of Persia, my nephew, whose power and grandeur, no less than his personal good qualities, cannot be unknown to you. Every body acknowledges the princess Giahaure to be one of the finest ladies under the heavens; but it is at the same time acknowledged by all, that the young king of Persia, my nephew, is as accomplished as any prince, either upon land or under the water. Thus the favour that is asked being likely to redound both to the honour of your majesty and the princess your daughter, you ought not to delay your consent to an alliance so equal, and which no doubt will be approved by the generality of people. The princess is worthy of the king of Persia, and the king of Persia is no less worthy of her. No king or prince in the world can deny me this. [115]

The king of Samarcand had not let king Saleh go on so long after this rate, had not the rage he put him in deprived him of all power of speech. He was moreover some time longer before he could find his tongue, so much was he transported with passion. At length, however, he broke out into outrageous and injurious expressions, unworthy of a king. Dog, says he aloud, dare you talk to me after this manner, and so much as once to mention my daughter's name in my presence? Can you think the son of your sister Gulnare worthy to come in competition with my daughter? Who are you? who was your father? who is your sister? and who your nephew? Was not his father a dog, and a son of a dog, like thee? Guards, seize the insolent wretch, and immediately cut off his head. [116]

The few officers that were about the king of Samarcand were immediately going to obey his orders, when king Saleh, who was in the flower of his age, nimble and vigorous, got from them before they could draw their sabres; and, having reached the palace gate, he there found a thousand men of his relations and friends, well armed and equipped, who were but just arrived. The queen his mother having considered the small number of attendants he took with him, and moreover foreseeing the bad reception he would probably have from the king of Samarcand, had sent these troops to protect and defend him, in case of danger. Those of his relations who were at the head of this troop immediately saw how seasonably they were arrived, when they beheld him and his companions come running in great disorder, and a small number of officers at their heels in pursuit of them. My lord, cried out his friends, at the moment he joined them, what is the matter? We are ready to revenge you; you need only command us.

King Saleh related his case to them in as few words as he could; and afterwards putting himself at the head of a large troop, he, whilst some seized on the gates, re-entered the palace as before. The few officers and guards who had pursued him being soon dispersed, he re-entered the king of Samarcand's apartment, who, being abandoned by his attendants, was soon seized. King Saleh left sufficient guards to secure his person, and then went from apartment to apartment, to search after the princess Giahaure. But that princess, on the first noise of this alarm, had, together with her women, flung herself on the surface of the sea, and escaped to a desert [117] island.

As matters passed thus in the palace of the king of Samarcand, those of king Saleh's attendants, who had fled at the first menaces of the king, put the queen his mother into a terrible consternation, upon relating the danger her son was in. King Beder, who was by at that time, was the more concerned, in that he looked upon himself as the principal author of all the mischief that might ensue: therefore, not caring to abide the queen's presence any longer, he, whilst she was giving the necessary orders at that conjuncture, darted himself upwards from the bottom of the sea; and not knowing how to find his way to the kingdom of Persia, he happened to light on the same island where the princess Giahaure had saved herself.

The prince, not a little disturbed in his mind, went and seated himself under the shade of a large tree, surrounded with divers others. Whilst he was endeavouring to recover his temper, he heard one that talked, but was too far off to understand what was said. He arose, and advanced softly towards the place whence the sound came, where, among the branches, he perceived a beauty that dazzled him. Doubtless, said he within himself, stopping, and considering her with great attention, this must be the princess Giahaure, whom fear has obliged to abandon her father's palace; or, if it be not, she is, at least, one that no less deserves my love and admiration. This said, he moved forward, and discovering himself, approached the princess with a profound reverence. Madam, said he, I can never sufficiently thank Heaven for the favour it has done me, in regaling my eyes this day with so glorious a sight. A greater blessing could not be conferred on me than this opportunity to offer you my most humble services. I beseech you, therefore, madam, to accept them, it being [118] impossible that a lady, under such solitary circumstances, should not want assistance.

True, my lord, replied Giahaure, very sorrowfully, it is not a little extraordinary for a lady of my quality to be found in this condition. I am a princess, daughter of the king of Samarcand, and my name is Giahaure. As I was at ease in my father's palace, and in my apartment, I all of a sudden heard a dreadful noise: news was immediately brought me, that king Saleh, I know not for what reason, had fired the palace, seized upon the king my father, and murdered all the guards that made any resistance. I had only time to save myself, and escape hither from his violence.

At these words of the princess, king Beder began to be concerned that he had quitted his grandmother so hastily, without staying to hear from her the news that had been brought her; but he was, on the other hand, overjoyed to find that the king his uncle had rendered himself master of the king of Samarcand's person, not doubting but he would consent to give up the princess for his liberty. Adorable princess, continued he, your concern is most just; but it is easy to put an end both to that and your father's captivity. You will agree with me, when I shall tell you that I am Beder, king of Persia, and king Saleh is my uncle. I assure you, madam, he has no design to seize upon the king your father's dominions: his only intent is, to obtain of him that I may have the honour to be received for his son-in-law. I had already given my heart to you, upon the bare relation of your charming beauty; and now, very far from repenting of what I have done, I beg of you to accept it, and to

be assured that I will love you as long as I live. I dare flatter myself you will not refuse this favour, but be ready to acknowledge, that a king that quitted his dominions purely on your account deserves some [119] favour. Permit then, beautiful princess, that I may have the honour to go and present you to the king my uncle; and the king your father shall no sooner have consented to our marriage, than king Saleh will leave him sovereign of his dominions as before.

This declaration of king Beder had not all the success he could have desired. It is true the princess no sooner saw his person, and the good mien wherewith he accosted her, than she had some kindness for him; but when she came to understand from his own mouth that he had been the occasion of all the ill treatment her father had undergone, of the grief and fright she had endured, and especially the necessity she was reduced to in flying her country to save her life, she looked upon him with that horror, that she considered him rather as an enemy than a friend, with whom she resolved to have no manner of converse. Moreover, whatever inclination she might by any means be thought to have in regard to this marriage, she determined never to yield to it, in consideration that one of the reasons her father might have against this match might be, that king Beder was son of a king of the earth; and therefore she proposed to obey her father, especially in that particular.

She nevertheless resolved to let king Beder know nothing of her resentment, and only sought an occasion to deliver herself dexterously out of his hands, seeming, in the mean time, to have a great kindness for him. Are you then, said she, with all possible civility, son of the queen Gulnare, so famous for her wit and beauty? I am highly glad of it, and moreover rejoice that you are the son of so worthy a mother. The king my father was much in the wrong for so strongly opposing our conjunction: he could no sooner have seen you but he [120] must have consented to have made us both happy. Saying these words, she reached forth her hand to him as a token of friendship.

King Beder, believing himself arrived at the very pinnacle of happiness held forth his hand, and was stooping to take that of the princess to kiss it, when she, pushing him back, and spitting at him, said, Wretch, quit that form of a man, and take one of a white bird, with a red bill and feet. Upon her pronouncing these words, king Beder was immediately changed into a bird of that sort, to his great surprise and astonishment. Take him now, said she to one of her women, and carry him to the Desert Island. This island was only one frightful rock, where there was not a drop of water to be had.

The waiting-woman took the bird; and, in executing the princess's orders, had compassion on king Beder's destiny. It would be great pity, said she to herself, to let a prince, so worthy to live, die of hunger and thirst. The princess will, it may be, repent of what she has ordered, when she comes again to herself: it were better that I carried him to a place where he may die a natural death. She then carried him to a well-frequented island, and left him on a charming plain, planted with all sorts of fruit-trees, and watered by divers rivulets.

Let us now return to king Saleh, who, after he had sought a good while for the princess Giahaure, and ordered others to seek for her, to no purpose, caused the king of Samarcand to be shut up in his palace, under a good guard; and, having given the necessary orders for governing the kingdom in his absence, he returned to give the queen his mother an account of what he had done. The first thing he asked, upon his arrival, was, Where [121] was the king his nephew? and he was answered, to his great surprise and astonishment, that he disappeared soon after he left him. News being brought me, said the queen, of the danger you was in at the palace of the king of Samarcand, while I was giving orders to send troops for you to revenge yourself, he disappeared. He must necessarily have been frightened at the hearing of your being in so great danger, and did not think himself in sufficient security with us.

This news exceedingly afflicted king Saleh, who now repented of his being so easily wrought upon by king Beder, as to carry him away with him without his mother's consent. He sent every where after him; but whatever diligence was used, he could hear no news of him; and instead of the joy he conceived at having carried on the marriage so far, which he looked upon as his own work, he felt a grief for this accident that was mortifying to him. While he was under suspense about his nephew, he left his kingdom to the administration of his mother, and went and governed that of the king of Samarcand, whom he continued to keep with great vigilance, though with all due respect to his character.

The same day that king Saleh returned to the kingdom of Samarcand, queen Gulnare, mother to king Beder, arrived at the court of the queen her mother. The princess was not at all surprised to find her son did not return the same day he set out; because it was common for him to go farther than he proposed, in the heat of the chase: but when she saw he neither returned the next day nor the day after that, she began to be alarmed, as may easily be imagined, from the kindness she professed for him. This alarm was considerably augmented, when the officers who had accompanied the king, and were retired, after they had for a long time sought in vain [122] both for him and his uncle, came and told her majesty they must of necessity have come to some harm, since, whatever diligence they had used, they had heard no tidings of them. Their horses, indeed, they had found; but, as for their persons, they knew not where to look for them. The queen, hearing this, dissembled and concealed her affliction, bidding the officers go and search once more with their utmost diligence; but in the mean time, saying nothing to any body, she went and plunged into the sea, to satisfy herself in the suspicion she had that king Saleh must have carried away his nephew along with him.

This great queen would have been the more affectionately received by the queen her mother, had she not, upon first sight of her, guessed the occasion of her coming. Daughter, said she, I plainly perceive you are not come hither to visit me; you come only to inquire after the king your son; and I can only tell you such news of him as will augment both your grief and mine. I must confess, I no sooner saw him arrive in our territories, than I greatly rejoiced: yet, when I came to understand he had come away without your knowledge, I began to partake with you in the concern you must needs have at it. Then she related to her with what zeal king Saleh went to demand the princess Giahaure in marriage for king Beder, and what happened upon it, till such time as her son disappeared. I have sent diligently after him, added she; and the king my son, who is just gone to govern the kingdom of Samarcand, has done all that lay in his power on his part. All our endeavours have hitherto proved unsuccessful; but we hope nevertheless to see him again, perhaps when we least expect it.

Comfortless queen Gulnare was not satisfied with this hope: she looked upon the king her dear son as [123] lost; and she lamented him grievously, laying all the blame upon the king his uncle. The queen her mother made her to consider the necessity there was of her not yielding too much to her grief. The king your brother, said she, ought not, it is true, to have talked to you so inconsiderately about that marriage, nor ever have consented to carry away the king your son without your privacy: yet, since it is not certain that the king of Persia is absolutely lost, you ought to neglect nothing to preserve his kingdom for him. Lose then no more time; but return to your capital: your presence there will be necessary; and it will not be hard for you to preserve the public peace, by causing it to be published that the king of Persia was gone to visit his grandmother.

This reason was sufficient to oblige queen Gulnare to submit to it. She took leave of the queen her mother, and was got back to the palace of her capital of Persia before she had been missed. She despatched immediately persons to recall the officers she had sent after the king, and to tell them she knew where his majesty was, and that they should soon see him again. She also caused the same report to be spread throughout the city, and governed, in concert with the prime minister and council, with the same tranquillity as if the king had been present.

To return to king Beder, whom the princess Giahaure's waiting-woman had carried and left in the island before mentioned. That monarch was not a little surprised when he found himself alone, and under the form of a bird. He esteemed himself more unhappy, in that he knew not where he was, nor in what part of the world the kingdom of Persia lay. But if he had known, and sufficiently knew the force of his wings to traverse so vast watery regions, what could he have gained by it, but the mortification to continue still in the same ill [124] plight, not to be accounted so much as a man, in the lieu of being acknowledged for king of Persia? He was then in a manner constrained to remain where he was, and live upon such nourishment as birds of his kind were wont to have.

A few days after, a peasant, who was skilled in taking birds with nets, chanced to come to the place where he was; when, perceiving this fine bird, the like of which he had never seen, though he had used that sport for a long while, he began greatly to rejoice. He employed all his art to become master of him; and at length used such proper methods, that he took him. Overjoyed at so great a prize, which he looked upon to be of more worth than all the other birds he commonly took, by reason of its being so great a rarity, he shut it up in a cage, and carried it to the city. As soon as he was come into the market, a citizen stopped him, and asked him how

much he would have for that bird.

Instead of answering, the peasant demanded of the citizen what he would do with him in case he should buy him. What wouldst thou have me do with him, answered the citizen, but roast and eat him? Very well, replied the peasant; and so, I suppose, you would think me very well paid if you should give me the smallest piece of money for him: but know, I set a much greater value upon him; and you should not have him for a large piece of gold. Although I am pretty well advanced in years, I never saw such a bird in my life. I intend to make a present to the king of him; and I am sure he will know the worth of him better than you.

Without staying any longer in the market, the peasant went directly to the court, and placed himself exactly before the king's apartment. His majesty being at a window where he could see all that passed in the base-court, at length cast his eyes on this beautiful bird; and, being charmed with the sight of it, he immediately sent the commander of his eunuchs to buy it for him. The officer, going to the peasant, demanded of him how much he would have for that bird. If it be for his majesty, answered the peasant, I humbly beg of him to accept it of me as a present, and I desire you to carry it to him. Hereupon the officer took the bird, and brought it to the king, who found it so great a rarity, that he ordered the same officer to take ten pieces of gold and carry them to the peasant, who departed very well satisfied with the market he had made. The king ordered the bird to be put into a magnificent cage, and gave it corn and water in rich vessels. [125]

His majesty being then ready to mount on horseback, had not time to consider the bird, therefore had it brought to him as soon as he came back. The officer brought the cage; and the king, that he might better view the bird, took it out himself, and perched it upon his hand. Looking earnestly upon it, he demanded of the officer if he had seen it eat. Sir, replied the officer, your majesty may observe his eating: the drawer is still full; and I believe he has hardly touched any of his meat; at least I did not see him. Then the king ordered him meat of divers sorts, that he might take what he liked best.

The table being spread, (for dinner happened to be served up just as the king had given these orders), and the plates being placed, the bird leaped off the king's hand, and, clapping his wings, flew upon the table, where he began to peck the bread and victuals after an extraordinary rate. The king seeing this, was so surprised at it, that he immediately sent for the queen to come and see this miracle. The person that was sent related the matter to her majesty, and she came forthwith; but she no sooner saw the bird, than she covered her face with her veil, and would have retired. The king, admiring her proceedings, in that there were none but the eunuchs of the chamber and the women that waited on her, asked the reason of it. [126]

Sir, answered the queen, your majesty will no longer admire at my proceeding, when you come to know that this bird, which you take to be such, is no bird, but a man. Madam, said the king, more astonished than before, you are pleased to banter me, I suppose; but you shall never persuade me that a bird can be a man. Sir, replied the queen, far be it from me to banter your majesty; yet nothing is more certain than what I have had the honour to tell you.

I can assure your majesty it is the king of Persia, named Beder, son of the celebrated Gulnare, princess of one of the largest kingdoms of the sea, nephew of Saleh, king of that kingdom, and grand-child of queen Farasche, mother of Gulnare and Saleh; and it was the princess Giahaure, daughter of the king of Samarcand, who thus metamorphosed him into a bird. Moreover, that the king might no longer doubt of what she affirmed, she told him the whole story, as how, and for what reason, the princess Giahaure had thus revenged herself for the ill treatment which king Saleh had used towards the king of Samarcand, her father.

The king had the less difficulty to believe this assertion of the queen's, in that he knew her to be a skilful sorceress, perhaps one of the greatest in the world; and as she knew every thing which passed in it, he was always timely informed of the designs of the kings his neighbours against him, and so prevented them. His majesty had compassion on the king of Persia, and therefore earnestly besought his queen to break the enchantment, that he might return to his own form.

The queen consented to it with great willingness. Sir, said she to the king, be pleased to take the bird into your closet, and I will show you a thing worthy of the consideration you have for him. The bird, [127]

which had never minded eating, by reason of his attentiveness to what the king and queen said, would not give his majesty the trouble to take him, but hopped into the closet before him; and the queen came in soon after, with a pot full of water in her hand. She mumbled over the pot some words, unknown to the king, till such time as the water began to boil; when she took some of it in her hand, and sprinkling a little upon the bird, said, By virtue of these holy and mysterious words I am going to pronounce, and in the name of the Creator both of heaven and earth, who raises the dead, and maintains the universe in its distinct state, quit that form of a bird, and reassume that form which thou receivedst from thy Creator.

The words were scarce out of the queen's mouth, when, instead of a bird, the king saw a young prince of good shape, air, and mien. King Beder immediately fell on his knees, and thanked God for the mercy that had been bestowed upon him. Then he took the king's hand, who helped him up, and kissed it as a token of his acknowledgment; but the king embraced him with a great deal of joy, and testified to him the great satisfaction he had to see him. He would then have paid his acknowledgments to the queen, but she was already retired to her apartment. The king made him sit at the table with him, and after supper was over, he prayed him to relate to him how the princess Giahaure had had the inhumanity to transform him into a bird, so agreeable and amiable a prince as he was; and the king of Persia immediately applied himself to satisfy him. When he had done, the king, disdaining the proceeding of the princess, could not help blaming her. It was commendable, said he, in the princess of Samarcand, not to be insensible of the king her father's ill treatment; but to [128] carry her vengeance so far, and especially against one that was not culpable, was by no means to be excused, and she will never be able to justify herself. But let us have done with this discourse, and tell me, I beseech you, in what I can farther serve you.

Sir, answered king Beder, my obligation to your majesty has been so great, that I ought to remain with you all my life-time to testify my acknowledgments; but since your majesty has set no limits to your generosity, I humbly entreat you to grant me one of your ships to transport me to Persia, where I fear my absence, which has been but too long, may have occasioned some disorder; and moreover, that the queen my mother, from whom I concealed my departure, may be dead of grief, under the uncertainty she must needs be of my life or of my death.

The king granted what he desired with all the good will imaginable, and immediately gave orders for equipping one of his largest ships and best sailers in all his numerous fleet. The ship was soon furnished with all its complement of men, provisions, and ammunition; and as soon as the wind became fair, king Beder embarked, after having taken leave of the king, and thanked him for all his favours.

The ship sailed before the wind for ten days together, which made it advance considerably. The eleventh day the wind changed, and becoming very violent, there followed a furious tempest. The ship was not only driven out of its course, but so grievously agitated, that all its masts were thrown overboard; and driving along at the pleasure of the wind, it at length struck against a rock and bulged.

The greatest part of the people were drowned, though some few were saved by swimming, and others by getting on pieces of the wreck. King Beder was one of the last; when, after having been tossed about for [129] some time under great uncertainty of his fate, he at length perceived himself near the shore, and not far from a city that seemed large. He used his utmost endeavours to reach the land, and was at length so fortunate to come so near as to be able to touch the ground with his feet. He then immediately abandoned his piece of wood, which had been of so great service to him; but when he came pretty near the shore, he was greatly surprised to see horses, camels, mules, asses, oxen, cows, bulls, and other animals, crowding towards the shore, and putting themselves in a posture to oppose his landing. He had all the difficulty in the world to conquer their obstinacy, and force his way; but at length he did it, which when done, he sheltered himself among the rocks till such time as he had recovered his breath, and dried his clothes in the sun.

When the prince advanced to enter the city, he met with the same opposition from these animals, who seemed to intend to make him forego his design, and give him to understand it was dangerous to proceed.

King Beder, however, got into the city soon after, and saw many fair and spacious streets, but was surprised to find never a man there. This made him think it was not without a cause that so many animals had opposed his

passage. Going forward, nevertheless, he observed divers shops open, which gave him reason to believe the place was not destitute of inhabitants, as he imagined. He approached one of these shops, where several sorts of fruits were exposed to sale, and saluted very courteously an old man that was sitting there.

The old man, who was busy about something, suddenly lifted up his head, and seeing a youth that showed some grandeur in his air, started, and asked him whence he came, and what business had brought him hither. [130] King Beder satisfied him in a few words; and the old man farther asked him, if he had met any body on the road. You are the first person I have seen, answered the king; and I cannot comprehend how so fine and large a city comes to be without inhabitants. Come in, sir, stay no longer on the threshold, replied the old man, or peradventure some misfortune may happen to you. I will satisfy your curiosity at leisure, and give you a reason why it is necessary you should take this precaution.

King Beder would not be bid twice. He entered the shop, and sat himself down by the old man. The old man, who had learned from him an account of his misfortunes, knew he must needs want nourishment, therefore immediately presented him with what was necessary to recover his spirits; and, although king Beder was very earnest to know why he gave him that precaution before he entered the shop, he would nevertheless not be prevailed upon to tell him any thing till he had done eating, for fear the sad things he had to relate might balk his appetite. In a word, when he found he ate no longer, he said to him, You have great reason to thank God you got hither without any ill accident. Alas! why? replied king Beder, very much surprised and alarmed.

Because, answered he, this city is the city of enchantments, and governed not by a king, but a queen, who is not only one of the finest women of her sex, but likewise a dangerous sorceress. You will be convinced of this, added he, when you come to know that these horses, mules, and other animals that you have seen, are so many men like you and me, whom she has transformed by her diabolical art: and for young men like you only, that come to enter into the city, she has hired servants to stop and bring them, either by good will or force, before her. She receives them with all the seeming civility in the world: she caresses them, she treats and [131] lodges them magnificently, and gives them so many reasons to believe that she loves them, that they think they cannot be mistaken. But she does not suffer them to enjoy long their happiness. Not one of them but she has transformed into some animal or bird, within the space of forty days. You told me those animals presented themselves to oppose your landing, and hinder your entering the city; and I must now tell you they were your friends, and what they did was to make you comprehend the danger you were going to expose yourself to.

This account afflicted exceedingly the young king of Persia. Alas! cried he out aloud, to what extremities has my ill fortune reduced me! I am hardly freed from one enchantment, which I look back upon with horror, but I incur another much more terrible to me. This gave him occasion to relate his story to the old man much more at length, and to acquaint him of his birth and quality, his passion for the princess of Samarcand, and her cruelty in changing him into a bird, the very moment he came to see and declare his love to her.

When the prince came to that passage where he spoke of his good fortune in finding a queen that broke the enchantment, the old man said to him, Notwithstanding all I have told you of the magic queen being true, yet that ought not to give you the least disquiet, since I am generally beloved throughout the city, and am not even unknown to the queen herself, who has no small respect for me; therefore it was your peculiar happiness to address yourself to me rather than elsewhere. You are secure in my house, where I advise you to continue, if you think fit; and, provided, you do not stray from hence, I dare assure you, you will have no just cause to complain of my breach of faith; so that you are under no sort of constraint whatsoever. [132]

King Beder thanked the old man for his kind reception of him, and the protection he was pleased to afford him. Then he sat down at the entrance into the shop, where he no sooner appeared, than his youth and good mien drew the eyes of all that passed that way on him. Many stopped and complimented the old man on his having so fine a slave, as they imagined the king to be; and they could not comprehend how so beautiful a youth could escape the queen's knowledge. Believe not, said the old man, this is a slave: you all know I am not rich enough to have one of this consequence: he is my nephew, son of a brother of mine that is dead; and as I had no children of my own, I sent for him to keep me company. They all congratulated his good fortune, in having so fine a young man for his relation; but withal told him, they feared the queen would take him from him. You

know her well, said they to him; and you cannot be ignorant of the danger you expose yourself and nephew to, after all the examples you have seen of the kind. How grieved would you be, if she should serve you as she has done so many others!

I am obliged to you, gentlemen, replied the old man, for your good will towards me, and I thank you for the care you seem to take of my interest; but I shall never entertain the least thought that the queen will do me any injury, after all the kindness she has professed for me. In case she happens to hear of this young man, and speaks to me about him, I doubt not but she will be contented to excuse him, as soon as she comes to know he is my nephew.

The old man was exceedingly glad to hear the commendations they bestowed on the young king of Persia. He was as much affected with them as if he had been his own son; and he conceived such a kindness for [133] him, as augmented every day during the stay he made with him. They lived about a month together, when king Beder, sitting at the shop-door after his ordinary manner, queen Labe (so was this magic queen's name) happened to come by with great pomp. The young king no sooner perceived the guards coming, who marched before her, than he arose, and going into the shop, asked the old man what all that show meant. The queen is coming by, answered he; but stand you still, and fear nothing.

The queen's guards, clothed in purple, and well armed and mounted, marched in four files, with their sabres drawn, to the number of a thousand, and not one of their officers but, as they passed by the shop, saluted the old man. Then followed a like number of eunuchs habited in brocade silk, and better mounted, whose officers did the old man the like honours. Next came as many young ladies on foot, equally beautiful, richly dressed, and set off with precious stones. They marched gravely, with half pikes in their hands; and in the midst of them appeared queen Labe, on a horse all glittering with diamonds, with a golden saddle, and a housing of inestimable price. All the young ladies saluted the old man as they passed by him; and the queen, moved with the good mien of king Beder, stopped as soon as she came over-against the shop. Abdallah, (so was the old man's name,) said she to him, tell me, I beseech thee, does that beautiful and charming slave belong to thee, and is it long that thou hast been in possession of him?

Abdallah, before he answered the queen, threw himself on the ground, and rising again, said, Madam, he is my nephew, son of a brother I had, who has been dead for some time. Having no children, I look upon him as my son, and sent for him to come and comfort me, intending to leave him what I have when I die. [134]

Queen Labe, who had never yet seen any one that pleased her so well as king Beder, and who began to conceive a mighty passion for him, thought immediately of getting the old man to abandon him to her. Father, quoth she, will not you oblige me so far as to make me a present of this young man? Do not refuse me, I conjure you; and I swear by the fire and the light, I will make him as great and powerful as ever private man was in the world. Although my design be to do evil to all mankind, yet he shall be the sole exception. I trust you will grant me what I desire, more on account of the friendship you have for me, than the esteem you know I have always had, and shall ever have, for your person.

Madam, replied the good Abdallah, I am infinitely obliged to your majesty for all the kindness you have for me, and the honours you propose to do my nephew. He is not worthy to approach so great a queen, and I humbly beseech your majesty to excuse him.

Abdallah, replied the queen, I all along flattered myself you loved me, and I could never have thought you would have given me so evident a token of your slighting my request: but I swear once more by the fire and light, and even by whatsoever is most sacred in my religion, that I will pass on no farther until I have conquered thy obstinacy. I understand very well what raises fears in thee; but I here promise, thou shalt never have any occasion to repent thy having trusted me.

Old Abdallah was exceedingly grieved, in relation to king Beder and himself, for being in a manner forced to obey the queen. Madam, therefore, replied he, I would not willingly have your majesty have an ill [135] opinion of the sincere respect I have for you, but would always contribute whatever I can to oblige you: I put an entire confidence in your royal word, and I do not in the least doubt but you will keep it: I only beg of

your majesty to delay doing this great honour to my nephew till you shall again pass by this way. That shall be to-morrow, quoth the queen; and so saying, she inclined her head, as a token of her being pleased, and so went forward towards her palace.

When queen Labe and all her attendants were out of sight, the good Abdallah said to king Beder, Son, (for so he was wont to call him, for fear of some time or other betraying himself in public.) it has not been in my power, as you may have observed, to refuse the queen what she demanded of me with so great earnestness, to the end I might not force her to an extremity of employing her magic both against you and myself. But I have some reason to believe she will use you well, as she promised, on account of that particular esteem she professes for me. This you may have seen, by the respect both she and all her court paid me. She would be a cursed creature indeed, if she should deceive me; but in case she should, she shall not deceive me unrevenged, for I know how to be even with her.

All these assurances, which appeared very doubtful, were not sufficient to support king Beder's spirits. After all you have told me of this queen's wickedness, replied he, you cannot wonder if I am somewhat fearful to approach her. I should, it may be, slight all you could tell me of her, and suffer myself to be dazzled by the lustre of grandeur that surrounds her, if I had not already been at the mercy of a sorceress. The condition I was in, through the enchantment of the princess Giahaure, and from whence I was delivered only to enter anew into another, has made me look upon such a fate with horror. His tears hindered him from going on any farther, and sufficiently showed with what repugnance he held himself in a manner under a fatal necessity of being delivered to queen Labe. [136]

Son, replied old Abdallah, do not afflict yourself; for though I must own there is no great stress to be laid upon the oaths and promises of so perfidious a queen, yet I must withal acquaint you, her power extends no farther than I am pleased to permit it: she knows it full well herself; and that is the reason, and no other, that she pays me so great respect. I can quickly hinder her from doing you the least harm, though she should be perfidious enough to attempt it. You may entirely depend upon me; and, provided you follow exactly the advice I shall give you before I abandon you to her, she shall have no more power over you than she has over me.

The magic queen did not fail to pass by the old man's shop the next day, with the same pomp she had done the day before; and Abdallah waited for her with great respect. Father, cried she, stopping just against him, you may judge of my impatience to have your nephew with me, by my punctual coming to put you in mind of your promise: I know you are a man of your word, and I cannot think you will break it with me.

Abdallah, who fell on his knees as soon as he saw the queen approaching, rose up when she had done speaking; and as he would have nobody hear what he had a mind to say to her, he advanced with great respect as far as her horse's head, and then said softly, Puissant queen! I am persuaded your majesty will not be offended at my seeming unwillingness to trust my nephew with you yesterday, since you cannot be ignorant of the reasons I had for it; but I conjure you to lay aside the secrets of that art which you possess in so wonderful a degree. I respect my nephew as my own son; and your majesty would reduce me to the utmost despair, if you should think fit to deal with him as you have done with others. [137]

I promise you once more I will not, replied the queen; and I once more repeat the oath I made yesterday, that neither you nor your nephew shall have any cause to be offended at me. I see plainly, added she, you are not yet well enough acquainted with me: you never saw me yet but through a veil; but as I find your nephew worthy of my friendship, I will show you I am not any wise unworthy of his. With that she threw off her veil, and discovered to king Beder, who came near her with Abdallah, an incomparable face: but king Beder was little charmed. It is not enough, said he within himself, to be beautiful; one's actions ought to correspond in regularity with one's features.

While king Beder was making these reflections, with his eyes fixed on queen Labe, the old man turned towards him, and, taking him by the arm, presented him to her majesty, saying, Here he is, madam; and I beg of your majesty once more to remember he is my nephew, and to let him come and see me sometimes. The queen promised he should; and, to give a farther assurance of her acknowledgment, she caused a bag of a thousand pieces of gold to be given him. He excused himself at first from receiving them; but she insisted absolutely

upon it, and he could not refuse her. She had caused a horse to be brought, as richly harnessed and set out as her own, for the king of Persia. While he was mounting him, I forgot, said the queen to Abdallah, to ask you your nephew's name; pray how is he called? He answered, his name was Beder, (The Full Moon); and her majesty replied, Sure his ancestors were mistaken; they ought to have given him the name of Shems, (The Sun).

When king Beder was mounted, he would have taken his post behind the queen; but she would not suffer [138] him, and made him to ride on her left hand. She looked upon Abdallah; and, after having made him an inclination with her head, she set forward on her march.

Instead of observing a satisfaction in the people's faces at the sight of their sovereign, king Beder took notice that they rather despised and cursed her. The sorceress, said some, has got a new subject to exercise her wickedness upon: will Heaven never deliver the world from her tyranny? Poor stranger, cried out others, thou art much deceived if thou thinkest thy happiness will last long: it is to render thy fall more terrible, that she has raised thee so high. This talk gave king Beder to understand Abdallah had told him nothing but the truth of queen Labe; but as he no longer depended on him, he had recourse to divine Providence to free him from the danger he was got into.

The magic queen arrived at her palace, whither she was no sooner come, than she alighted, and, giving her hand to king Beder, entered with him, accompanied by her women and the officers of her eunuchs. She herself showed him all her apartments, where there was nothing to be seen but massy gold, precious stones, and furniture of wonderful magnificence. When she had carried him into her closet, she led him out into a balcony, from whence he observed a garden of surprising beauty. King Beder commended all he saw, with a great deal of wit, but nevertheless in such a manner that he might not be discovered to be any other than old Abdallah's nephew. They discoursed of divers indifferent matters, till such time as news was brought the queen that dinner was upon the table.

The queen and king Beder arose, and went to place themselves at table, which was of pure massy gold, [139] and the plates of the same. They began to eat, but did not drink till almost the dessert came, when the queen caused a cup to be filled with excellent wine: she took it, and drank to king Beder's health; and then causing it to be filled again, presented it to him. King Beder received it with profound respect, and, by a very low bow, signified to her majesty that he likewise drank to her health.

Soon after, ten of queen Labe's women entered with musical instruments, with which, accompanied with their voices, they made an agreeable concert during the whole drinking, which continued till late at night. At length they began to be so heated with wine, that king Beder insensibly forgot he had to do with a magic queen, and looked upon her only as the finest woman he ever saw. As soon as the queen perceived she had wrought him to the pitch she desired, she made a sign to her eunuchs and women to retire. They obeyed; and king Beder and she went and lay together all night.

Next morning the queen and king Beder went to the bagnio; and as soon as they came out, the women who had served the king there, presented him with fine linen and a magnificent habit. The queen likewise, who was more splendidly dressed than the day before, came to receive him, and they went together to her apartment, where they had a good repast brought before them, and spent the remainder of the day in walking and other amusements.

Queen Labe treated king Beder after this manner for forty days, as she had been accustomed to do all her lovers. The fortieth night, as they were lying together, she, believing he was really asleep, arose without making any noise; but he was awake, and perceiving she had some design upon him, watched all her motions. Being up, she opened a chest, from whence she took a little box, full of a certain yellow powder. [140] Taking some of the powder, she laid a train of it across the chamber, and immediately flowed in a rivulet of water, to the great astonishment of king Beder. He trembled with fear, but still pretended to sleep, that he might not discover to the sorceress he was awake.

Queen Labe next took up some of the water in a pot, and poured it into a basin where there was flour, with which she made paste, and kneaded it for a long time: then she mixed certain drugs with it, which she took

from different boxes, and made a cake, and put it into a covered baking-pan. As she had taken care at first to make a good fire, she took some of the coals, and set the pan upon them; and as the cake was baking, she put up her pot and boxes again; and at the pronouncing of certain words, dismissed the rivulet, which appeared no more. When the cake was baked, she took it off the coals, and carried it into her closet, and afterwards returned to bed again to king Beder, who dissembled the matter so well with her, that she had not the least suspicion that he knew any thing of what she had done.

King Beder, whom the pleasures and delights of a court had made to forget his good host Abdallah, began now to think of him again, and believed he had more than ordinary occasion for his advice at this juncture, since he saw all the queen had done that night. As soon as he was up, therefore, he expressed a great desire to go and see his uncle, and begged of her majesty to permit him. Alas! my dear Beder, cried the queen, are you then already tired, I will not say with the pleasures of so superfine a palace as mine is, but with the company of a queen who loves you so passionately as I do?

Great queen, answered king Beder, how can I be tired with so many favours and graces as your majesty perpetually heaps upon me? Very far from that, I desire this permission, madam, purely to go and give [141] my uncle an account of the mighty obligations I have to your majesty. I must own likewise it is partly in this respect, that my uncle loving me so tenderly, as it is very well known he does, and I having been from him now forty days, without so much as once seeing him, he will surely take it very unkindly if I cannot afford him one visit. Go, said the queen, I consent to it; but you will not be long before you return, if you consider I cannot possibly live without you. This said, she ordered him a fine horse richly caparisoned, and so he departed.

Old Abdallah was overjoyed to see his dear adopted son again; insomuch that, without regard to his quality, he embraced him heartily, and king Beder returned the like, that nobody might doubt but that he was his nephew. As soon as they were sat down, Well, said Abdallah to the king, how do you do, sir? and how have you passed your time with that infidel sorceress?

Hitherto, answered king Beder, I must needs own she has been extraordinary kind to me, and has done all she could to persuade me that she loves me entirely; but I observed something last night, which gives me just reason to suspect that all her kindness hitherto is but dissimulation. Whilst she thought me asleep, although I was really awake, she stole from me with a great deal of precaution, which made me suspect her intention, and therefore I resolved to watch her. Going on with his discourse, he related to Abdallah how, and after what manner, he had seen her make the cake; and then added, Hitherto, said he, I must needs confess I had almost forgot, not only you, but all the advice you gave me concerning the wickedness of this queen: but this last action of hers gives me reason to fear she neither intends to observe any of her oaths nor promises. I thought of you immediately, and esteem myself happy in that I have obtained permission to come to you. [142]

You are not deceived in this wicked queen, replied old Abdallah with a smile, to show he did not himself believe she would observe one word she spoke, nor oath she made; nothing is capable of obliging a perfidious woman to mend her morals. But fear nothing; I have a way to make the mischief she intends you fall upon herself. You are become jealous in time; and you could not have done better than this, to have recourse to me. It is her ordinary practice to keep her lovers only forty days; and after that time, instead of sending them home, to turn them into animals to stock her forests and parks; but I thought of measures yesterday to prevent her doing any harm. The earth has borne this monster long enough, and it is now high time she should be served as she deserves.

So saying, Abdallah put two cakes into king Beder's hands, bidding him keep them to make use of as he should direct. You told me, continued he, the sorceress made a cake last night: it was for you to eat of, depend upon it, but take great care you do not touch it. Nevertheless, do not refuse to receive it when she offers it you; but, instead of tasting it, break off part of one of the two that I gave you, unobserved, and eat that. As soon as she thinks you have swallowed it, she will not fail to attempt transforming you into some animal, but she shall not succeed; which when she sees, she will immediately turn the thing to pleasantry, as if what she had done was only to frighten you; but she will conceal a mortal aversion in her heart, and think her having failed proceeded only from the want of something in the composition of her cake. As for the cake she made, and which she will not know to be her own, you shall make a present of it to her, and press her to eat it; which she will not refuse

to do, if it were only to convince you she does not mistrust you, though she has given you so much [143] reason to mistrust her. When she has quite eaten it, take a little water in the hollow of your hand, and, throwing it in her face, say, Quit that form you now wear, and take that of such or such an animal, as you shall think fit; which done, come to me with the animal, and I will tell you what you shall do afterwards.

King Beder made all possible acknowledgments to old Abdallah, for the great obligations he had to him, for defending him from the wiles of a pestilent sorceress who sought to ruin him; and after some little discourse, he took his leave of him and returned to the palace. Upon his arrival, he understood that the queen waited for him with great impatience in the garden. He went to pay his respects to her, and she no sooner perceived him, than she came in great haste to meet him. My dear Beder! said she, it is said, with a great deal of reason, that nothing moves more the force and excess of love than absence from the object beloved. I have had no quiet since I saw you, and the minutes I have been separated from you have seemed so many ages; nay, if you had staid ever so little longer, I was preparing to come and fetch you once more to my arms.

Madam, replied king Beder, I can assure your majesty that I have not been under less disquiets on your account; but I could not refuse to stay a little longer than ordinary with an uncle who loves me so dearly, and had not seen me for so long a while. He would have kept me still longer, but I tore myself away from him to come and pay my vows where they are so much due. Of all the collations he prepared for me, I have only brought away this cake, which I desire your majesty to accept. King Beder had wrapped up one of the two cakes in a handkerchief very neatly, took it out, and presented it to the queen, saying, I beg your majesty [144] to accept of it, though it be so inconsiderable a present.

I do accept of it with all my heart, replied the queen, receiving it, and will eat it cheerfully for yours and your good uncle's sake: but before I taste of it, I desire you will eat a piece of mine, which I have made for you during your absence. Fair queen, answered king Beder, receiving it with great respect, such hands as your majesty's can never make any thing but what is excellent; and the favour hereby done me will exact an eternal acknowledgment.

King Beder then substituted, in the place of the queen's cake, the other which old Abdallah had given him, and having broken off a piece, he put it to his mouth, and cried, while he was eating, Ah! queen, I never tasted any thing so charming in my life. They being near a cascade, the sorceress seeing him swallow one bit of the cake, and ready to eat another, she took a little water in the palm of her hand, and throwing it on the king's face, said, Wretch! quit that form of a man thou bearest, and take that of a vile horse, lame and blind.

These words not having the desired effect, the sorceress was strangely surprised to find king Beder still in the same form, and that he only started, being a little frightened. Blushes came suddenly into her cheeks; and as she saw that she had missed her aim, Dear Beder, cries she, this is nothing, recover thyself; I did not intend thee any harm; what I did, was only to see what thou wouldst say. I should be the most miserable and execrable of women, should I attempt aught against thy tranquillity; I do not only say, after all the oaths I made to the contrary, but even after so many testimonies of love as I have given thee.

Puissant queen, replied king Beder, however well satisfied I were, that what your majesty did was only to divert yourself, yet I could not help being a little frightened with the surprise. Also, what could hinder [145] me from being a little moved at the pronouncing of such terrible words, as are capable of making so strange a transformation? But, madam, continued he, let us set aside this discourse; and since I have ate of your cake, I desire you would do me the like favour by tasting of mine.

Queen Labe, who could no better justify herself than by putting this confidence in the king of Persia, broke off a piece of his cake and ate it; which she had no sooner done, than she appeared much troubled, and remained, as it were, motionless. King Beder, seeing his time, took water out of the same basin she had done, and, throwing it in her face, cried, Abominable sorceress! quit that form of a woman, and be turned instantly into a mare.

The same instant queen Labe was transformed into a very beautiful mare; and she was so concerned to find herself in that condition, that she shed tears in great abundance, which perhaps no mare before had been ever

known to do. She bowed her head with great obeisance to king Beder, thinking to move him to compassion; but, though he could have been so moved, it was absolutely out of his power to repair the damage he had done her. He led her then into the stable belonging to the palace, and put her into the hands of a groom, to bridle and saddle; but of all the bridles he tried upon her, not one would fit her. This made him cause two horses to be saddled, one for the groom and the other for himself; and the groom led the mare after him to old Abdallah's.

Abdallah, seeing king Beder coming with the mare at a distance, doubted not but he had done what he advised him. Cursed sorceress! said he immediately to himself very joyfully. Heaven has at length punished thee as thou deservest. King Beder alighted at Abdallah's door, and entered with him into the shop embracing [146] and thanking him for all the signal services he had done him. He related to him the whole matter, with all its circumstances; and moreover told him, he could find no bridle fit for the mare. Abdallah found one that fitted exactly; and as soon as king Beder had sent back the groom, he said to him, My lord, you have no reason to stay any longer in this city; take the mare, mount her, and return to your kingdom. I have but one thing more to recommend to you; and that is, if ever you should happen to part with the mare, be sure to deliver her bridle. King Beder promised to observe all his commands, and this especially; and so, having taken leave of the good old man, he departed.

The young king of Persia no sooner got out of the city, than he began to reflect on the deliverance he had had, and to rejoice he had the sorceress in his power, who had given him so much cause to tremble. Three days after, he arrived at a great city, where, entering the suburbs, he met a venerable old man, walking on foot towards a pleasure-house he had hard by: Sir, said the old man to him, stopping, may I presume to ask from what part of the world you come? The king stopped to satisfy him; and, as they were discoursing together, an old woman chanced to come by, who, stopping likewise, wept and sighed bitterly at the sight of the mare.

King Beder and the old man left off discoursing, to look on the old woman, whom the king asked, whom she had to lament so much. Alas! sir, replied she, It is because your mare resembles so perfectly one my son had, and which I still mourn the loss of on this account, and should think yours were the same, did I not know she was dead. Sell her to me, sir, I beseech you, and I will give you even more than she is worth, for the sake of the person that once owned her likeness.

Good woman, replied king Beder, I am heartily sorry I cannot comply with your request; my mare is not [147] to be sold. Alas! sir, continued the old woman, do not refuse me this favour, for the love of God. I conjure you to do it out of pure charity, since my son and I shall certainly die with grief if you do not grant it. Good mother, replied the king, I would grant it with all my heart, if I was disposed to part with so good a beast; but if I were so disposed, I believe you would hardly give a thousand pieces of gold for her, which is the lowest price I shall ever put upon her. Why should I not give so much? replied the old woman: if that be the lowest price, you need only say you will take it, and I will fetch you the money.

King Beder, seeing the old woman so poorly dressed, could not imagine she could find the money; therefore, to try her, he said, not thinking to part with his mare for all that, Go fetch me the money, and the mare is yours. The old woman immediately unloosed a purse she had fastened to her girdle, and desiring him to alight, bade him tell over the money: and, in case he found it came short of the sum demanded, her house was not far off, and she could quickly fetch the rest.

The surprise king Beder was in at the sight of this purse was not small. Good woman, said he, do you not perceive I have bantered you all this while? I will assure you my mare is not to be sold.

The old man, who had been witness to all that was said, now began to speak: Son, quoth he to king Beder, it is necessary you should know one thing, which I find you are ignorant of; and that is, that in this city it is not permitted any one to lie, on any account whatsoever, and that on pain of death: now, you having made this bargain with this old woman, you must not refuse her money, and delivering your mare according to the agreement; and this you had better do without any noise, than expose yourself to what may ensue. [148]

King Beder, sorely afflicted to find himself thus trapped by his rash proffer, was nevertheless forced to alight and perform his agreement. The old woman stood ready to seize the bridle; which when she had done, she

immediately unbridled the mare, and taking some water in her hand from a spring that ran in the middle of the street, she threw it in the mare's face, uttering these words: Daughter, quit that bestial form, and reassume thy own. The transformation was effected in a moment; and king Beder, who swooned as soon as he saw queen Labe appear, would have fallen to the ground, if the old man had not hindered him.

The old woman, who was mother to queen Labe, and who had instructed her in all her magic, had no sooner embraced her daughter, than in an instant, she, by whistling, caused a genie to rise, of a gigantic form and stature: this genie immediately took king Beder on one shoulder, and the old woman with the magic queen on the other, and transported them in a few minutes to the palace of queen Labe, in the city of enchantments.

The magic queen immediately fell upon king Beder, reproaching him grievously, in the following manner: Is it thus, ungrateful wretch, that thy unworthy uncle and thou make me amends for all the kindnesses I have done for you? I shall soon be able to make you both feel what you so well deserve. She said no more, but, taking water in her hand, threw it in his face, with these words, Come out of that form, and take that of a vile owl. These words were soon followed by the effect; and immediately she commanded one of her women to shut up the owl in a cage, and give him neither meat nor drink.

The woman took the cage, and, without regarding what the queen ordered, gave him both meat and drink; and being old Abdallah's friend, she sent him word privately how the queen had treated his nephew, and what design she had taken to destroy him and king Beder, in case he did not take timely measures to prevent it. [149]

Abdallah knew no common measures would do with queen Labe; he therefore did but whistle after a certain manner, and there immediately rose a vast giant, with four wings, who presented himself before him, and asked what he would have with him. Lightning, said Abdallah to him, (for so was the genie's name,) I command you to preserve the life of king Beder, son of the queen Gulnare. Go to the palace of the magic queen, and transport immediately to the capital of Persia the compassionate woman who has the cage in custody, that she may inform queen Gulnare of the danger the king her son is in, and the occasion he has of her assistance. Take care not to fright her when you come before her, and acquaint her from me what she ought to do.

Lightning immediately disappeared, and got in an instant to the palace of the magic queen. He instructed the woman, lifted her up into the air, and transported her to the capital of Persia, where he placed her on the terrace of the apartment where queen Gulnare was. She went down stairs to the apartment, and she there found queen Gulnare and queen Farasche, lamenting their mutual misfortunes. She made them a profound reverence, and, by the relation she gave them, they soon came to understand the great necessity king Beder was in of their assistance.

Queen Gulnare was so overjoyed at the news, that, rising from her seat, she went and embraced the good woman, telling her how much she was obliged to her for the service she had done her.

Then going immediately out, she commanded the trumpets to sound and the drums to beat, to acquaint the city, that the king of Persia would suddenly return safe to his kingdom. She then went again, and found king Saleh her brother, whom Farasche had caused to come speedily thither, by a certain fumigation. Brother, said she to him, the king your nephew, and my dear son, is in the city of enchantments, under the power of queen Labe. Both you and I must see what we can do to deliver him, for there is no time to be lost. [150]

King Saleh forthwith assembled a puissant body of sea-troops, and even called to his assistance the genies his allies, who appeared with a much more numerous army. As soon as the two armies were joined, he put himself at the head of them, together with queen Farasche, queen Gulnare, and the princesses, who would all have their share in this glorious action. They then lifted themselves up into the air, and soon poured down on the palace and city of enchantments, where the magic queen, her mother, and all the other adorers of fire, were destroyed in an instant.

Queen Gulnare had ordered the woman who brought her the news of queen Labe's transforming and

imprisoning her son, to follow her close, and bade her, in her hurly-burly, to take no other care than to go and seize the cage, and bring it to her. She did as she was ordered, and queen Gulnare was no sooner in the possession of the cage, than she opened it, and took the owl out, saying, after she had sprinkled a little water upon him, My dear son, quit that foreign form which has been given thee, and resume thy natural one of a man. In a moment queen Gulnare no more saw the hideous owl, but king Beder her son instead of him. She immediately embraced him with that excess of joy which is better expressed by actions than words. She could not find in her heart to let him go; and, if he had not been in a manner torn from her by queen Farasche, [151] who had a mind to embrace him in her turn, for aught I know, they might not have parted till now, so great queen Gulnare's affection was for him. After the queen his grandmother had done with him, he was likewise embraced by the king his uncle, and the princesses his relations.

The next care queen Gulnare had, was to look out for old Abdallah, to whom she had been obliged for the recovery of the king of Persia; and who, being brought to her, she said to him, My obligations to you, sir, have been so great, that there is nothing within my power but I will freely do for you as a token of my acknowledgment. Do but satisfy me in what I can serve you; and you shall see I will immediately set about it. Great queen, replied Abdallah, if the lady next to your majesty will but consent to the marriage I offer her, and the king of Persia will give me leave to reside at his court, I will spend the remainder of my days in his service. The queen turned towards the lady; and, finding by her modesty that she was not against the match proposed, she caused them to join hands, and the king of Persia and she took care of their fortune.

This marriage occasioned the king of Persia to speak thus, addressing himself to the queen: Madam, I am heartily glad of this match which your majesty has just now made: there remains one more, which I desire you to think of. Queen Gulnare did not at first comprehend what marriage he meant; but, after a little considering, she said, Of yours do you mean, son? I consent to it with all my heart. Then, turning about, and looking on her brother's sea-attendants, and the genies, who were still present, she said, Go you, and traverse both the sea and land, to find out the most lovely and amiable princess, worthy of the king my son, and come and bring us word.

Madam, replied king Beder, it is to no purpose for them to take all that pains. You have, no doubt, heard [152] that I have already given my heart to the princess of Samarcand, upon the bare relation of her beauty. I have seen her, and do not repent of the present I then made her. In a word, neither earth nor sea, in my opinion, can furnish a princess any thing like her. It is true, upon declaring my love to her, she used me after a rate that would have extinguished any flame less fierce than mine: but I hold her excused; for, after a rigorous treatment, and imprisoning the king her father, which I was in some measure the cause of, how could she use me more civilly? But, it may be, the king of Samarcand may have changed his resolution; and his daughter, the princess, may consent to love me, when she sees her father has agreed to it.

Son, replied queen Gulnare, if only the princess Giahaure can make you happy in this world, I shall not make it my business to oppose you. The king your uncle need only have the king of Samarcand brought, and we shall see whether he be still of the same untractable temper.

How strictly soever the king of Samarcand had been kept during his captivity, by king Saleh's orders, yet he always had great respect shown him, and was become very familiar with the officers that guarded him. In order to bring him, king Saleh caused a chafing dish of coals to be brought, into which he threw a certain composition, uttering at the same time some mysterious words. As soon as the smoke began to arise, the palace shook, and immediately the king of Samarcand, with king Saleh's officers, appeared. The king of Persia cast himself at the king of Samarcand's feet; and then, rising upon one knee, he said, It is no longer king Saleh that demands of your majesty the honour of your alliance for the king of Persia: it is the king of Persia himself that humbly begs that boon; and I persuade myself your majesty will never persist in being the cause of the [153] death of a king, who can no longer live than he is in the possession of the adorable princess Giahaure.

The king of Samarcand did not long suffer the king of Persia to remain on his knee; he took him up, and embracing him, said, I should be very sorry to have contributed in the least towards the death of a monarch who is so worthy to live. If it be true that so precious a life cannot be preserved, without being in possession of my daughter, live, sir, and live happy; she is yours. She has always hitherto been obedient to my will, and I

cannot think she will now oppose it. Speaking these words, he ordered one of the officers that king Saleh had assigned him, to go and look for the princess Giahaure, and bring her to him immediately.

The princess continued all this while where the king of Persia had left her. The officer brought her with her women to attend her. The king of Samarcand embraced her, and said, Daughter, I have provided a husband for you: it is the king of Persia you see there, the most accomplished monarch at this juncture in the universe. The preference he has given you to all other princesses obliges us both to make him suitable acknowledgments.

Sir, replied the princess Giahaure, your majesty well knows I have never presumed to disobey your will in any thing: I shall be always ready to obey you; and I hope the king of Persia will please to forget the ill treatment I gave him, and consider it was duty, not inclination, that forced me to it.

The nuptials were celebrated in the palace of the city of enchantments, with so much the greater solemnity, as all the lovers of the magic queen, who resumed their pristine forms as soon as ever that queen ceased to live, assisted at them, and came to pay their acknowledgments to the king of Persia, queen Gulnare, and king [154] Saleh. They were all either sons of kings, or princes of extraordinary merit.

King Saleh at length conducted the king of Samarcand to his dominions, and put him once again in possession of them. The king of Persia, having what he most desired, returned to his capital with queen Giahaure, queen Gulnare, queen Farasche, and the princesses; and queen Farasche and the princesses continued there, till such time as king Saleh came to re-conduct them to his kingdom under the waves of the sea.

THE STORY OF GANEM, SON TO ABOU AYOUB, AND KNOWN BY THE SURNAME OF LOVE'S SLAVE.

There was formerly a merchant at Damascus, who had, by care and industry, acquired great wealth, on which he lived in a very honourable manner. His name was Abou Ayoub, and he had one son and a daughter. The son was at first called Ganem, but afterwards had the surname of Love's Slave. He was graceful as to his person, and the excellent natural qualities of his mind had been improved by able masters his father had taken care to provide him. The daughter's name was Alcolomb, signifying ravisher of hearts, because her beauty was so accomplished, that whosoever saw her could not but love her.

Abou Ayoub died, and left immense riches: an hundred loads of brocades, and other silks that lay in his warehouse, were the least part of it. The loads were ready made up, and on every bale was written, in large characters, "For Bagdad."

Mohammed, the son of Soliman, surnamed Zinebi, reigned at that time in Damascus, the capital of Syria. His kinsman Haroun Alraschid, whose residence was at Bagdad, had bestowed this kingdom on him as tributary to him.

Soon after the death of Abou Ayoub, Ganem, discoursing with his mother about their private affairs, among the rest, concerning the bales of merchandise that lay in the warehouse, asked her the meaning of what was written upon each bale. My son, answered his mother, your father used to travel sometimes into one province [156] and sometimes into another, and it was customary with him, before he set out, to write the name of the city he designed to repair to on every bale. He had provided all things to take a journey to Bagdad, and was upon the point of setting forwards, when death——She had not the power to proceed any farther; the lively remembrance of the loss of her husband would not permit her to say any more, and drew from her a shower of tears.

Ganem could not see his mother so sensibly affected without relenting. Thus they continued some time in silence; but at length he recovered himself; and, as soon as he found his mother calm enough to listen to him, he directed his discourse to her, and said: Since my father designed these goods for Bagdad, and is no longer in being to put his design in execution, I will prepare myself to perform that journey; and I am of opinion, it will be proper for me to expedite my departure, for fear those commodities should perish, or, at least, that we lose the opportunity of selling them to the best advantage.

Abou Ayoub's widow, who tenderly loved her son, was much surprised at this resolution; and replied, My dear child, I cannot but commend you for designing to follow your father's example; but consider that you are too young, inexperienced, and altogether a stranger to the toils of travelling. Besides, can you think of leaving me, and by that means add to that sorrow with which I am already oppressed? Is it not better to sell those goods to the merchants of Damascus, and to take up with a moderate profit, than to expose yourself to the danger of perishing?

It was in vain for her to oppose Ganem's resolution by the strongest arguments, for they had no weight with him. An inclination to travel, and to accomplish himself by a thorough knowledge of the affairs of the world, urged him on to set out, and prevailed above all his mother's remonstrances, her entreaties, and even [157] her tears. He went away to the market where the slaves are sold, and bought such as were able of body, hired one hundred camels, and, having furnished all other necessaries, he entered upon his journey, with five or six merchants of Damascus, who were going to trade at Bagdad.

Those merchants, attended by all their slaves, and accompanied by several other travellers, made up such a considerable caravan, that they had no occasion to fear the Bedouins, that is, the Arabs who make it their only

profession to range the country, and to attack and plunder the caravans which are not strong enough to repulse them. Thus they had no other difficulty to encounter than the usual fatigues of a long journey, which were easily forgot when they saw the city of Bagdad, where they arrived in safety.

They went to alight at the most magnificent and most resorted khan in the city; but Ganem, who had a mind to be lodged conveniently, and by himself, took no apartment there. He only left his goods in a warehouse for their greater security, and hired a very fine house in the neighbourhood, richly furnished; having a garden, which was very delightful, on account of the many water-works and shady groves that were in it.

Some days after this young merchant had been settled in his house, and perfectly recovered of the fatigue of his journey, he dressed himself genteelly, and repaired to the public place where the merchants meet to buy and sell their commodities, with a slave following him, carrying a parcel of fine stuffs and silks.

The merchants received Ganem very courteously, and their syndic, or chief, to whom he first made application, bought all his parcel at the price set down in the ticket annexed to every piece of stuff. Ganem continued his trade so successfully, that he daily sold all the goods he exposed. [158]

He had no more left than one bale, which he had caused to be carried from the warehouse to his own house, and then went to the public rendezvous, where he found all the shops shut. This seemed somewhat extraordinary to him; and, having asked the cause of it, was told, that one of the prime merchants, whom he knew, was dead, and that all his brother traders were gone to his funeral.

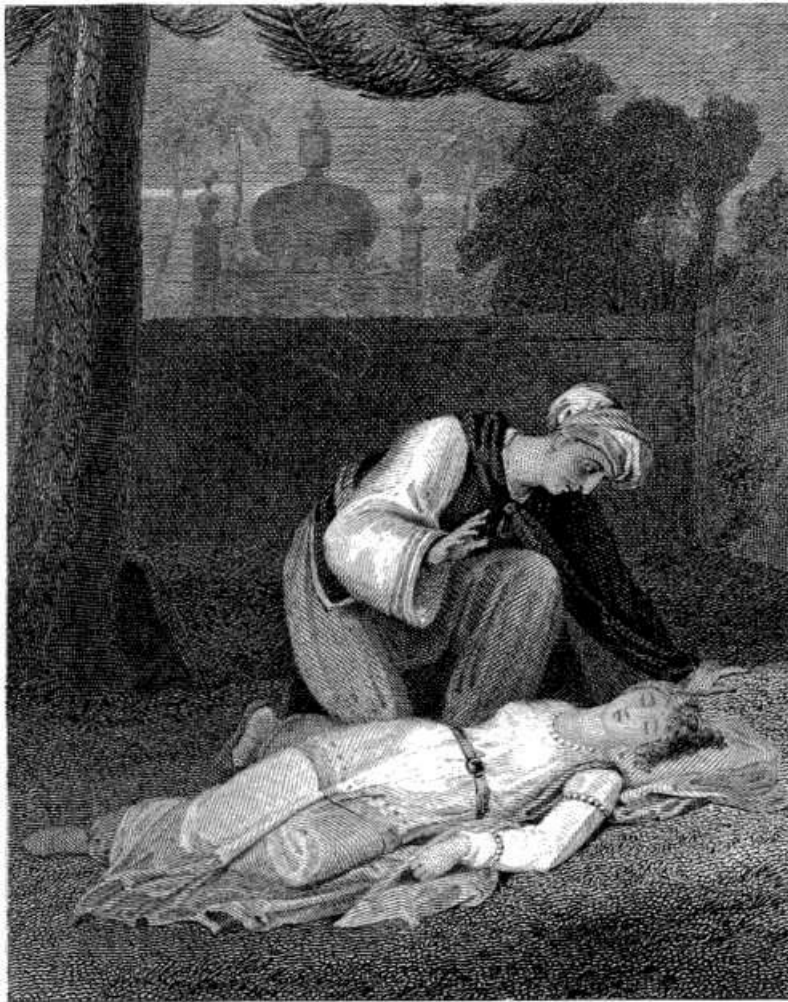
Ganem inquired after the mosque where the ceremony was to be performed, and whence the body was to be conducted to the grave; and having been told it, sent back his slaves with the goods, and walked towards the mosque. He got thither before the prayers were ended, which were said in a hall hung with black satin. The corpse was taken up and followed by the kindred, the merchants, and Ganem, to the place of burial, which was at a great distance without the city. It was a stone structure, like a dome, purposely built to receive the bodies of all the family of the deceased, and, being very small, they had pitched tents all about it, that all the company might be sheltered during the ceremony. The monument was opened, and the corpse laid into it, after which it was shut up again. Then the iman, and other ministers of the mosque, sat down in a ring on carpets, in the largest tent, and said the rest of the prayers. They also read the chapters of the Alcoran appointed for the burial of the dead. The kindred and merchants sat round in the same manner behind the ministers.

It was near night before the whole was ended. Ganem, who had not expected such a long ceremony, began to be uneasy; and was the more so, when he saw meat served up in memory of the deceased, according to the custom of Bagdad. He was also told that the tents had been set up, not only against the heat of the sun, [159] but also against the evening dew, because they should not return to the city before the next morning. These words perplexed Ganem: I am a stranger, said he to himself, and have the reputation of being a rich merchant: thieves may take this opportunity of my absence, and go rob my house: my very slaves may be tempted to make their advantage of so convenient a time; they may run away with all the gold I have received for my goods; and whither shall I look for them? His head being full of these thoughts, he ate a few mouthfuls hastily, and dexterously slipped away from the company.

He made all possible haste to gain time; but, as it often happens, the more a man puts on, the less he advances: he mistook his way, and went astray in the dark; so that it was near midnight when he came to the city-gate; and, to add to this misfortune, that was shut. That disappointment was a fresh affliction to him; and he was obliged to think of finding some convenient place to pass the rest of the night in, and wait till the gate was opened. He went into a burial-place, so very spacious, that it reached from the city to the very place he was come from. He advanced to a parcel of pretty high walls, which enclosed a small field, being the peculiar burying-place of a family, and in which there was a palm-tree. There was an infinite number of other particular burial-places, the doors whereof they did not take much care to shut fast. Ganem, finding that this burial-place was open, went into it, and put to the door after him. He lay down on the grass, and did all he could to sleep; but the uneasiness he was under, for being absent from home, would not permit him. He got up; and, after having passed by the door several times, as he walked forwards and backwards, he opened it, without knowing why he did so, and immediately perceived a light at a distance, which seemed to come [160]

towards him. He was startled at that sight, put to the door, which had nothing to make it fast but a latch, and got up as fast as he could to the top of the palm-tree, looking upon that as the safest retreat under his present apprehensions. No sooner was he got up, than, by the help of the light which had frightened him, he plainly perceived three men, whom, by their habit, he knew to be slaves, come into the burial-place. One of them went foremost with a lantern, and the two others followed him, being loaded with a chest, between five and six feet long, which they carried on their shoulders. They laid it down, and then one of the three slaves said to his comrades, Brothers, if you will be advised by me, we will leave the chest here, and return to the city. No, no, replied another, that is not the way of doing what we were ordered by our mistress; we may have cause to repent our not doing as we were commanded: let us bury the chest, since we are so enjoined to do. The two other slaves complied with him; so they began to break ground with the tools they had brought for that purpose. When they had made a deep trench, they put the chest into it, and covered it with the earth they had taken out; then departed, and returned home.

Ganem, who, from the top of the palm-tree, had heard every word the slaves had spoken, could not tell what to think of that adventure. He concluded that chest must needs contain something of value, and that the person to whom it belonged had some particular reasons for causing it to be buried in that church-yard. He resolved immediately to satisfy his curiosity, came down from the palm-tree, his fear being gone with the slaves, and fell to work upon the pit, plying his hands and feet so well, that in a short time he discovered the chest, [161] but found it secured with a great padlock. This new obstacle to the satisfying of his curiosity was no small mortification to him: yet he would not be discouraged; but the day beginning then to appear, he saw several great pebbles about the burial-place: he picked out one, with which he easily knocked off the padlock, and then, with much impatience, opened the chest. Ganem was strangely surprised, when, instead of finding money in it, he discovered a young lady of incomparable beauty. Her fresh and rosy complexion, and her gentle regular breathing, satisfied him that she was alive; but he could not conceive, why, if she were only asleep, she had not awaked at the noise he made in forcing off the padlock. Her habit was so costly, with bracelets and pendants of diamonds, and a necklace of true pearl, and so large, that he made not the least doubt of her being one of the prime ladies about the court. At the sight of so beautiful an object, not only natural inclination to relieve persons in danger, but also something more powerful, which Ganem could not then give an account of, prevailed on him to afford that young beauty all the assistance he was able.



Drawn by R. Westall R.A. Engraved by Chas. Heath.

He first shut the gate of the burial-place, which the slaves had left open, then returning, took the lady in his arms out of the chest, and laid her on the soft earth he had thrown off the chest. As soon as the lady was laid down, and had the benefit of the open air, she sneezed; and having made a motion in turning her head there came from her mouth a liquor, which seemed to have been offensive to her stomach; then opening and rubbing her eyes, she, with such a voice as charmed Ganem, whom she did not see, cried out, Zohorob Bostan, Schragrom Matglon, Cassabos Soucear, Nouron Nihar, Nagmatos Sobi, Nour Hatos Zoman, why do [162] you not answer? where are you? Those were the names of six female slaves that used to wait on her, and signified, Flower of the Garden, Branch of Coral, Sugar Cane, Light of the Day, Morning Star, and Delight of the Season. She called them, and wondered that nobody answered; but at length looking about, and perceiving she was in a burial-place, she was in a mighty fright. How now, cried she, much louder than before, is this the resurrection of the dead? Is the day of judgment come? What a wonderful change is this from night to morning!

Ganem did not think fit to leave the lady any longer in that confusion, but immediately appeared before her with all possible respect; and, in the most courteous manner, said, Madam, I am scarce able to express my joy, for having happened to be here to do you the service I have done, and for being present to offer you all the assistance you shall stand in need of, under your present circumstances.

In order to persuade the lady to repose all her confidence in him, he, in the first place, told her who he was, and what accident it was that had brought him into that place. Next, he acquainted her with the coming of the three slaves, and how they had buried the chest. The lady, who had covered her face with her veil as soon as Ganem appeared, was extraordinarily sensible of the obligations she owed him. I return thanks to God, said she, for having sent so worthy a person as you are to deliver me from death; but, since you have begun so charitable a work, I conjure you not to leave it imperfect. Let me beg of you to go into the city, and provide a muleteer to come with his mule, and carry me to your house in the chest; for, should I go in with you on foot,

my dress being different from that of the city-ladies, some one might happen to take notice of it, and follow me, which it highly concerns me to prevent. When I shall be in your house, I will give you an account of myself; and, in the mean time, be assured that you have not obliged an ungrateful person. [163]

Before the young merchant left the lady, he drew the chest out of the pit, which he filled up with the earth, laid her again in the chest, and shut it in such a manner, that it did not look as if the padlock had been forced off; but, for fear of stifling her, he put it not quite close, leaving room for the air to get in. Going out of the burial-place, he drew the door after him; and the city-gate being then open, soon found what he sought for. He returned with speed to the burial-place, and helped the muleteer to lay the chest across his mule; telling him, to remove all causes of suspicion, that he came to that place the night before, with another muleteer, who, being in haste to return home, had laid down the chest in the burial-place.

Ganem, who had minded nothing but his business since his arrival at Bagdad, was still unacquainted with the power of love, and now felt the first sallies of it. It had not been in his power to look upon the young lady without being disturbed; and the uneasiness he felt, following the muleteer at a distance, and the fear lest any accident might happen by the way that should deprive him of his conquest, taught him to unravel his intricate thoughts. It was an extraordinary satisfaction to him, when, being arrived safe at home, he saw the chest unloaded. He dismissed the muleteer; and having caused a slave to shut the doors of his house, he opened the chest, helped the lady out, gave her his hand, and conducted her to his apartment, lamenting how much she must have endured in that close confinement. If I have suffered, said she, I have satisfaction enough in what you have done me, and in the pleasure of seeing myself out of danger. [164]

Though Ganem's apartment was very richly furnished, the lady did not so much regard that, as she did the handsome presence and engaging mien of her deliverer, whose politeness and obliging behaviour highly heightened her gratitude. She sat down on a sofa; and, to begin to give the merchant to understand how sensible she was of the service done her, she took off her veil. Ganem, on his part, was sensible of the favour so lovely a lady did in uncovering herself, or rather felt he had already a most violent passion for her. Whatsoever obligations she owed him, he thought himself more than requited by so singular a favour.

The lady dived into Ganem's thoughts, yet was not at all surprised, because he appeared very full of respect. He, judging she might have occasion to eat, and not willing to trust any but himself with the care of entertaining so charming a guest, went out with a slave to an eating-house to give directions for a treat. From thence he went to a fruit-seller, where he chose the finest and most excellent fruit; buying also the choicest wine, and some of the same bread that was eaten at the caliph's table.

As soon as he returned home, he, with his own hands, made a pyramid of the fruit he had bought, and served it up himself to the lady, in a large dish of the finest china ware, saying, Madam, be pleased to make choice of some of this fruit, while a more solid entertainment, and more worthy yourself, is made ready. He would fain have continued standing before her; but she declared she would not touch any thing, unless he sat down and ate with her. He obeyed; and when they had eaten some small matter, Ganem observing that the lady's veil, which she had laid down by her on a sofa, was embroidered along the edge with golden letters, begged leave of her to look upon that embroidery. The lady immediately took up the veil, and delivered it to him, asking him whether he could read. Madam, replied he, with a modest air, a merchant would be able to manage his business very ill, if he could not at least read and write. Well then, said she, read the words which are embroidered on that veil, which gives me an opportunity of telling you my story. [165]

Ganem took the veil, and read these words, 'I am yours, and you are mine, thou descendant from the prophet's uncle.' That descendant from the prophet's uncle was the caliph Haroun Alraschid, who then reigned, and was descended from Abbas, Mahomet's uncle.

When Ganem perceived the sense of these words, Alas! madam, said he, in a melancholy tone, I have just saved your life, and this embroidery is my death! I do not comprehend all the mystery; but it makes me too sensible that I am the most unfortunate of men. Pardon the liberty I take, madam, of telling you so much. It was impossible for me to see you without giving you up my heart. You are not ignorant yourself, that it was not in my power to refuse it to you; and that makes my presumption excusable. I proposed to myself to move yours by

my respect, my diligence, my complaisance, my assiduity, my submission, and my constancy; and no sooner had I flattered myself with that design, than I am robbed of all my hopes. But be that as it will, I shall have the satisfaction of dying entirely yours. Proceed, madam, I conjure you, to give me a full information of my unhappy state.

He could not deliver those words without letting fall some tears. The lady was moved, but was so far from being displeased at the declaration he made, that she felt an inward joy, for her heart began to yield. However, she concealed it; and, as if she had not regarded what Ganem said, I would have been very cautious, answered she, of showing you my veil, had I thought it would have made you so uneasy; and I do not perceive that what I have to say to you can make your condition so deplorable as you imagine. [166]

You must understand, proceeded she, in order to acquaint you with my story, that my name is Fetnah, (which signifies a storm or tempest) which was given me at my birth, because it was judged that the sight of me would occasion many calamities. You cannot be a stranger to it, since nobody in Bagdad but knows that the caliph Haroun Alraschid, my sovereign lord and yours, has a favourite so called.

I was carried into his palace in my very tender years, and I have been brought up there with all the care that is usually taken with such persons of my sex as are designed to reside there. I made no ill advances in all they took the pains to teach me; and that, with some share of beauty, gained me the caliph's affection, who gave me a particular apartment adjoining to his own. That prince was not satisfied with such a mark of distinction: he appointed twenty women to wait on me, and as many eunuchs; and, ever since, he has made me such considerable presents, that I was once richer than any queen in the world. You may reasonably judge, by what I have said, that Zobeide, the caliph's wife and kinswoman, could not but be jealous of my happiness. Though Haroun has all the regard imaginable for her, she has used all her endeavours to ruin me.

Hitherto, I had secured myself against all her snares; but, at length, I fell under the last effort of her jealousy; and, were it not for you, I had now been exposed to inevitable death. I do not question but that she had corrupted one of my slaves, who, last night, in some lemonade, gave me a drug, which causes such a deep sleep, that it is easy to dispose of those who have taken it; and that sleep is so profound, that nothing can dispel it for the space of seven or eight hours. I have the more reason to judge so, because naturally I am very light of sleep, and apt to wake at the least noise. [167]

Zobeide, the better to put her design in execution, has laid hold of the opportunity of the absence of the caliph, who has been gone lately to put himself at the head of his troops, to chastise some neighbouring kings, who have presumed to join in league to make war on him. Were it not for this opportunity, my rival, courageous as she is, durst not have presumed to attempt any thing against my life. I know not what she will do to conceal this action from the caliph; but you see it highly concerns me that you should keep my secret. My life depends on it. I shall be safe in your house as long as the caliph is from Bagdad. It behoves you to keep my adventure private; for, should Zobeide know the obligation I owe you, she would punish you for having saved me.

When the caliph returns, I shall not need to be so much upon my guard. I shall find means to acquaint him with all that has happened, and I am fully persuaded he will be more earnest than myself to requite a service which restores me to his love.

As soon as Haroun Alraschid's beautiful favourite had done speaking, Ganem began, and said, Madam, I return you a thousand thanks for having given me the information I took the liberty to desire of you; and I beg of you to believe that you are here in safety; the sentiments you have inspired in me are a pledge of my secrecy. [168]

As for my slaves, I own there is cause to suspect them; they may perhaps fail of the fidelity they owe me, should they know by what accident, and in what place I had the good fortune to find you; but it is impossible they should guess at that. Nay, I dare assure you that they will not have the curiosity to inquire after it. It is so natural for young men to purchase beautiful slaves, that it will be no way surprising to them to see you here, as believing you to be one, and that I have bought you. They will also believe that I had some particular reasons for bringing you home as I did. Set your heart therefore at rest as to that point, and remain satisfied that you

shall be served with all the respect that is due to the favourite of so great a monarch as ours is. But how great soever he is, give me leave, madam, to declare, that nothing will be able to make me recall the present I have made you of my heart. I know, and shall never forget, that what belongs to the master is forbidden to the slave; but I loved you before you told me that you were engaged to the caliph: it is not in my power to overcome a passion, which, though now in its infancy, has all the force of a love strengthened by a perfect correspondence. I wish your august and most fortunate lover may revenge you against the malice of Zobeide, by calling you back to him; and, when you shall be restored to his wishes, that you may remember the unfortunate Ganem, who is no less your conquest than the caliph. As powerful as that prince is, I flatter myself he will not be able to blot me out of your memory. If love be your predominant passion, he cannot love you more passionately than I do; and I shall never cease to burn in your flames, whatsoever part of the world I go into to expire, after having lost you.

Fetnah perceived that Ganem was under the greatest of afflictions, and it moved her; but, considering [169] the uneasiness she was likely to bring upon herself by prosecuting the discourse upon that subject, which might insensibly lead her to discover the inclination she felt in herself for him, she said, I perceive that this sort of conversation gives you too much trouble; let us change the discourse, and talk of the infinite obligations I owe you. I can never sufficiently express my satisfaction, when I consider that, without your assistance, I had not beheld the light of the sun.

It was happy for them both that somebody just then knocked at the door: Ganem went to see who it was, and found it was one of his slaves to acquaint him that the entertainment was ready. Ganem, who, by way of precaution, would have none of his slaves to come into the room where Fetnah was, took what was brought, and served it up himself to his beautiful guest, whose soul was ravished to behold with what diligence and respect he attended her.

When they had eaten, Ganem took away, as he covered the table; and having delivered all things at the chamber-door to his slaves, he said to Fetnah, Madam, you may now perhaps desire to take some rest; I will leave you, and when you have reposed yourself you shall find me ready to receive your commands.

Having spoken these words, he left her, and went to buy two women-slaves. He also bought two parcels, the one of linen, and the other of all such things as were proper to make up a toilet fit for the caliph's favourite. Having conducted home the two women-slaves, he presented them to Fetnah, saying, Madam, a person of your quality cannot be without two maids, at least, to serve you; be pleased to allow me to give you these.

Fetnah, admiring Ganem's forecast, My lord, said she, I perceive you are not one that will do things by [170] halves: you add by your courtesy to the obligations I owe you already; but I hope I shall not die ungrateful, and that Heaven will soon put me in a condition to make acknowledgments for all your acts of generosity.

When the women-slaves were withdrawn into a chamber adjoining, which the young merchant showed them, he sat down on the sofa where Fetnah was; but, at some distance from her, in token of the greater respect. He then began again to discourse of his passion, and spoke very moving things relating to the invincible obstacles which robbed him of all his hopes. I dare not so much as hope, said he, by my passion, to excite the least sensibility in a heart like yours, destined for the greatest prince in the world. Alas! it would be a comfort to me, if I could flatter myself that you have not looked upon the excess of my love with indifferency. My lord, answered Fetnah—Alas! madam, said Ganem, interrupting her at the word lord, this is a second time you have done me the honour to call me lord; the presence of the women-slaves hindered me the first time from taking notice of it to you: in the name of God, madam, do not give me that title of honour; it does not belong to me: treat me, I beseech you, as your slave: I am, and shall never cease to be so.

No, no, replied Fetnah, interrupting him in her turn, I shall be cautious how I treat a man to whom I owe my life, after that manner. I should be ungrateful could I say or do any thing that did not become you. Leave me therefore to follow the dictates of my gratitude, and do not require it of me that I misbehave myself towards you, in return for the benefits I have received. I shall never be guilty of it; I am too sensible of your respectful behaviour, to abuse it; and I will not stick to own, that I do not look upon all your care with [171]

indifferency. You know the reason that condemns me to silence.

Ganem was ravished at that declaration: he wept for joy; and not being able to find expressions significant enough, in his own conceit, to return Fetnah thanks, was satisfied with telling her, that, as she knew what she owed to the caliph, he, on his part, was not ignorant, 'that what belongs to the master is forbidden to the servant.'

Night drawing on, he went out to fetch some light, which he brought in himself, as also some collation, as is the custom in the city of Bagdad; where, having made a good meal at noon, they, at night, are satisfied with eating some fruit, and drinking a glass of wine; so diverting the time till they go to bed.

They both sat down at table, and at first complimented each other, presenting the fruit reciprocally. The excellency of the wine insensibly drew them both on to drink; and having drunk two or three glasses, they agreed that neither should take another glass without singing some air first. Ganem sang verses he composed *extempore*, and which expressed the vehemency of his passion; and Fetnah, encouraged by his example, composed and sang verses relating to her adventure, and always containing something which Ganem might take in a sense that was favourable to him; bating, that she nicely observed the fidelity due to the caliph. The collation held till very late, and the night was far advanced, before they thought of parting. Ganem then withdrew to another apartment, leaving Fetnah where she was, and the women-slaves he had bought coming in to wait upon her.

They lived together after this manner for several days. The young merchant went not abroad, unless upon business of the utmost consequence; and, even for that, took the time when his lady was at her rest; for [172] he could not prevail upon himself to let slip a moment that might be spent in her company. All his thoughts were taken up with his dear Fetnah, who, on her side, giving way to her inclination, confessed she had no less affection for him than he had for her. However, as fond as they were of each other, their respect for the caliph kept them within those bounds that were due to him, which still heightened their passion.

While Fetnah, thus snatched from the jaws of death, passed her time so agreeably with Ganem, Zobeide was not without some apprehensions in Haroun Alraschid's palace.

As soon as the three slaves intrusted with the execution of her revenge, had carried away the chest, without knowing what was in it, or so much as the least curiosity to inquire into it, as being used to pay a blind obedience to her commands, she was seized with a tormenting uneasiness: a thousand perplexing thoughts disturbed her rest; sleep fled from her eyes, and she spent the night in contriving how to conceal her crime. My consort, said she, loves Fetnah more than ever he did any of his favourites. What shall I say to him at his return, when he inquires of me after her? Many contrivances occurred to her, but none were satisfactory: she still met with difficulties, and knew not where to fix. There lived with her an ancient lady, who had bred her up from her infancy: as soon as it was day, she sent for her, and having intrusted her with the secret, said, Dear mother, you have always been assisting to me with your advice; if ever I stood in need of it, it is now; when the business before you is to still my thoughts, distracted by a mortal concern, and to show me some way to satisfy the caliph.

Dear madam, replied the old lady, it had been much better not to have run yourself into the difficulties [173] you labour under; but since the thing is done, the best way is to say no more of it: all that must now be thought of, is how to deceive the chief of believers; and I am of opinion that you must immediately cause a wooden image to be carved resembling a dead body; we will shroud it up in old linen; and, when shut up in a coffin, it shall be buried in some part of the palace; then shall you immediately cause a marble monument to be built, after the manner of a dome, over the burial-place; and erect a figure which shall be covered with black cloth, and set about with great candlesticks and large wax tapers. There is another thing, added the old lady, which ought not to be forgot: you must put on mourning, and cause the same to be done by all your own and Fetnah's women, your eunuchs, and all that belong to the palace. When the caliph returns, and sees you and all the palace in mourning, he will be sure to ask the occasion of it; then will you have an opportunity of insinuating yourself into his favour, saying, it was in respect to him, that you paid the last honours to Fetnah, snatched away by sudden death. You may also tell him you have caused a mausoleum to be built; and, in short,

that you have paid all the dues to his favourite which he would have done himself had he been present. His passion for her being extraordinary, he will certainly go and shed some tears upon her grave; and, perhaps, added the old woman, he will not believe she is really dead; and suspect you have turned her out of the palace through jealousy, and look upon all the mourning as an artifice to deceive him, and prevent his making search after her. It is likely he will cause the coffin to be taken up and opened, and it is certain he will be convinced of her death as soon as he shall see the figure of a dead body buried. He will be pleased with all you [174] shall have done, and express his gratitude. As for the wooden image, I will undertake to have it cut myself by a carver in the city, who shall not know what use it is to be put to. As for your part, madam, order Fetnah's woman, who yesterday gave her the lemonade, to give out that she had just found her mistress dead in her bed; and, that they may only think of lamenting, without offering to go into her chamber, let her add, she has already acquainted you with it, and that you have ordered Mesrour to cause her to be laid out and buried.

As soon as the old lady had spoken these words, Zobeide took a rich diamond ring out of her casket, and putting it on her finger, and embracing her in a perfect transport of joy, said, How infinitely am I beholden to you, my dear mother! I should never have thought of so ingenious a contrivance. It cannot fail of success, and I perceive my peace of mind begins to be restored to me. I leave the care of the wooden figure to you, and I will go myself to order the rest.

The wooden image was got ready with as much expedition as Zobeide could have wished, and then conveyed by the lady herself into Fetnah's bed-chamber, where she dressed it like a dead body, and put it into a coffin. Then Mesrour, who was much deceived by it, caused the coffin, and the representation of Fetnah, to be carried away; and buried it with the usual ceremonies, in the place appointed by Zobeide, the favourite's women weeping and lamenting, and she who had given her the lemonade setting them an example by her cries and howlings.

That very day, Zobeide sent for the architect of the palace, and of the caliph's other houses; and, according to the orders he received from her, the mausoleum was finished in a very short time. Such potent princesses, as was this consort of a monarch, whose power extended from east to west, are always punctually obeyed [175] in whatsoever they command, by all the court; so that the news of Fetnah's death was soon spread all over the town.

Ganem was one of the last who had heard of it; for, as I have before observed, he scarce went abroad. Being at length informed of it, Madam, said he to the caliph's fair favourite, you are thought to be dead in Bagdad, and I do not question but that Zobeide herself believes it; I bless Heaven that I am the cause, and the happy witness of your being alive; and would to God, that, taking the advantage of this false report, you would share my fortune, and go far from hence to reign in my heart! But whither does this pleasing notion carry me? I do not consider that you are born to make the greatest prince in the world happy, and that only Haroun Alraschid is worthy of you. Supposing you could resolve to give him up for me, and that you would follow me, ought I to consent to it? No, it is my part always to remember, that what belongs to the master is forbidden to the slave.

The lovely Fetnah, though moved by the tenderness of the passion he expressed, yet prevailed with herself not to comply with it. My lord, said she to him, we cannot obstruct Zobeide's triumphing. I am not at all surprised at the artifice she makes use of to conceal her guilt: but let her proceed; I flatter myself that sorrow will soon follow her triumph: the caliph will return, and we shall find means privately to inform him of all that has happened. In the mean time, let us be more cautious than ever, that she may not know I am alive. I have already told you the consequences.

Three months after, the caliph returned to Bagdad with honour, having vanquished all his enemies: he entered the palace with impatience to see Fetnah, and to lay all his laurels at her feet; but was amazed to see all [176] the servants he had left behind him in mourning. It struck him, without knowing the cause; and his concern was double, when, coming into the apartment of Zobeide, he spied that princess coming to meet him with all her women in mourning. He immediately asked her the cause of it, with much concern. Chief of the believers, answered Zobeide, I am in mourning for your slave Fetnah, who died so suddenly, that it was impossible to apply any medicine to her distemper. She would have proceeded, but the caliph did not give her time, being so surprised at the news, that he cried out, and then fell into a swoon in the arms of Giafar, his

grand vizier, who attended him. Coming soon after to himself, he, with a weak voice, which sufficiently expressed his concern, asked where his dear Fetnah had been buried? Sir, said Zobeide, I took care myself of her funeral, and spared for no cost to make it magnificent. I have caused a marble mausoleum to be built over her grave, and will attend you thither, if you desire it.

The caliph would not permit Zobeide to take that trouble, but was satisfied to have Mesrour to conduct him. He went thither just as he was, that is, in the camp dress. When he saw the figure covered with a black cloth, the lighted candles all about it, and the magnificence of the mausoleum, he was amazed that Zobeide should have performed the obsequies of her rival with so much magnificence; and, being naturally of a jealous temper, he suspected his wife's generosity, and fancied his mistress might perhaps be yet alive; that Zobeide, taking the advantage of his long absence, might have turned her out of the palace, ordering those she had intrusted with it to convey her so far-off, that she might never more be heard of. This was all he suspected; for he did not think Zobeide wicked enough to have murdered his favourite. [177]

The better to discover the truth himself, that prince ordered the figure to be removed, and caused the grave and the coffin to be opened in his presence: but when he saw the linen which wrapped up the wooden image, he durst not proceed any farther. That religious caliph thought it would be an irreligious act to suffer the body of the dead lady to be touched; and this scruple prevailed above his love and curiosity. He caused the coffin to be shut up again, the grave to be filled, and the figure to be placed as it was before.

The caliph, thinking himself obliged to pay some respect to the tomb of his favourite, sent for the ministers of his religion, the officers of the palace, and the readers of the Alcoran; and, whilst they were calling together, he remained in the mausoleum, moistening the earth that covered the phantom of his love with his tears. When all the persons he had sent for were come, he stood before the figure, and they about it recited long prayers; after which the readers of the Alcoran read several chapters.

The same ceremony was performed every day during the whole month, morning and evening, the caliph being always present, with Giafar the grand vizier, and the prime officers of the court, all of them in mourning, as well as the caliph himself, who all that while failed not to honour the memory of Fetnah with tears, and would not talk the least of any business.

The last day of the month, the prayers and reading of the Alcoran lasted from that morning till break of day the next morning; and at length, when all was done, every man returned home. Haroun Alraschid, being tired with sitting up all that time, went to take some rest in his apartment, and fell asleep on a sofa between two of the court ladies, one of them sitting at the bed's head, and the other at the feet, who, whilst he slept, were [178] working some embroidery, and observed a profound silence.

She who sat at the bed's head, and whose name was Nouron-Nihar, that is, Dawn of the Day, perceiving the caliph was asleep, whispered to the other, called Nagmatos-Sobi, signifying Morning-Star, There is great news! The chief of the believers, our master, will be overjoyed when he awakes and hears what I have to say to him: Fetnah is not dead; she is in perfect health. O Heavens! cried Morning-Star, in a transport of joy, is it possible that the beautiful, the charming, the incomparable Fetnah should be still among the living? Morning-Star uttered these words with such a sprightly air, and so loud, that the caliph awaked. He asked why they had disturbed his rest. Alas! my sovereign lord, answered Morning-Star, pardon me this indiscretion, I could not contain myself. What then is become of her, said the caliph, if she is not dead? Chief of the believers, replied Dawn of the Day, I this evening received a note, not signed, from a person unknown, but written with Fetnah's own hand, which gives me an account of her melancholy adventures, and orders me to acquaint you with it. I thought fit, before I fulfilled my commission, to let you take some few moments' rest, believing you must stand in need of it after your fatigue. Give me that note, said the caliph, interrupting her in a disorderly manner; you were in the wrong in deferring to deliver it to me.

Dawn of the Day immediately delivered him the note, which he opened with much impatience; and in it Fetnah gave a brief account of all that had befallen her, but enlarged a little too much on the care Ganem took of her. The caliph, who was naturally jealous, instead of being provoked at the inhumanity of Zobeide, was only concerned for the infidelity he fancied Fetnah had been guilty of towards him. Is it so? said he, after [179]

reading the note; the perfidious wretch has been four months with a young merchant, and has the impudence to boast of the respect he pays her. Thirty days are passed since my return to Bagdad, and she now bethinks herself of sending me this news. Ungrateful creature! while I spend the days in bewailing her, she passes them away in betraying me. Go to, let us take revenge of the false woman, and that bold youth who affronts me. Having spoken these words, that prince got up, and went into a great hall, where he used to appear in public, and to give audience to the great men of his court. The first gate was opened, and immediately all the courtiers, who expected him, that moment entered. The grand vizier came in, and prostrated himself before the throne the caliph sat on. Then rising, he stood before his master, who, in a tone which denoted he would be instantly obeyed, said to him, Giafar, your presence is requisite for putting in execution an important affair I am about to commit to you. Take four hundred men out of my guards along with you, and first inquire where a merchant of Damascus lives, whose name is Ganem, the son of Abou Ayoub. When you have learned that, repair to his house, and cause it to be razed down to the foundation; but first secure Ganem, and bring him hither, with my slave Fetnah, who has lived with him these four months. I will punish her, and make an example of that insolent man, who has presumed to fail in respect to me.

The grand vizier having received this positive command, made a low bow to the caliph, having his hand on his own head, as a token that he would rather lose it than disobey him, and departed. The first thing he did, was to send to the syndic, or head of the merchants, for some foreign stuffs and fine silks, of the new ones brought by Ganem; with strict orders, above all things, to inquire after the street and house he lived in. The officer [180] he sent with these orders brought him back word, that he had scarce been seen for some months, and no man knew what could keep him at home, if he was there. The same officer told Giafar where Ganem lived, and the name of the widow who had let him the house.

Upon this information, which could not fail, that minister, without losing any time, marched with the soldiers the caliph had ordered him to take, went to the mayor of the city, whom he also caused to bear him company; and being attended by a great number of carpenters and masons, with the necessary tools for razing of a house, came to that in which Ganem lived; and finding it stood alone, without being confined any way, he posted his soldiers quite round it, to prevent the young merchant making his escape.

Fetnah and Ganem had just then dined: the lady was sitting at a window next the street; and hearing a noise, she looked out through the lattice, when, seeing the grand vizier draw near with all his attendants, she concluded his design was upon her as well as Ganem. She perceived her note had been received, but had not expected such an answer, having hoped that the caliph would have taken that business quite otherwise. She knew not how long that prince had been come home; and though she was acquainted with his jealous temper, yet she apprehended nothing on that account. However, the sight of the grand vizier and the soldiers made her quake in reality, not for herself, but for Ganem: she did not question clearing herself, provided the caliph would but hear her. As for Ganem, whom she was kind to rather out of gratitude than affection, she plainly foresaw that his rival, being incensed, would see, and might be apt to condemn him, upon account of his youth and mien. Being full of that thought, she turned to the young merchant, and said, Alas! Ganem, we are [181] undone; it is you and I that are sought after. He presently looked through the lattice, and was seized with dread when he beheld the caliph's guards with their naked scimitars, and the grand vizier with the civil magistrate at the head of them. At that sight he stood motionless, and had not power to utter one word. Ganem, said the favourite, there is no losing of time: if you love me, put on the habit of one of your slaves immediately, and daub your face and arms with soot; then lay some of these dishes on your head: you may be taken for a servant belonging to the eating-house, and they will let you pass. If they happen to ask you where the master of the house is, answer, without any hesitation, that he is within. Alas! madam, answered Ganem, less concerned for himself than for Fetnah, you only take care of me; what will become of you? Let not that trouble you, replied Fetnah, it is my part to look to that. As for what you leave in this house, I will take care of it; and I hope it will be one day justly restored to you, when the caliph's anger is over: but do you avoid his fury; for the orders he gives in heat of passion are always fatal. The young merchant's affliction was so great, that he knew not what course to fix upon, and would certainly have suffered himself to have been seized by the caliph's soldiers, had not Fetnah pressed him to disguise himself. He was prevailed upon by her persuasions, to put on the habit of a slave, and daub himself with soot; and it was high time, for they were knocking at the door; and all they could do was to embrace each other lovingly: they were both so overwhelmed with sorrow

that they could not utter one word; and it was thus they parted. Ganem went out with some dishes on his head: he was taken for the servant of an eating-house, and nobody offered to stop him. On the contrary, the grand vizier, who was the first that met him, gave him way to let him pass, being far from any thought that he [182] was the man he looked for. Those who were behind the grand vizier made way as he had done, and thus favoured his escape. He got speedily to one of the city gates, and so got clear away.

While he was making the best of his way from the grand vizier Giafar, that minister came into the room where Fetnah was sitting on a sofa, and where there were many chests full of Ganem's equipage, and of the money he had made of his goods.

As soon as Fetnah saw the grand vizier come into the room, she fell flat on her face, and continued in that posture, as it were, ready to receive her death. My lord, said she, I am ready to undergo the sentence passed against me by the chief of the believers; you need only make it known to me. Madam, answered Giafar, falling also down till she had raised herself, God forbid any man should presume to lay his profane hands on you. I do not design to offer you the least wrong. I have no farther orders than to entreat you will be pleased to go with me to the palace, and to conduct you thither with the merchant that lives in this house. My lord, replied the favourite, let us go; I am ready to follow you. As for the young merchant, to whom I am indebted for my life, he is not here; he has been gone about a month since to Damascus, whither his business called him, and he has left these chests you see under my care till he returns. I conjure you to cause them to be secured, that I may perform the promise I made to take all possible care of them.

You shall be obeyed, said Giafar, and immediately sent for porters, whom he commanded to take up the chests, and carry them to Mesrour.

As soon as the porters were gone, he whispered the civil magistrate, committing to him the care of [183] seeing the house razed; but first to cause diligent search to be made for Ganem, who, he suspected, might be hid, whatever Fetnah had told of him. Then he went out, taking the young lady with him attended by the two slaves that waited on her. As for Ganem's slaves, they were not regarded; they ran in among the crowd, and it was not known what became of them.

No sooner was Giafar out of the house, than the masons and carpenters began to raze it; and did it so effectually, that in a few hours none of it remained. But the civil magistrate, not finding Ganem, after the strictest search, sent to acquaint the grand vizier with it, before that minister reached the palace. Well, said Haroun Alraschid, seeing him come into his closet, have you executed my orders? Yes, sir, answered Giafar, the house Ganem lived in is levelled with the ground, and I have brought you your favourite Fetnah; she is at your closet-door, and I will call her in if you command me. As for the young merchant, we could not find him, though all places have been searched; and Fetnah affirms that he has been gone this month to Damascus.

Never was any man in such a passion as the caliph, when he heard that Ganem had made his escape. As for his favourite, being possessed that she had been false to him, he would neither see nor speak to her. Mesrour, said he to the chief of the eunuchs, who was there present, take the ungrateful, the perfidious Fetnah, and go shut her up in the dark tower. That tower was within the enclosure of the palace, and commonly served as a prison for the favourites who any way disgusted the caliph.

Mesrour, being used to execute his sovereign's orders, though ever so unjust, without making any objection, obeyed this with some reluctancy. He signified his concern to Fetnah, who was the more grieved at it, [184] because she had reckoned that the caliph would not refuse to speak to her. There was no remedy but to submit to her hard fate, and to follow Mesrour, who conducted her to the dark tower, and there left her.

In the mean time the caliph, being incensed, and only consulting his passion, wrote the following letter, with his own hand, to the king of Syria, his cousin and tributary, who resided at Damascus.

‘COUSIN, this is to inform you, that a merchant of Damascus, whose name is Ganem, the son of Abou Ayoub, has seduced the most amiable of my women slaves, called Fetnah, and is fled. It is my will, that, when you have read my letter, you cause search to be made for Ganem, and secure him. When he is in your power, you shall cause him to be loaded with irons, and for three days successively he shall receive fifty strokes with a bull’s pizzle. Then let him be led through all parts of the city, with a crier, crying, This is the smallest punishment the chief of the believers inflicts on him that offends his lord, and debauches one of his slaves. After that, you shall send him to me under a strong guard. It is my will that you cause his house to be plundered; and when it shall be razed, order the materials to be carried out of the city into the middle of the plain. Besides, if he has father, mother, sister, wives, daughters, or other kindred, cause them to be stripped; and when they are naked, expose them as a spectacle during three days to the whole city, forbidding any one, on pain of death, to afford them any shelter. I expect you will no way delay what I enjoin.

HAROUN ALRASCHID.’

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The caliph having written this letter, sent it away by an express, ordering him to make all possible speed, and to take pigeons along with him, that he might the sooner hear what had been done by Mohammed Zinebi.

The pigeons of Bagdad have this particular quality, that, though they be carried ever so far, they return to Bagdad as soon as they are turned loose, especially when they have young ones. A letter rolled up is made fast under their wing; and by that means, they have speedy advice from such places as they desire.

The caliph’s express travelling night and day, as his master’s impatience required, and being come to Damascus, went directly to king Zinebi’s palace, who sat upon his throne to receive the caliph’s letter. The express having delivered it, Mohammed looking upon it, and knowing the hand, stood up to show his respect, kissed the letter, and laid it on his head, to denote he was ready submissively to obey the orders contained in it. He opened it, and having read it, immediately descended from his throne, and, without losing time, mounted on horseback, with the prime officers of his household. He also sent for the civil magistrate, who came to him; and then he went directly to Ganem’s house, attended by all his guards.

That young merchant’s mother had never heard or received any letter from him since he left Damascus, but the other merchants with whom he went to Bagdad were returned, and all of them told her they had left her son in perfect health. However, as he did not return himself, and neglected to write, the tender mother could not be persuaded but that he was dead, and was so fully convinced of it in her imagination, that she went into mourning. She bewailed Ganem as if she had seen him die, and had herself closed his eyes: never mother expressed greater sorrow; and so far was she from seeking any comfort, that she delighted in indulging her sorrow. She caused a dome to be built in the middle of the court belonging to her house, in which she placed a figure representing her son, and covered it with black cloth. She spent the greatest part of the days and nights in weeping under that dome, in the same manner as if her son had been buried there. The beautiful Alcolomb, or Ravisher of Hearts, her daughter, bore her company, and mixed her tears with hers. [186]

It was now some time since they had thus devoted themselves to sorrow, and since the neighbourhood, hearing their cries and lamentations, pitied such loving relations, when king Mohammed Zinebi came to the door, which, being opened by a slave belonging to the family, he went into the house, inquiring for Ganem, the son of Abou Ayoub.

Though the slave had never seen king Zinebi, she easily guessed, by his retinue, that this must be one of the prime men of Damascus. My lord, said she, that Ganem you inquire for is dead: my mistress, his mother, is in that monument you see there, actually lamenting the loss of him. The king, not regarding what was said by the slave, caused all the house to be diligently searched by his guards for Ganem. Then he advanced towards the monument, where he saw the mother and daughter sitting on nothing but a mat, by the figure which represented Ganem, and their faces appeared to him bathed in tears. Those poor women immediately veiled themselves, as soon as they beheld a man at the door of the dome; but the mother, knowing the king of Damascus, got up, and ran to cast herself at his feet. My good lady, said he, I was looking for your son Ganem; is he here? Alas, sir!

cried the mother, it is a long time since he has ceased to be: would to God I had at least put him into his shroud with my own hands, and had the comfort of having his bones in this monument! O, my son, my dear son! She would have said more, but was oppressed with so violent sorrow that she was not able. [187]

Zinebi was moved; for he was a prince of a mild nature, and had much compassion for the sufferings of the unfortunate. If Ganem alone is guilty, thought he to himself, why should the mother and the daughters, who are innocent, be punished? Ah! cruel Haroun Alraschid, what a mortification do you put upon me, in making me the executioner of your vengeance, obliging me to persecute those persons who have not offended you!

The guards that the king ordered to search for Ganem, came and told him they had lost their labour. He was fully convinced: the tears of these two women would not leave him any room to doubt. It distracted him to be obliged to execute the caliph's order. My good lady, said he to Ganem's mother, come out of this monument with your daughter; it is no place of safety for you. They went out; and he, to secure them against any insult, took off his own robe, which was very large, and covered them both with it, bidding them be sure to keep close to him. Then he ordered the multitude to be admitted to plunder, which was performed with the utmost rapaciousness, and many shouts, which terrified Ganem's mother and sister the more, because they knew not the reason of it. The rabble carried off the richest goods, chests full of wealth, fine Persian and Indian carpets, cushions made of cloth of gold and silver, fine china ware. In short, all was taken away; nothing was left but the hard walls of the house: and it was certainly a dismal spectacle for the unhappy ladies, to see all their goods plundered, without knowing why they were so cruelly treated. [188]

When the house was plundered, Mohammed ordered the civil magistrates to raze the house and monument; and, whilst that was doing, he carried away Alcolomb and her mother to his palace. There it was he redoubled their affliction, acquainting them with the caliph's will. He commands me, said he to them, to cause you to be stripped, and expose you naked for three days to the view of the people. It is with the utmost reluctance that I execute that cruel and ignominious sentence. The king delivered these words with such an air, as plainly made it appear his heart was really pierced with grief and compassion. Though the fear of being dethroned obstructed his following the dictates of his pity, yet he in some measure moderated the rigour of Haroun Alraschid's orders, causing coarse sacks, like smocks with sleeves, to be made of horse-hair, for Ganem's mother, and his sister Alcolomb, or Ravisher of Hearts.

The next day, these two victims of the caliph's rage were stripped of their clothes, and their horse-hair smocks put upon them; their head-dress was also taken away, so that their dishevelled hair hung upon their backs. Alcolomb had the finest hair in the world; and it hung down to the ground. In that condition, they were exposed to the people. The civil magistrate, attended by his officers, went along with them; and they were conducted throughout all the city. A crier went before them, who, every now and then, cried, This is the punishment due to those who have drawn on themselves the indignation of the chief of the believers.

When they walked in this manner along the streets of Damascus, with their arms and feet naked, clad in such a strange garment, and endeavouring to hide their shame under their hair, with which they covered their faces, all the people were dissolved in tears; more especially the ladies, looking on them as innocent persons, through their lattice-windows, and being particularly moved by Alcolomb's youth and beauty, made the air ring with their dreadful shrieks, as they passed before their houses. The very children, frightened at those shrieks, and at the spectacle that occasioned them, mixed their cries with that general lamentation, and added new horror to it. In short, had an enemy been at Damascus, and then putting all to fire and sword, the consternation could not have been greater. [189]

It was near night when that dismal scene concluded. The mother and daughter were both conducted back to king Mohammed's palace. Not being used to walk barefoot, they were so spent, that they lay a long time in a swoon. The queen of Damascus, highly afflicted at their misfortunes, notwithstanding the caliph's prohibition to relieve them, sent some of her women to comfort them with all sorts of refreshments, and wine to raise their spirits.

The queen's women found them still in a swoon, and almost past receiving any benefit by what they offered them. However, with much difficulty, they were brought to themselves. Ganem's mother immediately returned

them thanks for their courtesy. My good lady, said one of the queen's ladies to her, we are highly concerned at your affliction; and the queen of Syria, our mistress, has done us a favour in employing us to assist you. We can assure you, that princess is much afflicted at your misfortunes, as well as the king her consort. Ganem's mother entreated the queen's women to return her majesty a thousand thanks from her and her daughter Alcolomb; and then, directing her discourse to the lady that spoke to her, she said, Madam, the king has not told me why the chief of the believers inflicts so many outrages on us; pray be pleased to tell us what [190] crimes we have been guilty of. My good lady, answered the other, the origin of your misfortune proceeds from your son Ganem. He is not dead, as you imagine. He is accused of having stolen the beautiful Fetnah, the best beloved of all the king's favourites; and he having, by timely flight, withdrawn himself from that prince's indignation, the punishment is fallen on you. All mankind condemns the caliph's resentment; but all mankind fears him: and you see king Zinebi himself dares not contradict his orders, for fear of incurring his displeasure. So that all we can do is to pity and exhort you to have patience.

I know my son, answered Ganem's mother; I have educated him very carefully, and in that respect which is due to the commander of the believers. He has not committed the crime he is accused of; I dare answer for his innocency. But I will give over muttering and complaining, since it is for him that I suffer, and he is not dead. O Ganem! added she, in a transport of love and joy, my dear son Ganem, is it possible that you are still alive? I no longer am concerned for the loss of my goods; and how extravagant soever the caliph's orders may be, I forgive him all the severity of them, provided Heaven has saved my son. I am only concerned for my daughter; her sufferings only afflict me; yet I believe her to be so good a sister as to follow my example.

At the hearing of these words, Alcolomb, who till then had appeared insensible, turned to her mother, and, clasping her arms about her neck, Yes, dear mother, said she, I will always follow your example, whatever extremity the love of my brother brings you to.

The mother and daughter, thus interchanging their sighs and tears, continued a considerable time in such moving embraces. In the mean time, the queen's women, who were much moved at that spectacle, [191] omitted no persuasions to prevail with Ganem's mother to take some sustenance. She ate a morsel out of complaisance, and Alcolomb did the like.

The caliph having ordered that Ganem's kindred should be exposed three days successively to the sight of the people, in the condition as has been said, Alcolomb and her mother afforded the same spectacle the second time next day, from morning till night. But that day and the following, things were not done after the same manner: the streets, which at first had been full of people, were left quite empty. All the traders, incensed at the ill usage of Abou Ayoub's widow and daughter, shut up their shops, and kept themselves close within their houses. The ladies, instead of looking through their lattice-windows, withdrew into the back parts of their houses. There was not one soul to be seen in the public places those unfortunate women were carried through. It looked as if all the inhabitants of Damascus had abandoned their city.

On the fourth day, king Mohammed Zinebi, who was resolved punctually to obey the caliph's orders, though he did not approve of them, sent criers into all quarters of the city to make proclamation, strictly forbidding all the inhabitants of Damascus, and strangers, of what condition soever, upon pain of death, and having their bodies cast to the dogs to be devoured, to receive Ganem's mother and sister into their houses, or to give them a morsel of bread or a drop of water; and, in a word, to afford them the least support, or hold the least correspondence with them.

When the criers had performed what the king had enjoined them, that prince ordered the mother and the daughter to be turned out of the palace, and left to their choice to go where they thought fit. As soon as [192] ever they appeared, all persons fled from them, so great an impression had the late prohibition made upon them all. They easily perceived that every body shunned them; but not knowing the reason of it, they were much surprised; and their amazement was the greater, when, coming into any street, or among several persons, they knew some of their best friends, who presently vanished with as much haste as the rest. What is the meaning of this? said Ganem's mother: do we carry the plague about us? Must the unjust and barbarous usage we have received render us odious to our fellow-citizens? Come, my child, added she, let us depart from Damascus with all speed; let us not stay any longer in a city where we are become frightful to our very friends.

The two wretched ladies, discoursing after this manner, came to one of the ends of the city, and retired to a ruined house, to pass the night. Thither some Mussulmen, or believers, out of charity and compassion, resorted to them after the day was shut in. They carried them provisions, but durst not stay to comfort them, for fear of being discovered, and punished for disobeying the caliph's orders.

In the mean time, king Zinebi had let fly a pigeon, to give Haroun Alraschid an account of his exact obedience. He informed him of all that had been done, and conjured him to direct what he would have done with Ganem's mother and sister. He soon received the caliph's answer the same way, which was, that he banished them from Damascus for ever. Immediately the king of Syria sent men to the old house, with orders to take the mother and the daughter, and to conduct them three days' journey from Damascus, and there to leave them, forbidding them ever to return to the city.

Zinebi's men executed their commission; but being less precise than their master, in the strict performance of every tittle of Haroun Alraschid's orders, they in pity gave Alcolomb and her mother some small [193] pieces of money to buy them some subsistence, and each of them a bag, which they hung about their necks, to carry their provisions.

In this miserable condition, they came to the first village. The peasants flocked about them; and as it appeared through their disguise that they were people of some fashion, they asked them what was the occasion of their travelling after that manner, in a habit that did not seem properly to belong to them. Instead of answering the question put to them, they fell a-weeping, which only served to heighten the curiosity of the peasants, and to move them to compassion. Ganem's mother told them what she and her daughter had endured; at which the good countrywomen were sensibly afflicted, and endeavoured to comfort them. They treated them as well as their poverty would permit; they took off their horse-hair smocks, which were very uneasy, and put on others they gave them, with shoes, and something to cover their heads, and save their hair.

Having expressed their gratitude to those charitable women, Alcolomb and her mother departed that village, taking short journeys towards Aleppo. They used at night to lie near the mosques, or in them, upon the mat, if there was any, or else on the bare pavement; and sometimes put up in the places appointed for the use of travellers. As for sustenance, they did not want; for they often came to places where bread, boiled rice, and other provisions, are distributed to all travellers who desire it.

At length they came to Aleppo, but would not stay there, and holding on their journey towards the Euphrates, crossed that river, and entered into Mesopotamia, which they traversed as far as Moussoul. Thence, notwithstanding all they had endured, they proceeded to Bagdad. That was the place they had fixed their [194] thoughts upon, hoping to find Ganem there, though they ought not to have fancied that he was in a city where the caliph resided: but they hoped, because they wished it; their affection rather increasing than diminishing, in spite of all their misfortunes. Their discourse was generally about him, and they inquired for him of all they met. But let us leave Alcolomb and her mother, to return to Fetnah.

She was still confined close in the dark tower, ever since the day that had been so fatal to Ganem and her. However, disagreeable as her prison was to her, it was much less grievous than the thoughts of Ganem's misfortune, the uncertainty of whose fate was a killing affliction to her. There was scarce a moment in which she did not lament him.

One night when the caliph was walking by himself within the enclosure of his palace, as he frequently did; for he was the most prying prince in the world, and sometimes, by means of those night-walks, he came to the knowledge of things that happened in his palace, which would otherwise never have come to his ear: one of these nights, in his walk, he happened to pass by the dark tower, and fancying he heard somebody talk, he stopped, and drew near the door to listen, and distinctly heard these words, which Fetnah, whose thoughts were always on Ganem, uttered with a loud voice: O Ganem! too unfortunate Ganem! where are you at this time? whither has thy cruel fate led thee? Alas! it is I that have made you miserable! Why did you not let me perish unhappily, rather than afford me your generous relief? What a dismal reward have you received for your care and respect! The commander of the faithful, who ought to have requited, persecutes you; and in return for having always looked upon me as a person reserved for his bed, you lose all your goods, and are

obliged to seek for safety in flight. O caliph! barbarous caliph! what will you say for yourself when you [195] shall appear with Ganem before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge, and the angels shall testify the truth before your face! All the power you are now invested with, and which makes the best part of the world quake, will not prevent your being condemned and punished for your violent and unjust proceedings. Here Fetnah ceased her complaint, her sighs and tears putting a stop to her tongue.

This was enough to bring the caliph to himself. He plainly perceived, that if what he had heard was true, his favourite must be innocent, and that he had been too rash in giving orders against Ganem and his family. Being resolved to be rightly informed in an affair which so nearly concerned him, in point of equity, on which he valued himself, he immediately returned to his apartment, and that moment ordered Mesrour to repair to the dark tower and bring Fetnah to him.

By this command, and much more by the caliph's way of delivery, the chief of the eunuchs guessed that his master designed to pardon his favourite, and take her to him again. He was overjoyed at it, for he loved Fetnah, and had been much concerned at her disgrace; and therefore flying to the tower, Madam, said he to the favourite, with such an air as expressed his satisfaction, be pleased to follow me: I hope you will never more return to this vile dark tower: the commander of the faithful has a mind to speak with you, and I have reason to hope for a happy issue.

Fetnah followed Mesrour, who conducted her into the caliph's closet. She prostrated herself before that prince, and so continued, letting fall a shower of tears. Fetnah, said the caliph, without bidding her rise, I think you charge me with violence and injustice. Who is he, who, notwithstanding the regard and respect he [196] had for me, is in a miserable condition? Speak freely; you know how good-natured I am, and that I love to do justice.

By these words the favourite conceived that the caliph had heard what she had said; and laying hold on so favourable an opportunity to clear her dear Ganem, she said, Commander of the true believers, if I have let fall any word that is not agreeable to your majesty, I most humbly beseech you to forgive me; but he whose innocence and misfortune you desire to be acquainted with, is Ganem, the unhappy son of Abou Ayoub, merchant in Damascus. He is the man that saved my life, and afforded me a safe sanctuary in his house. I must own, that, from the first moment he saw me, he perhaps designed to devote himself to me, and conceived hopes of engaging me to admit of his service. I guessed at this, by the eagerness he showed in entertaining, and giving me all the attendance which was requisite under the circumstances I was then in; but as soon as he heard that I had the honour to belong to you, Alas, madam, said he, 'That which belongs to the master is forbidden to the slave.' From that moment, I owe this justice to his virtue, his behaviour was always suitable to his words. However, you well know with what rigour you have treated him, and you will answer for it before the tribunal of God.

The caliph was not displeased with Fetnah for the freedom of those words. But may I, answered he, rely on the assurances you give me of Ganem's virtue? Yes, replied Fetnah, you may; I would not for the world conceal the truth from you: and to make out to you that I am sincere, I must own one thing to you, which perhaps may displease you; but I beg pardon of your majesty beforehand. Speak, child, said Haroun Alraschid; I forgive all, provided you conceal nothing from me. Well then, replied Fetnah, let me inform you, that Ganem's [197] respectful behaviour, together with all the good offices he did me, gained him my esteem. I went farther yet: you know the tyranny of love; I felt some tender inclination growing in my breast. He perceived it, but was still far from taking an advantage of my frailty: and notwithstanding the flame which consumed him, he still remained steady in his duty; and all his passion could force from him, were those words I have already told your majesty, 'That which belongs to the master is forbidden to the slave.'

This ingenuous confession might have provoked any other man than the caliph; but it was the very thing which quite appeased that prince. He commanded her to rise, and making her sit by him, Tell me your story, said he, from the beginning to the end. She did so with much art and wit, slightly passing over what regarded Zobeide, and dilating on the obligations she owed Ganem, the expense he had been at for her; and, above all, she highly extolled his discretion, endeavouring by that means to make the caliph sensible that she had been under the necessity of lying concealed in Ganem's house, to deceive Zobeide. She concluded with the young merchant's

escape, which she plainly told the caliph she had compelled him to, that he might avoid his indignation.

When she had done speaking, the caliph said to her, I believe all you have told me; but why was it so long before you let me hear from you? Was there any need of staying a whole month after my return, before you sent me word where you were? Commander of the true believers, answered Fetnah, Ganem went abroad so very seldom, that you need not wonder that we were none of the first that heard of your return. Besides that, Ganem, who took upon him to deliver the letter I wrote to Nouron Nihar, was a long time before he could find [198] an opportunity of putting it into her own hands.

It is enough, Fetnah, replied the caliph; I own my fault, and would willingly make amends for it by heaping favours on that young merchant of Damascus; therefore consider what I can do for him: ask what you think fit, and I will grant it. Hereupon the favourite fell down at the caliph's feet, with her face flat on the ground; and then rising again, said, Commander of the true believers, after returning your majesty thanks for Ganem, I most humbly entreat you to cause it to be published throughout all your dominions, that you pardon the son of Abou Ayoub, and that he may safely come to you. I will do more, rejoined that prince, in requital for having saved your life, and the respect he has bore to me, and to make amends for the loss of his goods; and, in short, to repair the wrong I have done to his family, I give him to you for a husband. Fetnah had not words expressive enough to thank the caliph for his generosity. She then withdrew into the apartment she had before her dismal adventure. The same furniture was still in it; nothing had been removed; but that which pleased her most, was, to find there Ganem's chests and packs, which Mesrour had taken care to convey thither.

The next day Haroun Alraschid ordered the grand vizier to cause proclamation to be made throughout all his dominions, that he pardoned the son of Abou Ayoub; but this proved of no effect, for a long time elapsed without any news of that young merchant. Fetnah concluded for certain, that he had not been able to survive the pain of losing her. A dreadful uneasiness seized her; but as hope is the last thing which forsakes lovers, she entreated the caliph to give her leave to seek for Ganem herself; which being granted, she took a purse [199] with a thousand pieces of gold out of her basket, and one morning went out of the palace, mounted on a mule she had out of the caliph's stables, very richly accoutred. Black eunuchs attended her, with their hands on each side upon the mule's buttocks.

Thus she went from mosque to mosque, bestowing her alms among the devotees of the Mahometan religion, desiring their prayers for obtaining the accomplishment of an affair on which the happiness of two persons, as she told them, depended. She spent the whole day and the thousand pieces of gold, in giving alms at the mosques, and returned to the palace in the evening.

The next day she took another purse of the same value, and, in the like equipage as the day before, went to the place where all the jewellers' shops were; and stopping at the door without alighting, sent one of her black eunuchs for the syndic, or chief of them. That syndic, who was an extraordinary charitable man, and spent above two-thirds of his income in relieving poor strangers, whether they happened to be sick or in distress, made not Fetnah stay, knowing by her dress that she was a lady belonging to the palace. I apply myself to you, said she, putting the purse into his hands, as a person whose piety is cried up throughout the city. I desire you to distribute that gold among the poor strangers you relieve, for I know you make it your business to assist poor strangers who have recourse to your charity. I am also satisfied that you prevent their wants, and that nothing is more agreeable to you than to have an opportunity of easing their misery. Madam, answered the syndic, I shall obey your commands with pleasure; but if you desire to exercise your charity in person, and will be pleased to step to my house, you will there see two women worthy of your compassion: I met them yesterday as they were coming into the city; they were in a deplorable condition, and it moved me the [200] more, because I thought they were persons of some quality. Through all the rags that covered them, and notwithstanding the impression the sun has made on their faces, I discovered a noble air, not to be commonly found in those poor people I relieve. I carried them both to my house, and delivered them to my wife, who was of the same opinion with me. She caused her slaves to provide them good beds, whilst she herself washed their faces, and gave them clean linen. We know not as yet who they are, because we will let them take some rest before we trouble them with our questions.

Fetnah, without being able to give any reason for it, had a curiosity to see them. The syndic would have

conducted her to his house, but she would not give him the trouble, and was satisfied that a slave of his should go and show her the way. She alighted at the door, and followed the syndic's slave, who was gone on before to give notice to his mistress, she being then in the chamber with Alcolomb and her mother, for they were the persons the syndic had been talking of to Fetnah.

The syndic's wife, being informed by the slave that a court-lady was in her house, was going out of the room to meet her; but Fetnah, who had followed close to the slave's heels, did not give her so much time, and coming into the chamber, the syndic's wife fell down before her, to express the respect she had for all that belonged to the caliph. Fetnah took her up, and said, My good lady, I desire you would let me speak with those two strangers that arrived at Bagdad last night. Madam, answered the syndic's wife, they lie in those two little beds you see close by each other. The favourite immediately drew near the mother's, and viewing her carefully, Good woman, said she, I come to offer you my assistance: I have a considerable interest in [201] this city, and may be assisting to you and your companion. Madam, answered Ganem's mother, I perceive by your obliging offers that Heaven has not quite forsaken us, though we have cause to believe it, after so many misfortunes as have befallen us. Having uttered these words, she wept so bitterly that Fetnah and the syndic's wife could not forbear letting fall some tears.

The caliph's favourite, having dried up hers, said to Ganem's mother, Be so kind as to tell us your misfortunes, and recount your story. You cannot give the relation to any persons better disposed than we are to use all possible means to comfort you. Madam, replied Abou Ayoub's disconsolate widow, a favourite of the commander of the true believers, a lady whose name is Fetnah, is the occasion of all our misfortunes. These words were like a thunderbolt to the favourite: but suppressing her concern and uneasiness, she suffered Ganem's mother to proceed, who did it after this manner: I am the widow of Abou Ayoub, a merchant of Damascus; I had a son, called Ganem, who, coming to trade at Bagdad, has been accused of having debauched that Fetnah. The caliph has caused search to be made for him every where, to put him to death; and not finding him, wrote to the king of Damascus, to cause our house to be plundered and razed, and to expose my daughter and me three days successively, stark naked, to be seen by the people, and then to banish us out of Syria for ever.

But how unworthy soever our usage has been, I should still be comforted, were my son alive, and I could meet with him. What a pleasure would it be for his sister and me to see him again! Embracing him, we should forget the loss of our goods, and all the evils we have suffered for him. Alas! I am fully persuaded he is the innocent cause of them; and that he is no more guilty towards the caliph, than his sister and I. [202]

No doubt of it, said Fetnah, interrupting her there; he is no more guilty than you are; I can assure you of his innocence, for I am that very Fetnah you so much complain of, who, through some fatality in my stars, have occasioned so many misfortunes. To me you must impute the loss of your son, if he is no more; but if I have occasioned your misfortune, I can in some measure relieve it. I have already cleared Ganem to the caliph, who has caused it to be proclaimed throughout his dominions, that he pardons the son of Abou Ayoub; and I do not question but that he will do you as much good as he has done you harm. You are no longer his enemies: he expects Ganem to requite the service he has done me by uniting our fortunes: he gives me to him for his consort; therefore look on me as your daughter, and permit me to vow an eternal friendship to you. Having so said, she bowed down on Ganem's mother, who was so astonished that she could return no answer. Fetnah held her a long time in her arms, and only left her to run to the other bed to Alcolomb, who, sitting up, held out her arms to receive her.

When the caliph's charming favourite had given the mother and daughter all the tokens of affection they could expect from Ganem's wife, she said to them, Cease both of you to afflict yourselves: the wealth Ganem had in this city is not lost; it is in my apartment in the palace; but I know all the treasure in the world cannot comfort you without Ganem: I judge so of his mother and sister, if I may judge of them by myself; blood is no less powerful than love in great minds. But why should we despair of seeing him again? We shall find him: the good fortune of meeting with you makes me conceive fresh hopes: and perhaps this is the last day of your sufferings, and the beginning of a greater felicity than you enjoyed in Damascus when Ganem was with [203] you.

Fetnah would have gone on, when the syndic of the jewellers came in, saying, Madam, I am come from seeing a very moving object; it is a young man, a camel-driver, who was carrying to the hospital of Bagdad: he was bound with cords on a camel, because he had not strength enough to sit him. They had already unbound, and were carrying him into the hospital, when I happened to be passing by. I went close up to the young man, viewed him carefully, and fancied his countenance was not altogether unknown to me. I asked him some questions concerning his family and his country; but all the answer I could get, consisted only in sighs and tears. I took pity on him, and perceiving, by being so much used to sick people, that he had great need to have particular care taken of him, I would not permit him to be put into the hospital; for I am too well acquainted with their way of looking to the sick, and am sensible of the incapacity of the physicians. I have caused him to be brought home to my house by my slaves; and they are now, by my orders, putting on some of my own linen, and serving him as they would do me, in a chamber for that purpose.

Fetnah's heart leaped at these words of the jeweller, and she felt a sudden emotion, for which she could not account. Show me, said she to the syndic, into that sick man's room; I would gladly see him. The syndic conducted her, and whilst she was going thither, Ganem's mother said to Alcolomb, Alas! daughter, as wretched as that sick stranger is, your brother, if he be living, is not perhaps in a more happy condition.

The caliph's favourite, coming into the chamber where the sick man was, drew near the bed, into which the syndic's slaves had already laid him. She saw a young man whose eyes were closed, his countenance [204] pale, disfigured, and bathed in tears. She gazed earnestly on him, her heart beat, and she fancied she beheld Ganem; but yet she would not believe her eyes. Though she found something of Ganem in the object she beheld, yet, in other respects, he appeared so different, that she durst not imagine it was he that lay before her. However, not being able to withstand the earnest desire of being satisfied, Ganem, said she, with a quivering voice, is it you I behold? Having spoken these words, she stopped to give the young man time to answer; but observing that he seemed insensible, Alas! Ganem, added she, it is not you that I talk to! My imagination being overcharged with your image, has given this stranger a deceitful resemblance: the son of Abou Ayoub, though ever so sick, would know the voice of Fetnah. At the name of Fetnah, Ganem (for it was really he) opened his eyes, and turned his face towards the person that spoke to him, and knowing the caliph's favourite, Ah! madam, said he, what miracle?—He could say no more; such a sudden transport of joy seized him that he fell into a swoon. Fetnah and the syndic did all they could to bring him to himself; but as soon as they perceived he began to revive, the syndic desired the lady to withdraw, for fear lest the sight of her should heighten Ganem's distemper.

The young man, having recovered his senses, looked all about, and not seeing what he looked for, cried out, What is become of you, charming Fetnah? did you really appear before mine eyes, or was it only an illusion? No, sir, said the syndic, it was no illusion. It was I that caused that lady to withdraw, but you shall see her again as soon as you are in a condition to bear her sight. You now stand in need of rest, and nothing ought to obstruct your taking it. The posture of your affairs is altered, since you are, as I suppose, that Ganem, in [205] favour of whom the commander of the true believers has caused a proclamation to be made in Bagdad, declaring that he forgives him what is past. Be satisfied for the present, with knowing so much; the lady who just now spoke to you will acquaint you with the rest; therefore think of nothing but recovering your health: I will contribute all that shall be in my power towards it. Having spoken these words, he left Ganem to take his rest, and went himself to provide all such medicines for him as were proper to recover his strength, quite spent by want and toil.

During that time Fetnah was in the room with Alcolomb and her mother, where almost the same scene was acted over again; for when Ganem's mother understood that the sick man the syndic had then newly brought into his house was Ganem himself, she was so overjoyed, that she also swooned away; and when, with the assistance of Fetnah and the syndic's wife, she was again come to herself, she would have got up to see her son: but the syndic coming in then, hindered her, giving her to understand that Ganem was so weak and feeble that it would endanger his life, to excite in him those commotions which must be the consequence of the unexpected sight of a beloved mother and sister. There was no occasion for the syndic's making any long discourses to persuade Ganem's mother: as soon as she was told that she could not discourse to her son without hazarding his life, she ceased insisting to go and see him. Then Fetnah, turning the discourse, said, Let us bless Heaven for having brought us all together into one place. I will return to the palace to give the caliph

an account of all these adventures, and to-morrow morning I will return to you: this said, she embraced the mother and the daughter, and went away. As soon as she came to the palace, she sent Mesroure to desire [206] to be admitted to the caliph in private, which was immediately granted; and being brought into that prince's closet, where he was alone, she prostrated herself at his feet, with her face on the ground, according to custom. He commanded her to rise, and having made her sit down, asked whether she had heard any news of Ganem. Commander of the true believers, said she, I have been so successful, that I have found him, as also his mother and sister. The caliph was curious to know how she could find them in so short a time, and she satisfied his curiosity, saying so many things in commendation of Ganem's mother and sister, that he desired to see them, as well as the young merchant.

Though Haroun Alraschid was passionate, and in his heat sometimes guilty of cruel actions; yet, to make amends, he was just, and the most generous prince in the world, as soon as his anger was over, and he was made sensible of the wrong he had done. Therefore, having no longer cause to doubt but that he had unjustly persecuted Ganem and his family, and having publicly wronged them, he resolved to make them public satisfaction. I am overjoyed, said he to Fetnah, that your search has proved so successful; it is a mighty satisfaction to me, not so much for your sake as for my own. I will keep the promise I have made you. You shall marry Ganem, and I here declare you are no longer my slave. Go back to that young merchant; and, as soon as he has recovered his health, you shall bring him to me, with his mother and sister.

The next morning early, Fetnah repaired to the syndic of the jewellers, being impatient to hear of Ganem's health, and to tell the mother and daughter the good news she had for them. The first person she met was [207] the syndic, who told her that Ganem had rested very well that night; and that his distemper altogether proceeded from melancholy, and the cause being removed, he would soon recover his health.

Accordingly the son of Abou Ayoub was much mended. Rest, and the good medicines applied to him, but, above all, the easiness of his mind, had wrought so good an effect, that the syndic thought he might without danger see his mother, his sister, and his mistress, provided he was prepared to receive them; because there was ground to fear that, not knowing his mother and sister were at Bagdad, the sight of them might occasion too great joy and surprise. It was therefore resolved, that Fetnah should first go alone into Ganem's chamber, and then make a sign to the two other ladies to appear, when she thought fit.

Affairs being so ordered, the sick man was acquainted with Fetnah's coming, by the syndic, which was so ravishing a sight to him, that he was again near falling into a swoon. Well, Ganem, said she, drawing near to his bed, you have again found your Fetnah, whom you thought you had lost for ever. Ah! madam, said he, interrupting her, what miracle has restored you to my sight? I thought you were in the caliph's palace: that prince has doubtless given ear to you. You have dispelled his jealousy, and he has restored you to his favour. Yes, my dear Ganem, answered Fetnah, I have cleared myself before the commander of the true believers, who, to make amends for the wrong he has done you, bestows me on you for a wife. These last words occasioned such an excess of joy in Ganem, that he knew not for a while how to express himself, otherwise than by that passionate silence so well known to lovers. At length he broke out with these words: Ah, beautiful Fetnah, may I give credit to what you tell me? May I believe that the caliph really resigns you to Abou [208] Ayoub's son? Nothing is more certain, answered the lady. That prince, who before caused search to be made for you to take away your life, and who in his fury caused your mother and your sister to suffer a thousand indignities, desires now to see you, that he may reward the respect you had for him; and there is no question to be made, but that he will be profuse in his favours to your family.

Ganem asked what the caliph had done to his mother and sister, which Fetnah told him; and he could not forbear letting fall some tears at that relation, notwithstanding his thoughts were so full of the news he had heard of being married to his mistress. But when Fetnah informed him that they were actually in Bagdad, and in the same house with him, he appeared so impatient to see them, that the favourite could no longer defer giving him that satisfaction; and accordingly called them in. They were then at the door, only waiting that moment. They came in, made up to Ganem, and embracing him in their turns, gave him a thousand kisses. How many tears were shed amidst those embraces! Ganem's face was bathed with them, as well as his mother's and sister's; and Fetnah let fall in abundance. The syndic himself, and his wife, being moved at the spectacle, could not forbear weeping, nor sufficiently admire the secret workings of Providence, which brought together

into their house four persons whom fortune had so cruelly parted.

When they had all dried up their tears, Ganem drew a fresh supply, by the recital of all he had suffered from the day he left Fetnah, till the moment the syndic brought him to his house. He told them, that having reached a small village, he there fell sick; that some charitable peasants had taken care of him, but finding he did not recover, a camel-driver had undertaken to carry him to the hospital at Bagdad. Fetnah, also, told them [209] all the uneasiness of her imprisonment; how the caliph, having heard her talk in the tower, had sent for her into his closet, and how she had cleared herself. In the conclusion, when they had all related what accidents had befallen them, Fetnah said, Let us bless Heaven, which has brought us all together again, and let us think of nothing but the happiness that attends us. As soon as Ganem has recovered his health, he must appear before the caliph with his mother and sister; but because they are not in a condition to be seen, I will go and make some provision for them; so I desire you to stay a moment for me.

This said, she went away to the palace, and soon returned to the syndic's, with a purse containing a thousand pieces of gold, which she delivered to the syndic, desiring him to buy clothes for the mother and daughter. The syndic, who was a man of a good fancy, chose such as were extraordinary fine, and had them made up with all speed. They were finished in three days, and Ganem, finding himself strong enough to go abroad, prepared for it; but on the day he had appointed to go and pay his respects to the caliph, when he was making ready with his mother and sister, the grand vizier Giafar came to the syndic's house.

That minister came on horseback, attended by a great number of officers. Sir, said he to Ganem, as soon as he came in, I am come from the commander of the true believers, my master and yours; the orders I have, differ very much from those which I do not care to revive in your memory. I am to bear you company, and to present you to the caliph, who is desirous to see you. Ganem returned no other answer to the vizier's compliments than by profoundly bowing his head, and then mounted a horse brought from the caliph's stables, which he [210] managed very gracefully. The mother and daughter were mounted on mules belonging to the palace; and whilst Fetnah led them a by-way to the prince's court, Giafar conducted Ganem another way, and brought him into the presence-chamber. The caliph was there sitting on his throne, encompassed with emirs, viziers, and other attendants and courtiers, Arabs, Persians, Egyptians, Africans, and Syrians, of his own dominions, not to mention strangers.

When the vizier had conducted Ganem to the foot of the throne, that young merchant paid his obeisance, prostrating himself with his face on the ground; and then rising, made his compliment in verse, which, though *extempore*, met with the approbation of the whole court.

After his compliment, the caliph caused him to draw near, and said to him, I am glad to see you, and desire to hear from your own mouth where you found my favourite, and all that you did for her. Ganem obeyed, and appeared so sincere, that the caliph was convinced of the reality of what he said. That prince ordered a very rich vest to be given him, according to the custom observed with those who are admitted to audience. After which, he said to him, Ganem, I will have you live in my court. Commander of the true believers, answered the young merchant, a slave has no will but his master's, on whom his life and fortune depend. The caliph was highly pleased with Ganem's answer, and assigned him a considerable pension. Then that prince came down from his throne, and causing only Ganem and the grand vizier to follow him, went into his own apartment. Not questioning but Fetnah was there, with Abou Ayoub's widow and daughter, he caused them to be called in. They fell down before him: he made them rise, and was so taken with Alcolomb's beauty, that, after [211] viewing her very attentively, he said, I am so sorry for having treated your charms so unworthily, that I owe them such a satisfaction as may surpass the injury I have done them: I take you to wife; and by that means shall punish Zobeide, who shall become the first cause of your good fortune, as she was of your past sufferings. This is not all, added he, turning towards Ganem's mother; you are still young; I believe you will not disdain to be allied to my grand vizier: I give you to Giafar. Let a *cadi* and witnesses be called, and the three contracts be drawn up and signed immediately. Ganem would have represented to the caliph, that it would be honour enough for his sister to be one of his favourites; but that prince was resolved to marry her.

He thought this such an extraordinary story, that he ordered a famous historian to commit it to writing, with all its circumstances. It was afterwards laid up in his library; and many copies being transcribed from that

original, it became public.

THE STORY OF PRINCE ZEYN ALASNAM, AND THE KING OF THE GENII.

A king of Balsora, who possessed great wealth and was well beloved by his subjects, had no children, which was a great affliction to him; and therefore he made presents to all the holy persons in his dominions to engage them to beg a son for him of Heaven: and their prayers being effectual, the queen proved with child, and was happily delivered of a prince who was named Zeyn Alasnam, which signifies Ornament of the Statues.

The king caused all the astrologers in his kingdom to be assembled, and ordered them to calculate the infant's nativity. They found by their observations, that he would live long and be very brave; but that all his courage would be little enough to bear him through the misfortunes that would threaten him. The king was not daunted at the prediction. My son, said he, is not to be pitied, since he will be brave: it is fit that princes should have a taste of misfortunes; for adversity tries virtue, and they are the fitter to reign.

He rewarded the astrologers, and dismissed them; and caused Zeyn to be educated with the greatest care imaginable; appointing him able masters as soon as he was of age to receive their instructions. In short, he proposed to make him an accomplished prince; when, on a sudden, that good king fell sick of a distemper which all the skill of his physicians could not cure. Perceiving his disease was mortal, he sent for his son, and among other things advised him rather to endeavour to be beloved than to be feared by his people; not [213] to give ear to flatterers; to be as slow in rewarding as in punishing; because it often happens that monarchs, misled by false appearances, load wicked men with favours, and oppress the innocent.

As soon as king Zeyn was dead, prince Zeyn went into mourning, which he wore seven days, and the eighth he ascended the throne, taking his father's seal off the royal treasure, and putting on his own. He began thus to taste the sweets of ruling, the pleasure of seeing all his courtiers bow down before him, and make it their whole business to show their zeal and obedience. In a word, the sovereign power was too agreeable to him. He only regarded what his subjects owed to him, without considering what his duty was towards them, and consequently took little care to govern them well. He wallowed in all sorts of debauchery among the voluptuous youth, on whom he conferred the prime employments in the kingdom; so that there was nothing regular. Being naturally prodigal, he set no bounds to his grants, so that his women and his favourites insensibly drained his treasure.

The queen his mother was still living, a discreet wise princess. She had several times unsuccessfully tried to give some check to her son's prodigality and debauchery; giving him to understand, that if he did not soon take another course, he would not only squander his wealth, but would also alienate the minds of his people, and occasion some revolution, which perhaps might cost him his crown and his life. What she had foretold was very near falling out; the people began to mutter against the government, and their muttering had certainly been followed by a general revolt, had not the queen by her dexterity prevented it. But that princess, being informed of the ill posture of affairs, gave notice to the king, who at last suffered himself to be prevailed upon. [214] He committed the government to discreet ancient men, who knew how to keep the people within the bounds of duty.

Zeyn, seeing all his wealth consumed, repented that he had made no better use of it. He fell into a dismal melancholy, and nothing could comfort him. One night he saw in a dream, a venerable old man, who came towards him, and with a smiling countenance said, Know, Zeyn, that there is no sorrow but what is followed by mirth, no misfortune but what in the end brings some happiness. If you desire to see the end of your affliction, get up, set out for Egypt, go to Grand Cairo: a greater fortune attends you there.

The prince, when he awaked in the morning, reflected on his dream, and talked of it very seriously to his mother, who only laughed at it. My son, said she to him, would you now go into Egypt upon belief of that fine dream? Why not, madam? answered Zeyn: do you imagine all dreams are chimerical? No, no, some of them

are mysterious. My masters have told me a thousand stories, which will not permit me to doubt of it. Besides, though I were not otherwise convinced, I could not forbear giving some credit to it. The old man that appeared to me had something supernatural. He was not one of those men whom nothing but age makes venerable; there appeared a sort of divine air about his person. In short, he was such a one as our great prophet is represented; and if you will have me tell you what I think, I believe it was he, who, pitying my affliction, designs to ease it: I rely on the confidence he has inspired me with. I am full of his promises, and have resolved to follow his advice. The queen endeavoured to dissuade him; but it was in vain. The prince committed to her the government of the kingdom, set out one night very privately from his palace, and took the road to Cairo, without suffering any person to attend him. [215]

After much trouble and fatigue, he arrived at that famous city, like which there are few in the world either for extent or beauty. He alighted at the gate of a mosque, where, being spent with weariness, he lay down. No sooner was he fallen asleep, than he saw the same old man, who said to him, I am pleased with you, my son; you have given credit to my words. You are come hither, without being deterred by the length or the difficulties of the way: but take notice, that I have not put you upon undertaking such a long journey upon any other design than to make trial of you. I find you have courage and resolution. You deserve I should make you the greatest and richest prince in the world. Return to Balsora, and you shall find immense wealth in your palace. No king ever possessed so much as is there.

The prince was not pleased with that dream.—Alas! thought he to himself, when he awaked, how much was I mistaken! That old man, whom I took for our prophet, is no other than the product of my disturbed imagination. My fancy was so full of him, that it is no wonder I have seen him again. I had best return to Balsora; what should I do here any longer? It is very happy that I told none but my mother the occasion of my journey: I should become a jest to my people if they knew it.

Accordingly he set out again for his kingdom; and as soon as he arrived there, the queen asked him, whether he returned well pleased. He told her all that had happened; and he was so much concerned for having been so credulous, that the queen, instead of adding to his vexation by reproving or laughing at him, comforted him. Forbear afflicting yourself, my son, said she; if God has appointed you riches, you will have them without any trouble. Be easy: all that I recommend to you is, to be virtuous. Renounce the delight of dancing, music, and high-coloured wine: shun all pleasures; they have already almost ruined you: apply yourself to the making of your subjects happy; and, securing their happiness, you will fix your own. [216]

Prince Zeyn swore he would for the future follow his mother's advice, and be directed by the wise viziers she had made choice of to assist him in supporting the weight of the government. But the very first night after he returned to his palace, he the third time saw in a dream the old man, who said to him, Brave Zeyn, the time of your prosperity is come. To-morrow morning, as soon as you are up, take a little pick-axe, and go dig in your father's closet; you will there find a mighty treasure.

As soon as the prince awaked, he got up, ran to the queen's apartment, and with much earnestness told her the new dream of that night. Really, my son, said his mother, that is a very positive man: he is not satisfied with having deceived you twice; have you a mind to believe him again? No, madam, answered Zeyn, I give no credit to what he has said; but I will, for my own satisfaction, search my father's closet. I really fancied so, cried the queen, laughing very heartily: go, my son, please yourself; my comfort is, that work is not so toilsome as the journey to Egypt.

Well, madam, answered the king, I must own that this third dream has restored my belief, for it agrees with the two others; and, in short, let us examine the old man's words. He first directed me to go into Egypt; there he told me, he had put me upon taking that journey only to try me. Return to Balsora, said he; that is the place where you are to find treasures: this night he has exactly pointed out the place where they are. These three dreams, in my opinion, are connected. After all, they may be chimerical; but I would rather search in vain, than blame myself as long as I live for having perhaps missed of great riches, by being unseasonably too hard of belief. [217]

Having spoken these words, he left the queen's apartment, caused a pick-axe to be brought him, and went

alone into the late king's closet. He fell to breaking up the ground, and took up above half the square stones it was paved with; and yet found not the least appearance of what he sought after. He ceased working to take a little rest, thinking within himself, I am much afraid my mother had cause enough to laugh at me. However, he took heart, and went on with his labour: nor had he cause to repent; for, on a sudden, he discovered a white stone, which he took up, and under it found a door made fast with a steel padlock, which he broke with the pick-axe, and opened the door, which covered a staircase of white marble. He immediately lighted a candle, and went down those stairs into a room, the floor whereof was laid with tiles of china-ware, and the roofs and walls were of crystal; but he particularly fixed his eyes on four places a little raised above the rest of the floor, on each of which there were ten urns of porphyry stone. He fancied they were full of wine: Well, said he, that wine must needs be very old; I do not question but it is excellent. He went up to one of the urns, took off the cover, and, with no less joy than surprise, perceived it was full of pieces of gold. He searched all the forty, one after another, and found them full of the same coin, took out a handful, and carried it to the queen.

That princess was as much amazed as can be imagined, when the king gave her an account of what he had seen. Oh! my son, said she, take heed that you do not lavish away all that treasure foolishly, as you have already done the royal treasure: let not your enemies have so much occasion to rejoice. No, madam, answered Zeyn, I will from henceforward live after such a manner as shall be pleasing to you. [218]

The queen desired the king her son to conduct her to that wonderful subterraneous place, which the late king her husband had made with such secrecy, that she had never heard the least account of it. Zeyn led her to the closet, down the marble stairs, and into the chamber where the urns were. She observed every thing with singular curiosity, and in a corner spied a little urn of the same sort of stone as the others. The prince had not before taken notice of it, but opening, found in it a golden key. My son, said the queen, the key certainly belongs to some other treasure; let us look all about; perhaps we may discover the use it is designed for.

They viewed all the chamber with the utmost exactness, and at length found a key-hole in one of the pannels of the wall, and guessed it to be that the key belonged to. The king immediately tried, and as readily opened the door, which led into a chamber, in the midst of which were nine pedestals of massy gold, on eight of which stood as many statues, each of them made of one single diamond, and from them came such a brightness that the whole room was perfectly light.

O Heavens! cried Zeyn, in a wonderful surprise, where could my father find such rarities? The ninth pedestal redoubled their amazement, for it was covered with a piece of white satin, on which were written these words: 'Dear son, it cost me much toil to get these statues: but though they are extraordinary beautiful, you must understand that there is a ninth in the world which surpasses them all: that alone is worth more than a thousand such as these. If you desire to be master of it, go to the city of Cairo in Egypt: one of my old slaves, whose name is Morabec, lives there; you will easily find him; the first person you shall meet will show you his house: go seek, and tell him all that has befallen you. He will know you to be my son, and he will conduct you to the place where that wonderful statue is, which you will get with safety.' [219]

The prince, having read those words, said to the queen, I will not be without that ninth statue; it must certainly be a very rare piece, since all these here are not of so great value together. I will set out speedily for Grand Cairo; nor do I believe, madam, that you will oppose my design. No, my son, answered the queen, I am not against it: you are certainly under the special protection of our great prophet; he will not suffer you to perish in this journey. Set out when you think fit; your viziers and I will take care of the government during your absence. The prince made ready his equipage, but would take only a small number of slaves with him.

Nothing remarkable befell him by the way; but arriving at Cairo, he inquired for Morabec. The people told him he was one of the wealthiest inhabitants of the city; that he lived like a great lord, and that he kept open house, especially for strangers. Zeyn was conducted thither, knocked at the gate, which a slave opened, and said, What is your want? and who are you? I am a stranger, answered the prince; and, having heard much of lord Morabec's generosity, am come to take up my lodging with him. The slave desired Zeyn to stay a while, and went to acquaint his master, who ordered him to desire the stranger to walk in. The slave returned to the gate, and told the prince he was welcome. [220]

Zeyn went in, crossed a large court, and entered into a hall magnificently furnished, where Morabec expected him, and received him very courteously, returning thanks for the honour he did him in accepting of a lodging in his house. The prince, having answered his compliments, said to Morabec, I am son to the late king of Balsora, and my name is Zeyn Alasnam. The king, said Morabec, was formerly my master; but, my lord, I never knew of any children he had. What age are you of? I am twenty years old, answered the prince. How long is it since you left my father's court? Almost two and twenty years, replied Morabec. But how can you convince me that you are his son? My father, replied Zeyn, had a subterraneous place under his closet, in which I have found forty porphyry urns full of gold. And what more is there? said Morabec. There are, answered the prince, nine pedestals of massy gold, on eight whereof are eight diamond statues, and on the ninth is a piece of white satin, on which my father has written what I am to do to get another statue, more valuable than all those together. You know where the statue is; for it mentioned on the satin that you will conduct me to it.

As soon as he had spoken these words, Morabec fell down at his feet, and kissing one of his hands several times, said, I bless God for having brought you hither: I know you to be the king of Balsora's son. If you will go to the palace where the wonderful statue is, I will conduct you; but you must first rest here a few days. This day I treat the great men of the court: we were at table when word was brought me of your being at the door. Will you vouchsafe to come and be merry with us? I shall be very glad, replied Zeyn, to be admitted to your feast. Morabec immediately led him into a dome where the company was, seated him at table, and [221] served him on his knee. The great men of Cairo were surprised, and whispered to one another, Who is this stranger to whom Morabec pays so much respect?

When they had dined, Morabec, directing his discourse to the company, said, Great men of Cairo, do not think much to see me serve this young stranger after this manner: be it known to you, that he is the son of the king of Balsora, my master. His father purchased me with his money, and died without making me free; so that I am still a slave, and consequently all I have of right belongs to this young prince, his sole heir. Here Zeyn interrupted him, saying, Morabec, I declare before all these lords, that I make you free from this moment, and that I renounce all right to your person, and all you possess. Consider what you would have me do more for you. Morabec then kissed the ground, and returned the prince most hearty thanks. Wine was then brought in, which they drank all the day, and towards evening presents were distributed among the guests, who then went away.

The next day, Zeyn said to Morabec, I have taken rest enough: I came not to Cairo to take my pleasure; my design is to get the ninth statue: it is time for us to set out in search of it. Sir, said Morabec, I am ready to comply with your desires; but you know not what dangers you must encounter to gain the precious conquest. Whatsoever the danger may be, answered the prince, I am resolved to undertake it; I will either perish or succeed. All that happens in this world is by God's direction: do you but bear me company, and let your resolution be equal to mine.

Morabec finding him resolved to set out, called his servants, and ordered them to make ready his [222] equipage. Then the prince and he performed the ablution, or washing, and the prayer enjoined, which is called Farz; and, that done, they set out. By the way they took notice of abundance of strange and wonderful things, and travelled many days; at the end whereof, being come to a delicious place, they alighted from their horses. Then Morabec said to all the servants that attended them, Do you stay in this place, and take care of our equipage till we return. Next, he said to Zeyn, Now, sir, let us two go on by ourselves: we are near the dreadful place where the ninth statue is kept. You will stand in need of all your courage.

They soon came to a lake; and Morabec sat down on the brink of it, saying to the prince, We must cross this sea. How can we cross it, answered Zeyn, when we have no boat? You will see one appear in a moment, replied Morabec: the enchanted boat of the king of the genii will come for us. But do not forget what I am going to say to you: you must observe a profound silence; do not speak to the waterman, though his figure seem ever so strange to you: whatsoever you observe, say nothing: for I tell you beforehand, that if you utter the least word when you are embarked, the boat will sink down. I shall take care to hold my peace, said the prince: you need only tell me what I am to do, and I will strictly observe it.

Whilst they were talking, he spied on a sudden a boat in the lake, and it was made of red sanders. It had a mast

of fine amber, and a blue satin flag. There was only one waterman in it, whose head was like an elephant's, and his body like a tiger's. When the boat was come up to the prince and Morabec, the monstrous waterman took them up one after another with his trunk, and put them into the boat, and then carried them over the lake in a moment. He then again took them up with his trunk, set them ashore, and immediately vanished with his boat. [223]

Now we may talk, said Morabec: the island we are on belongs to the king of the genii; there are no more such throughout the world. Look all about you, prince; can there be a more delightful place? It is certainly a lively representation of the charming place God has appointed for the faithful observers of our law. Behold the fields, adorned with all sorts of flowers and odoriferous plants: admire those fine trees, whose delicious fruit makes the branches hang down to the ground: enjoy the delight of those harmonious songs formed in the air by a thousand birds, of as many various sorts, unknown in other countries. Zeyn could never sufficiently admire the beauty of those things that were about him, and still found something new as he advanced farther into the island.

At length they came before a palace all of fine emeralds, encompassed with a ditch, on the banks whereof, at certain distances, were planted such tall trees that they shaded the whole palace. Before the gate, which was of massy gold, was a bridge made of one single shell of a fish, though it was at least six fathoms long and three in breadth. At the head of the bridge stood a company of genii, of a prodigious height, who guarded the entrance into the castle with great clubs of china steel.

Let us go no farther, said Morabec; these genii will beat our brains out; and if we would prevent their coming to us, we must perform a magical ceremony. He then drew out of a purse he had under his garment four long stripes of yellow taffety; one he put about his middle, and laid the other on his back, giving the other two to the prince, who did the like. Then Morabec laid on the ground two large table-cloths, on the edges whereof he scattered some precious stones, musk, and amber. Then he sat down on one of those cloths, and Zeyn on the other; and Morabec said to the prince, I will now, sir, conjure the king of the genii, who lives in the palace that is before us, that he may come peaceably to us. I confess I am somewhat uneasy about the reception he is like to give us. If our coming into this island is displeasing to him, he will appear in the shape of a dreadful monster; but if he approves of our design, he will come in the shape of a handsome man. As soon as he appears before us, you must rise and salute him, without going off your cloth; for you would certainly perish, should you stir off it. You may say to him, Sovereign lord of the genii, my father, who was your servant, has been taken away by the angel of death; I wish your majesty may protect me, as you always protected my father. If the king of the genii ask you what favour you desire of him, you must answer, Sir, I most humbly beg of you to give me the ninth statue. [224]

Morabec having thus instructed prince Zeyn, began his conjuration. Immediately their eyes were dazzled with a long flash of lightning, which was followed by a clap of thunder. The whole island was covered with a hideous darkness, a furious storm of wind blew, a dreadful cry was heard, the island felt a shock, and there was such an earthquake as that which Asrasyel is to cause on the day of judgment.

Zeyn was somewhat startled, and began to look upon that noise as a very ill omen, when Morabec, who knew better than he what to think of it, began to smile, and said, Be not dismayed, my prince, all goes well. In short, that very moment the king of the genii appeared in the shape of a very handsome man; yet there was something of sternness in his air.

As soon as prince Zeyn had made him the compliment he had been taught by Morabec, the king of the genii, smiling, answered, My son, I loved your father; and every time he came to pay me his respects, I presented him with a statue, which he carried away with him. I have no less kindness for you. I obliged your father, some days before he died, to write that which you read on the piece of white satin. I promised him to receive you under my protection, and to give you the ninth statue, which in beauty surpasses those you have already. I have begun to perform my promise to him. It was I whom you saw in a dream in the shape of an old man: I caused you to open the subterraneous place where the urns and the statues are: I have a great share in all that has befallen you, or rather am the occasion of it. I know the motive that brought you hither; and you shall obtain what you desire. Though I had not promised your father to give it, I would willingly grant it you; but you [225]

must first swear to me by all that is sacred, that you will return to this island, and that you will bring a maid that is in her fifteenth year, and who has never known man, nor desired to know any. She must also be perfectly beautiful, and you so much master of yourself, as not even to desire to enjoy her, as you are conducting her hither.

Zeyn took the rash oath that was required of him. But, sir, said he, then suppose I should be so fortunate as to meet with such a maid as you require, how shall I know that I have found her? I own, answered the king of the genii smiling, that you might be mistaken in her mien: that knowledge is above the sons of Adam, and therefore I do not intend to depend upon your judgment in that particular; I will give you a looking-glass, which will be surer than your conjectures. When you shall have seen a maid fifteen years of age, perfectly beautiful, you shall only need to look into the glass, in which you shall see the maiden's representation. If she be chaste, the [226] glass will remain clear and unsullied; but if, on the contrary, it sullies, that will be a certain sign that she has not been always undefiled, or at least that she has desired to cease being so. Do not forget the oath you have taken; be sure to keep it, as becomes a man of honour, otherwise I will take away your life, as much kindness as I have for you. Prince Zeyn Alasnam protested over again that he would faithfully keep his word.

Then the king of the genii delivered to him a looking-glass, saying, My son, you may return when you please: there is the glass you are to make use of. Zeyn and Morabec took leave of the king of the genii, and went towards the lake. The waterman with the elephant's head brought his boat, and carried them over the lake as he had done before. They joined their servants, and returned with them again to Cairo.

Prince Alasnam rested a few days at Morabec's house, and then said to him, Let us go to Bagdad, to seek a maiden for the king of the genii. Why, are we not at Grand Cairo? said Morabec: shall we not there find beautiful maidens enough? You are in the right, answered the prince; but how shall we do to find where they are? Do not trouble yourself about that, sir, answered Morabec; I know a very cunning old woman, whom I will intrust with that affair, and she will acquit herself well of it.

Accordingly the old woman found means to show the prince a considerable number of beautiful maidens of fifteen years of age; but when he had viewed them, and came to consult his looking-glass, the fatal touchstone of their virtue, the glass always appeared sullied. All the maidens in the court and city, that were in their fifteenth year, underwent the trial one after another, and the glass never remained bright and clear.

When they saw there were no chaste maids to be found in Cairo, they went away to Bagdad, where they [227] hired a magnificent palace in one of the chief corners of the city, and began to live splendidly. They kept open house; and, after all people had eaten in the palace, the fragments were carried to the dervises, who, by that means, had convenient subsistence.

There lived in that quarter an iman, whose name was Boubekir Mouesm, a vain, haughty, and envious person: he hated the rich, only because he was poor, his misery incensing him against his neighbour's prosperity. He heard talk of Zeyn Alasnam, and of the plenty his house afforded. This was enough for him to take an aversion to that prince; and it proceeded so far, that one day, after the evening prayer, in the mosque, he said to the people, Brethren, I have been told a stranger is come to live in our ward, who is at a prodigious expense every day. How can we tell but that this unknown person is some villain, who has committed a great robbery in his own country, and comes hither to make much of himself? Let us take heed, brethren; if the caliph should happen to be informed that such a man is in our ward, it is to be feared that he will punish us for not acquainting him with it: I declare, for my part, I wash my hands of it; and if any thing should happen amiss, it shall not lie at my door. The multitude, who were easily led away, unanimously cried to Boubekir, It is your business, doctor; do you acquaint the council with it. The iman went home well pleased, and drew up a memorial, resolving to present it to the caliph the next day.

But Morabec, who had been at prayers, and heard all that was said by the doctor as well as the rest of the company, put five hundred pieces of gold into a handkerchief, made up with a parcel of several silks, and went away to Boubekir's house. The doctor asked him in a harsh tone what he wanted. Doctor, answered [228] Morabec, with an obliging air, and at the same time putting into his hand the gold and the silk, I am your neighbour and your servant; I come from prince Zeyn, who lives in this ward. He has heard of your worth, and

has ordered me to come and tell you, that he desires to be acquainted with you; and, in the mean time, desires you to accept of this small present. Boubekir was transported with joy, and answered Morabec thus: Be pleased, sir, to beg the prince's pardon for me: I am ashamed I have not yet been to see him, but I will atone for my fault, and wait on him to-morrow.

Accordingly the next day, after morning prayer, he said to the people, You must understand, brethren, that no man is without some enemies. Envy pursues those chiefly who are very rich. The stranger I spoke to you about yesterday in the evening is no ill man, as some ill-designing persons would have persuaded me: he is a young prince, endued with all manner of virtues. It behoves us to take care how we go about to give any ill account of him to the caliph.

Boubekir, having thus wiped off the ill impression he had the day before given the people concerning Zeyn, returned home, put on his best apparel, and went to visit that young prince, who gave him a courteous reception. After several compliments had passed on both sides, Boubekir said to the prince, Sir, do you design to stay long at Bagdad? I shall stay, answered Zeyn, till I can find a maid fifteen years of age, perfectly beautiful, and so chaste, that she has not only never known a man, but even never desired to know one. You seek after a rarity, replied the iman; and I should be apt to fear your search would prove unsuccessful, did I not know where there is a maid of that character. Her father was formerly vizier; but he has left the court, and lived a long time in a house out of the way, where he applies himself only to the education of his daughter. If you please, I will go ask her of him for you: I do not question but he will be overjoyed to have a son-in-law of your quality. Not so fast, said the prince; I shall not marry that maid before I know whether I like her. As for her beauty, I can depend on you: but what assurance can you give me in relation to her virtue? What assurance do you require? said Boubekir. I must see her face, answered Zeyn; that is enough for me to come to a resolution. You are skilful, then, in physiognomy? replied the iman, smiling. Well, come along with me to her father's: I will desire him to let you see her one moment in his presence. [229]

Mouesm conducted the prince to the vizier's, who, as soon as he was acquainted with the prince's birth and design, called his daughter, and made her take off her veil. Never had the young king of Balsora beheld such a perfect and powerful beauty. He stood amazed; and, since he could then try whether the maid was as chaste as fair, he pulled out his glass, which remained bright and unsullied.

When he perceived he had at length found such a person as he desired, he entreated the vizier to grant her to him. Immediately the lady was sent for, and came; the contract was signed, and the marriage-prayer said. After which ceremony, Zeyn carried the vizier to his house, where he treated him magnificently, and gave him considerable presents. Next, he sent a prodigious quantity of jewels to the bride by Morabec, who brought her to his house, where the wedding was kept with all the pomp that became Zeyn's quality. When all the company was dismissed, Morabec said to his master, Let us be gone, sir; let us not stay any longer at Bagdad, but return to Cairo: remember the promise you made the king of the genii. Let us go, answered the prince; I must take care to perform it exactly: yet I must confess, my dear Morabec, that, if I obey the king of the genii, it is not without reluctancy. The person I have married is charming, and I am tempted to carry her to Balsora, and place her on the throne. Alas! sir, answered Morabec, take heed how you give way to your inclination. Make yourself master of your passions; and, whatsoever it costs you, be as good as your word to the king of the genii. Well then, Morabec, said the prince, do you take care to conceal that lovely maid from me: let her never appear in my sight. Perhaps I have already seen too much of her. [230]

Morabec having made all ready for their departure, they returned to Cairo, and thence set out for the island of the king of the genii. When they were there, the maid, who had performed the journey in a horse-litter, and whom the prince had never seen since his wedding-day, said to Morabec, Where are we? shall we be soon in the dominions of the prince my husband? Madam, answered Morabec, it is time to undeceive you. Prince Zeyn married you, only in order to get you from your father; he did not engage his faith to you to make you sovereign of Balsora, but to deliver you to the king of the genii, who has asked of him a virgin of your character. Hearing these words, she wept bitterly, which moved the prince and Morabec. Take pity on me, said she; I am a stranger: you will be accountable to God for your treachery towards me.

Her tears and complaints were of no effect, for she was presented to the king of the genii, who, having gazed

on her very earnestly, said to Zeyn, Prince, I am satisfied with your behaviour; the virgin you have brought me is beautiful and chaste, and I am pleased with the force you have put upon yourself to be as good as your word to me. Return to your dominions, and when you shall enter the subterraneous room where the eight statues are, you shall find the ninth which I promised you. I will go and make my genii carry it thither. [231] Zeyn thanked the king, and returned to Cairo with Morabec, but did not stay long there; his impatience to see the ninth statue made him hasten his journey. However, he could not but often think of the young virgin he married; and, blaming himself for having deceived her, he looked upon himself as the cause and instrument of her misfortune. Alas! said he to himself, I have taken her from a tender father to sacrifice her to a genie. O incomparable beauty! you deserve a better fate.

Prince Zeyn, disturbed with these thoughts, at length reached Balsora, where his subjects made extraordinary rejoicings for his return. He went directly to give his mother an account of his journey, who was in a rapture to hear he had obtained the ninth statue. Let us go, my son, said she, let us go and see it; for it is certainly in the chamber under ground, since the king of the genii told you you should find it there. The young king and his mother, being both impatient to see that wonderful statue, went down into the subterraneous place, and into the room of the statues: but how great was their surprise, when, instead of a statue of diamonds, they spied on the ninth pedestal a most beautiful virgin, whom the prince knew to be the same he had conducted into the island of the genii! Prince, said the young maid, you are amazed to see me here: you expected to have found something more precious than I; and I question not but that you now repent having taken so much trouble: you expected a better reward. Madam, answered Zeyn, Heaven is my witness, that I more than once thought to have broke my word with the king of the genii, to keep you to myself. Whatsoever the value of a diamond statue may be, is it worth the satisfaction of enjoying you? I love you above all the diamonds and wealth in the world. [232]

Just as he had done speaking these words, a clap of thunder was heard, which made that subterraneous place shake. Zeyn's mother was frightened; but the king of the genii, immediately appearing, dispelled her dread. Madam, said he to her, I protect and love your son: I had a mind to try whether, at his age, he could subdue his passions. I know the charms of this young lady have wrought on him, and that he did not punctually keep the promise he had made me, not to desire to enjoy her; but I am too well acquainted with the frailty of the human race. This is the ninth statue I designed for him; it is more rare and precious than the others. Live, said he, (directing his discourse to the young prince,) live happy, Zeyn, with this young lady, who is your wife; and, if you would have her true and constant to you, love her always, and love her alone. Give her no rival, and I will answer for her fidelity. Having spoken these words, the king of the genii vanished; and Zeyn, ravished with that young lady, consummated the marriage the same day, and caused her to be proclaimed queen of Balsora. Those two ever faithful and loving consorts lived together many years.

THE STORY OF CODADAD AND HIS BROTHERS.

Those who have written the history of the kingdom of Diarbekir inform us, that there formerly reigned a most magnificent king in the city of Harran, who loved his subjects, and was equally beloved by them. He was endued with all virtues, and wanted nothing to complete his happiness but an heir. Though he had the finest women in the world in his seraglio, yet he was destitute of children. He continually prayed to Heaven for them; and one night, in his sleep, a comely person, or rather a prophet, appeared to him, and said, Your prayers are heard; you have obtained what you desired: rise as soon as you awake, go to your prayers, and make two genuflections: then walk into the garden of your palace, call your gardener, and bid him bring you a pomegranate; eat as many of the seeds as you think fit, and your wishes shall be accomplished.

The king, calling to mind his dream when he awaked, returned thanks to Heaven, got up, and fell to his prayers, made two genuflections, and then went down into his garden, where he took fifty pomegranate-seeds, which he counted, and ate them. He had fifty wives who shared in his bed; they all proved with child; but there was one called Pirouze, who did not appear to be big-bellied. He took an aversion to that lady, and would have her put to death. Her barrenness, said he, is a certain token that Heaven does not judge Pirouze worthy to bear a prince; it is my duty to deliver the world from an object that is odious to the Lord. He had taken this cruel resolution, but his vizier diverted him from putting it in execution; representing to him, that all women [234] were not of the same constitution, and that it was not impossible but that Pirouze might be with child, though it did not appear. Well, answered the king, let her live; but let her depart my court, for I cannot endure her. Your majesty, replied the vizier, may send her to prince Samer, your cousin. The king approved of his advice: he sent Pirouze to Samaria with a letter, in which he ordered his cousin to treat her well; and, in case she proved with child, to give him notice of her being brought to bed.

No sooner was Pirouze arrived in that country, than it appeared that she was with child; and at length she was delivered of a most beautiful prince. The prince of Samaria wrote immediately to the king of Harran, to acquaint him with the birth of that son, and to congratulate him on that occasion. The king was much rejoiced at it, and answered prince Samer as follows: ‘Cousin, all my other wives have also been delivered of each a prince; so that we have a great number of children here. I desire you to breed up that of Pirouze, to give him the name of Codadad, and to send him to me when I shall give you notice.’

The prince of Samaria spared nothing that might improve the education of his nephew. He taught him to ride, shoot with a bow, and all the other things becoming the son of a king; so that Codadad, at eighteen years of age, was looked upon as a prodigy. This young prince, being inspired with a courage worthy his birth, said one day to his mother, Madam, I begin to grow weary of Samaria: I find myself inclined to gain renown; give me leave to go seek it amidst the perils of war. My father, the king of Harran, has many enemies. Some neighbouring princes make it their business to disturb him. Why does he not call me to his assistance? Why does he leave me here so long, like an infant? Must I spend my life here in sloth, when all my brothers [235] have the good fortune to be fighting by his side? My son, answered Pirouze, I am no less impatient to have your name become famous; I could wish you had already signalized yourself against your father’s enemies; but we must wait till he requires it. No, madam, replied Codadad, I have already waited but too long. I long to see the king, and am tempted to go to offer him my service as a young gentleman unknown. No doubt but he will accept of it, and I will not discover myself till I have performed a thousand glorious actions: I design to merit his esteem before he knows who I am. Pirouze approved of his generous resolution; and Codadad one day departed from Samaria, as if he had been going a-hunting, without acquainting prince Samer, for fear he should thwart his design.

He was mounted on a white horse, who had a gold bit and shoes; his housing was of blue satin, embroidered with pearls; the hilt of his scimitar was of one entire diamond; and the scabbard of sandal-wood, all adorned with emeralds and rubies; and on his shoulder hung his bow and quiver. In this equipage, which added much to

his good mien, he arrived at the city of Harran, and soon found means to offer his service to the king; who, being charmed with his beauty and lovely presence, and perhaps inspired by natural sympathy, gave him a favourable reception, and asked his name and quality. Sir, answered Codadad, I am son to an emir of Grand Cairo: an inclination to travel has made me quit my country; and, understanding, in my passage through your dominions, that you were engaged in war with some of your neighbours, I am come to your court to offer your majesty my service. The king showed him extraordinary kindness, and employed him in his troops.

That young prince soon signalized his bravery. He gained the esteem of the officers, and was admired [236] by the soldiers; and, having no less wit than courage, he so far advanced himself in the king's affection as to become his favourite. All the ministers and other courtiers daily resorted to Codadad, and were so eager to purchase his friendship that they neglected the king's other sons. Those princes could not but resent it; and, imputing it to the stranger, they all conceived an implacable hatred against him; but the king's affection daily increasing, he was never weary of giving him fresh testimonies of it. He always desired he should be near him: he admired his discourse, ever full of wit and discretion; and, to show how much he was satisfied with his wisdom, he gave him the tuition of the other princes, though he was of the same age as they. Thus Codadad was made governor of his brothers; which only served to heighten their hatred. Is it come to this, said they, that the king, not satisfied with loving a stranger more than us, will have him to be our tutor, and not allow us to do any thing without his leave? This is not to be endured: we must rid ourselves of this stranger. Let us go together, said one of them, and dispatch him. No, no, answered another; we had better be cautious how we sacrifice ourselves: his death would render us odious to the king, who, in return would declare us all unfit to reign. Let us destroy the stranger artfully. We will ask leave to go a-hunting; and, when far from the palace, we will proceed to some other city, and stay there some time. The king will wonder at our absence; and, perceiving we do not return, he may perhaps put the stranger to death, or at least will turn him out of the court, for suffering us to leave the palace.

All the princes applauded this artifice, went together to Codadad, and desired him to give them leave to [237] go and take the diversion of hunting, promising to return the same day. Pirouze's son was taken in the snare, and granted the leave his brothers desired. They went, but returned not. They had been three days absent, when the king asked Codadad where the princes were, for it was long since he had seen them. Sir, answered Codadad, they have been gone a-hunting these three days; but they promised me they would return sooner. The king grew uneasy, and much more when he perceived the princes did not return the next day. This provoked his passion: Indiscreet stranger, said he to Codadad, why did you let my sons go without bearing them company? Is it thus you discharge the trust I have reposed in you? Go seek them immediately, or you are a dead man.

These words pierced Pirouze's unfortunate son to the heart. He armed himself, went out of the city, and, like a shepherd who had lost his flock, searched all the country for his brothers, inquiring at every village whether they had been seen; and, hearing no news of them, was grieved to the heart. Alas! my brothers, said he, what is become of you? Are you perhaps fallen into the hands of our enemies? Am I come to the court of Harran to be the occasion of giving the king so much trouble? He was altogether comfortless for having given the princes leave to go a-hunting, or for not having borne them company.

After some days spent in a fruitless search, he arrived in a plain of prodigious extent, in the midst whereof was a palace all of black marble. He drew near, and at one of the windows spied a most beautiful lady, but set off with no other ornament than her own beauty; for her hair was dishevelled, her garments ragged, and on her countenance appeared all the tokens of the greatest affliction. As soon as she saw Codadad, and judged he might hear her, she directed her discourse to him, saying, Alas! young man, get away from this fatal [238] place, or else you will soon fall into the hands of the monster that inhabits it. A black who feeds only on human blood, resides in this palace. He seizes all persons whom their ill fate conducts to this plain, and shuts them up in his dark dungeons, whence they are never released but to be devoured by him.

Madam, answered Codadad, tell me who you are, and be not concerned for any more. I am a maid of quality, of Grand Cairo, replied the lady: I was passing by this castle yesterday, in my way to Bagdad, and met with the black, who killed all my servants, and brought me hither. I wish I had nothing but death to fear; but, to add to my calamity, this monster would persuade me to love him; and, in case I do not yield to-morrow to his

brutality, I must expect the utmost violence. I tell you once more, added she, make your escape: the black will soon return: he is gone out to pursue some travellers he spied at a distance on the plain. Lose no time; nay, I know not whether a speedy flight will deliver you from him.

She had scarce done speaking these words before the black appeared. He was a man of a monstrous bulk, and of a dreadful aspect, mounted on a mighty Tartar horse, and wore such a large and heavy scimitar, that none but he could make use of it. The prince, seeing him, was amazed at his monstrous mien, directed his prayers to Heaven to assist him, then drew his scimitar, and stood still to expect the black; who, despising so inconsiderable an enemy, called to him to yield himself with engaging words; but Codadad, by his behaviour, gave him to understand that he was resolved to defend his life; for he drew near, and gave him a great cut on the knee. The black, feeling himself wounded, gave such a dreadful shriek as made all the plain resound. He grew enraged, foamed at the mouth, and raising himself on his stirrups, made at Codadad with his [239] dreadful scimitar. The stroke was so violent, that no more would have been required to put an end to the prince, had not he, by a sudden spring he made his horse take, avoided it. The scimitar made a mighty hissing in the air; but, before the black could have leisure to second the blow, Codadad let fall one on his right arm with such fury, that he cut it off. The dreadful scimitar fell, with the hand that held it; and the black, yielding under the violence of the stroke, lost his stirrups, and made the earth quake with his mighty fall. The prince alighted at the same time, and chopped off his enemy's head. Just then the lady, who had been a spectator of the combat, and was still offering up her vows to Heaven for that young hero whom she admired, gave a shriek for joy, and said to Codadad, Prince, (for the mighty victory you have obtained convinces me that you are of no ordinary extraction,) finish the work you have begun: the black has the keys of this castle: take them, and deliver me out of prison. The prince searched the wretch's pockets, as he lay stretched out on the ground, and found several keys.

He opened the first door, and went into a court, where he met the lady coming to meet him. She would have cast herself at his feet, in token of her gratitude; but he would not permit her. She commended his valour, and extolled him above all the heroes in the world. He returned her compliments; and she appearing still more lovely to him near at hand than at a distance, I know not whether she was more joyful to be delivered from the desperate danger she had been in, than he for having done so considerable a service to so beautiful a person.

Their discourse was interrupted by dismal cries and groans. What is this I hear? said Codadad: whence come those miserable cries which pierce our ears? Sir, said the lady to him, pointing to a little door there [240] was in the court, they come from thence. There are I know not how many wretched persons, whom fate has made to fall into the hands of the black. They are all chained; and that monster drew out one every day to be devoured.

It is an addition to my joy, answered the young prince, to understand that my victory will save the lives of those unfortunate persons. Come along with me, madam, to partake in the satisfaction of giving them their liberty. You may guess by yourself how welcome we shall be to them. Having so said, they advanced towards the door of the dungeon; and the nearer they drew, the more distinctly they heard the complaints of the prisoners. Codadad pitying them, and impatient to put an end to their sufferings, put one of the keys into the key-hole, which proved not to be the right one at first, and therefore he took another; at which noise all those unfortunate creatures, concluding it was the black, who came, according to custom, to bring them some meat, and at the same time to seize one of them to eat himself, redoubled their cries and groans. Lamentable voices were heard, which sounded as if they had come from the centre of the earth.

In the mean time, the prince had opened the door, and went down a very steep stair-case into a large and deep vault, which received some small light from a little window, and in which there were above a hundred persons bound to stakes, and their hands tied. Unfortunate travellers, said he to them, wretched victims, who only expected the moment of an approaching cruel death, give thanks to Heaven, which has this day delivered you by my means. I have slain the black by whom you were to be devoured, and am come to knock off your irons. The prisoners hearing these words, all together gave a shout, occasioned by joy and surprise. Codadad and the lady began to unbind them; and, as soon as any of them were loose, they helped to take off the [241] fetters from the rest; so that in a short time they were all at liberty.

They then kneeled down, and, having returned thanks to Codadad for what he had done for them, went out of the dungeon; and when they were come into the court, how surprising it was for the prince to see among the prisoners those he was in search of, and almost out of hopes to find! Princes, cried he, am I not deceived? is it not you I behold? May I flatter myself that it will be in my power to restore you to the king your father, who is inconsolable for the loss of you? But will he not have some one to lament? Are you all here alive? Alas! the death of one of you will suffice to damp all the joy I conceive for having delivered you.

The forty-nine princes all made themselves known to Codadad, who embraced them one after another, and told them how uneasy their father was on account of their absence. They gave their deliverer all the commendations he deserved, as did the other prisoners, who could not find words expressive enough to declare the gratitude they were sensible of. Next, Codadad, with them, took a view of the whole castle, where there was immense wealth; curious silks, gold brocades, Persian carpets, China satins, and an infinite quantity of other goods, which the black had taken from the caravans he had plundered, a considerable part whereof belonged to the prisoners Codadad had then set free. Every man knew and reclaimed what belonged to him. The prince restored them their own, and divided the rest of the merchandise among them. Then he said to them, How will you do to carry away your goods? we are here in a desert place, and there is no likelihood of getting your horses. Sir, answered one of the prisoners, the black robbed us of our camels as well as our goods, and perhaps they may be in the stables of this castle. That is not unlikely, replied Codadad; let us see after [242] it. Accordingly they went to the stables, where they not only found the camels, but also the horses belonging to the king of Harran's sons. There were some black slaves in the stables; who, seeing all the prisoners released, and guessing thereby that their master had been killed, fled through by-ways well known to them. Nobody minded to pursue them. All the merchants, overjoyed that they had recovered their goods and camels, together with their liberty, thought of nothing but prosecuting their journey; but first repeated their thanks to their deliverer.

When they were gone, Codadad, directing his discourse to the lady, said, To what place, madam, do you desire to go? whither did you design when you were seized by the black? I intend to bear you company to the place you shall appoint, and I do not question but that all these princes will do the same. The king of Harran's sons protested to the lady they would not leave her till she was restored to her friends.

Princes, said she, I am of a country too remote from hence: and, besides that it would be an imposition on your generosity to oblige you to travel so far, I must own to you that I am come from my native country for ever. I told you a while ago that I was a lady of Grand Cairo; but since you have shown me so much favour, and I am so highly obliged to you, added she, looking upon Codadad, I should be much in the wrong in concealing the truth from you. I am a king's daughter; an usurper has possessed himself of my father's throne after having murdered him, and I have been forced to fly to save my life.

Then Codadad and his brothers desired the princess to tell them her story, assuring her they were highly [243] concerned at her misfortunes, and fully disposed to spare for nothing that might contribute towards rendering her more happy. After thanks returned for their fresh protestations of readiness to serve her, she could not refuse satisfying their curiosity, and began the recital of her adventures in the following manner.

STORY OF THE PRINCESS OF DERYABAR.

There is, in a certain island, a great city called Deryabar. It has been long governed by a potent, magnificent, and virtuous king. That prince had no children, which was the only thing wanting to make him happy. He continually addressed his prayers to Heaven; but Heaven granted his requests by halves; for the queen his wife, after a long expectation, brought forth a daughter.

I am the unfortunate princess. My father was rather troubled than pleased at my birth; but he submitted to the will of God, and caused me to be educated with all possible care, being resolved, since he had no son, to teach me the art of ruling, that I might supply his place after his death.

One day, when he was taking the diversion of hunting, he spied a wild ass, which he chased, lost his company, and was carried away so far in that heat, as to ride on till night, without reflecting that he was quite out of the way. He then alighted, and sat down at the edge of a wood, into which he had observed the ass had taken. No sooner was the day shut in, than he discovered a light among the trees, which made him conclude that he was not far from some village: he rejoiced at it, hoping that he might pass the night there, and find some person to send to his followers to acquaint them where he was; and accordingly he got up and walked towards [244] the light, which served to guide him.

He soon found he had been deceived, that light being no other than a fire lighted in a hut: however, he drew near, and with amazement beheld a great black, or rather a dreadful giant, sitting on a sofa. Before the monster was a great pitcher of wine, and he was roasting a bullock he had newly killed. Sometimes he drank out of the pitcher, and then cut slices off the bullock and ate them. But that which most drew the king my father's attention was a beautiful woman he saw in the hut. She seemed to be overwhelmed with grief; her hands were bound, and at her feet was a small child, about two or three years old, who, as if he was sensible of his mother's misfortunes, continually wept, and rent the air with cries.

My father being moved with that object of pity, thought at first to have gone into the hut and attack the giant; but considering it would be an unequal combat, he stopped, and resolved, since he had not strength enough to prevail by open force, to use art.

In the mean time the giant, having emptied the pitcher and devoured above half the bullock, turned to the woman, and said, Beautiful princess, why do you oblige me by your obstinacy to treat you with severity? It is in your own power to be happy. You need only to resolve to love and be true to me, and I shall express my affection to you. Thou hideous satyr, answered the lady, never expect that time should wear away the aversion I have for you. Thou wilt ever be a monster in my eyes. To these words she added so many reproaches, that the giant grew enraged. This is too much, cried he, in a furious tone; my love undervalued is turned into rage. Your hatred has at last caused mine; I find it prevails above my desires, and that I now wish your death rather [245] than enjoyment. Having spoken these words, he took that wretched lady by the hair, held her up with one hand in the air, and drawing his scimitar with the other, was just going to strike off her head, when the king my father let fly an arrow, which pierced the giant's breast, so that he staggered and dropped down dead.

My father entered the hut, unbound the lady's hands, asked her who she was, and how she came thither. Sir, said she, there are some families of Saracens along the sea-coast, who live under a prince who is my husband; this giant you have killed was one of his principal officers. The wretch fell desperately in love with me, but took special care to conceal it, till he could put in execution the designs he had laid of stealing me away. Fortune oftener favours wicked designs than the virtuous. The giant one day surprised me and my child in a by-place. He seized us both; and, to disappoint the search he well knew my husband would cause to be made on account of this rape, he removed far from the country inhabited by those Saracens, and brought us into this wood, where he has kept me some days. As deplorable as my condition is, it is still a great satisfaction to me to think that the giant, though so brutal and amorous, never used force to obtain that which I always refused to his entreaties: not but that he has threatened me a hundred times that he would have recourse to the worst of

extremities, in case he could not otherwise prevail upon me; and, I must confess to you, that a while ago, when I provoked his anger by my words, I was less concerned for my life than for my honour.

This, sir, said the prince of the Saracens' wife, is the faithful account of my misfortunes, and I do not question but that you will think me worthy enough of your compassion, not to repent your having so generously relieved me. Madam, answered my father, be assured your troubles have moved me, and I will do all that shall be in my power to make you happy again. To-morrow, as soon as the day appears, we will go out of this wood, and endeavour to fall into the road which leads to the great city of Deryabar, of which I am sovereign; and, if you think fit, you shall be entertained in my palace, till the prince your husband shall come to reclaim you. [246]

The Saracen lady accepted the offer, and the next day followed the king my father, who found all his retinue upon the skirts of the wood, they having spent the night in searching after, and being very uneasy for that they could not find him. They were no less joyful to meet their king, than amazed to see him with a lady whose beauty surprised them. He told them how he had found her, and the danger he had run in drawing near to the hut, where he must certainly have lost his life had the giant espied him. One of his servants took up the lady behind him, and another carried the child.

Thus they arrived at the king my father's palace, who assigned the beautiful Saracen lady an apartment, and caused the child to be carefully educated. The lady was sensible of the king's goodness to her, and expressed as much gratitude as he could desire. She had at first appeared very uneasy and impatient, on account that her husband did not reclaim her; but by degrees she shook off that uneasiness: the respect my father paid her dispelled her impatience; and I am of opinion she would at last have blamed fortune more for restoring her to her kindred than she did for removing her from them.

In the mean time, the lady's son grew up; he was very handsome; and not wanting wit, found the way to please the king my father, who had a great kindness for him. All the courtiers perceived it, and guessed that young man might in the end be my husband. Upon this conceit, and looking on him already as heir to the crown, they made their court to him, and every man endeavoured to gain his favour. He soon saw into their designs, grew conceited of himself, and, forgetting the distance there was between our conditions, flattered himself with the hopes that my father was fond enough of him to prefer him before all the princes in the world. Nay, he went farther; for the king not answering his expectation, in offering me to him as soon as he could have wished, he had the boldness to ask me of him. Whatsoever punishment his insolence deserved, my father was satisfied with telling him that he had other thoughts in relation to me, and showed him no farther dislike. The youth was incensed at this refusal; the vain fellow resented the contempt, as if he had asked some maid of indifferent extraction, or as if his birth had been equal to mine. Nor was he so satisfied; but resolved to be revenged on the king; and, with unparalleled ingratitude, conspired against him. In short, he murdered him, and caused himself to be proclaimed king of Deryabar, by a great number of malcontents whom he supported. The first thing he did, after ridding himself of my father, was to come into my apartment with a great train of the conspirators. His design was, either to take my life or oblige me to marry him. While he was busy murdering my father, the grand vizier, who had been always loyal to his master, came to carry me away from the palace, and secured me in a friend's house, till a vessel he had provided was ready to sail. I then left the island, attended only by a governess and that generous minister, who chose rather to follow his master's daughter, and to partake of her misfortunes, than to submit to a tyrant. [248]

The grand vizier designed to carry me to the courts of the neighbouring kings, to implore their assistance, and excite them to revenge my father's death; but Heaven did not give me a blessing to that resolution we thought so just. When we had been but a few days at sea, there arose such a furious storm, that, in spite of all the mariners' art, our vessel, carried away by the violence of the winds and waves, was dashed in pieces against a rock. I will not spend time in describing our shipwreck. I can but faintly represent to you how my governess, the grand vizier, and all that attended me, were swallowed up by the sea. The dread I was seized with did not permit me to observe the horror of our condition. In fine, I lost my senses; and whether I was thrown upon the coast upon any part of the wreck of our ship, or whether Heaven, which reserved me for other misfortunes, wrought a miracle in my deliverance, I found myself on shore when my senses returned to me.

Misfortunes very often make us forget our duty: instead of returning thanks to God for so singular a mercy shown me, I only lifted up my eyes to heaven, to complain because I had been saved. I was so far from bewailing the vizier and my governess, that I envied their fate; and, my dreadful imaginations by degrees prevailing above my reason, I resolved to cast myself into the sea. I was upon the point of doing so, when I heard behind me a great noise of men and horses. I looked about to see what it might be, and spied several armed horsemen, among whom was one mounted on an Arabian horse. He had on a garment embroidered with silver, a girdle set with precious stones, and a crown of gold on his head. Though his habit had not convinced me that he was the chief of the company, I should have judged it by the air of grandeur which appeared [249] in his person. He was a young man extraordinarily finely shaped, and perfectly beautiful. Being surprised to see a young lady alone in that place, he sent some of his officers to ask who I was. All my answer was weeping. The shore being covered with the wreck of our ship, they concluded some vessel had been cast away there, and that I was certainly some person that had saved my life. This conjecture, and my inconsolable condition, excited the curiosity of those officers, who began to ask me a thousand questions, with assurances that their king was a generous prince, and that I should receive all comfort in his court.

The king, impatient to know who I was, grew weary of expecting the return of his officers, and drew near to me. He gazed on me very earnestly, and, observing that I did not give over weeping and afflicting myself, without being able to return an answer to their questions, he forbade them troubling me any more; and, directing his discourse to me, said, Madam, I conjure you to moderate your excessive affliction. Though Heaven in its wrath has laid this calamity upon you, yet it does not behove you to despair. I beseech you, show more courage: fortune, which has hitherto persecuted you, is inconstant, and may soon change. I dare assure you, that, if your misfortunes are capable of receiving any comfort, you shall find it in my dominions. My palace is at your service: you shall live with the queen my mother, who will endeavour by her kindness to ease your affliction. I know not as yet who you are; but I find I am already concerned for you.

I thanked the young king for his great goodness towards me, accepted of the obliging offers he made me; and, to convince him that I was not unworthy of him, told him my condition. I described to him the insolence [250] of the young Saracen, and found it needless to do any more than barely to recount my misfortunes, to excite compassion in him, and all his officers who heard me. When I had done speaking, the prince began again, assuring me that he was highly concerned at my misfortune. Then he conducted me to his palace, and presented me to the queen his mother, to whom I was obliged again to repeat my misfortunes, and to renew my tears. The queen seemed very sensible of my troubles, and took an extraordinary liking to me. On the other hand the king her son fell desperately in love with me, and soon offered me his person and his crown. I was still so entirely taken up with the thoughts of my calamities, that the prince, though so lovely a person, did not make so great an impression on me as he might have done at another time. However, gratitude prevailing on me, I did not refuse to make him happy; and our wedding was kept with all imaginable grandeur.

At the time when all the people were taken up with the celebration of their sovereign's nuptials, a neighbouring prince, who was his enemy, made a descent by night on the island with a great number of troops. That formidable enemy was the king Zanguebar: he surprised those people, and cut to pieces all the king my husband's subjects. We two escaped very narrowly, for he had already entered the palace with some of his followers; but we found means to slip away, and got to the sea-coast, where we entered a fishing-boat we had the good fortune to meet with. Two days we were driven about by the winds, without knowing what would become of us. The third day, we spied a vessel making towards us with all her sails aboard. We rejoiced at first, believing it had been a merchant-ship which might take us aboard; but were more astonished than I can express, when, as it drew near, we saw ten or twelve armed pirates appear on the deck. Being come up [251] to us, five or six of them leaped into our boat, seized us, bound the prince, and conveyed us into their ship, where they immediately took off my veil. Instead of casting lots, every one of them claimed the preference, and me as his right. The controversy grew hot, and they came to blows about me, and fought like so many madmen. The deck was soon covered with dead bodies; and, in short, they were all killed but one, who, being left sole possessor of me, said, You are mine; I will carry you to Grand Cairo, to deliver you to a friend of mine, to whom I have promised a beautiful slave. But who, added he, looking upon the king my husband, is that man? What relation is he to you? Are you allied by blood or love? Sir, answered I, he is my husband. If so, replied the pirate, in pity I must rid myself of him; it would be too great an affliction to him to see you in

my friend's arms. Having spoken these words, he took up the unhappy prince, who was bound, and threw him into the sea, notwithstanding all my endeavours to hinder him.

I shrieked in a dreadful manner at the sight of that cruel action, and had certainly cast myself headlong into the sea, had not the pirate held me. He plainly saw that was my design, and therefore bound me fast to the main-mast, and then hoisting sail, made towards the land, and there got ashore. He unbound and led me to a little town, where he bought camels, tents, and slaves, and then set out for Grand Cairo; designing, as he still said, to present me to his friend, according to his promise.

We had been several days upon the road, when, as we were crossing this plain yesterday, we spied the black who inhabited this castle. At a distance, we took him for a tower; and, when near us, could scarce believe him to be a man. He drew his vast scimitar, and summoned the pirate to yield himself up a prisoner, with all [252] his slaves, and the lady he was conducting. The pirate was daring; and, being seconded by all his slaves, who promised to stand by him, he attacked the black. The fight lasted a considerable time; but at length the pirate fell under the enemy's deadly blows, as did all his slaves, who chose rather to die than forsake him. The black then conducted me to the castle, whither he also brought the pirate's body, which he did eat that night for his supper. After that inhuman meal, perceiving that I ceased not weeping, he said to me, Young lady, prepare to satisfy my desires, rather than continue thus to afflict yourself. Make a virtue of necessity, and comply: I give you till to-morrow to consider. Let me then find you comforted for all your misfortunes, and overjoyed for having been reserved for my bed. Having spoken these words, he conducted me to a chamber, and went to bed in his own, after locking up all the castle-doors. He opened them this morning, and presently locked them again, to pursue some travellers he perceived at a distance; but it is likely they made their escape, since he was coming alone, and without any booty, when you attacked him.

As soon as the princess had put an end to the recital of her adventures, Codadad declared to her that he was highly concerned at her misfortunes. But, madam, added he, it shall be your own fault if you do not live at ease for the future: the king of Harran's sons offer you a safe retreat in the court of the king their father; be pleased to accept of it. You will be there cherished by that prince, and respected by all other persons; and, if you do not disdain the person of your deliverer, permit me to make you a present of it, and to marry you before all these princes: let them be witnesses to our contract. The princess consented to it, and the marriage was concluded that very day in the castle, where they found all sorts of provisions. The kitchens were full of [253] flesh and other eatables, which the black used to feed on when he was weary of feeding on human bodies. There was also a variety of fruits, very excellent in their kinds, and, to complete their satisfaction, abundance of delicious wine and other liquors.

They all sat down to table; and, after having eaten and drunk plentifully, they took along with them the rest of the provisions, and set out for the king of Harran's court. They travelled several days, encamping in the pleasantest places they could find; and they were within one day's journey of Harran, when, having halted, and drunk all their wine, as being under no longer concern to make it hold out, Codadad directed his discourse to all his company thus: Princes, I have too long concealed from you who I am. Behold your brother Codadad! I have received my being, as well as you, of the king of Harran. The prince of Samaria has bred me, and the princess Pirouze is my mother. Madam, added he, applying himself to the princess of Deryabar, do you also forgive me, for having concealed my birth from you. Perhaps, by discovering it sooner, I might have prevented some disagreeable reflections which may have been occasioned by a match you may have thought unequal. No, sir, answered the princess; the opinion I at first conceived of you heightened every moment, and you did not stand in need of the extraction you now discover, to make me happy.

The princes congratulated Codadad on his birth, and expressed much satisfaction at the knowledge of it: but, in reality, instead of rejoicing, their hatred for so amiable a brother was redoubled. They met together at night in a by-place, whilst Codadad and the princess his wife lay fast asleep in their tent. Those ungrateful, envious brothers, forgetting that, had it not been for the brave son of Pirouze, they must have been devoured by [254] the black, agreed among themselves to murder him. We have no other course to choose, said one of those wicked brethren; for the moment our father shall come to understand that this stranger he is already so fond of is our brother, and that he alone has been able to destroy a giant whom we could not all of us together conquer, he will bestow all his favour and a thousand praises on him, and declare him his heir, in spite of all

his brothers, who will be obliged to obey and fall down before him. Besides these, he added many other words, which made such an impression on their jealous minds, that they immediately repaired to Codadad, then fast asleep, stabbed him in a thousand places, and leaving him for dead in the arms of the princess of Deryabar, proceeded on their journey for the city of Harran, where they arrived the next day.

The king their father conceived the greater joy at their return, because he had despaired of ever seeing them. He asked what had been the occasion of their stay; but they took care not to acquaint him with it, making no mention either of the black or of Codadad; and only said, that, being curious to see the country, they had spent some time in the neighbouring cities.

In the mean time Codadad lay in his tent, drowned in his own blood, and little differing from a dead man, with the princess his wife, who seemed to be in no much better condition than he. She rent the air with her dismal shrieks, tore her hair, and, bathing her husband's body with her tears, Alas! Codadad, my dear Codadad, cried she, is it you whom I behold just departing this life? What cruel hands have put you into this condition? May I believe these are your brothers who have treated you so unmercifully? No, they are rather devils, who have taken those shapes to murder you. O barbarous wretches! whosoever you are, how could you make so ungrateful a return for the service he has done you? But why should I complain of your brothers, [255] unfortunate Codadad! I alone am to blame for your death. You would tack your fate upon mine; and all the ill fortune that attends me since I left my father's palace has fallen upon you. O Heaven! which has condemned me to lead a wandering life and full of calamities, if you will not permit me to have a consort, why do you permit me to find any? Behold, you have now robbed me of two, just as I began to be endeared to them.

By these, and other moving expressions, the unhappy princess of Deryabar vented her sorrow, fixing her eyes on the deplorable Codadad, who could not hear her. But Codadad was not dead; and his consort, observing that he still breathed, ran to a large open town she spied in the plain, to inquire for a surgeon. She was showed one, who went immediately with her: but when they came to the tent, they could not find Codadad, which made them conclude he had been dragged away by some wild beast to devour him. The princess renewed her complaints and lamentations in a most dismal manner. The surgeon took compassion; and, being unwilling to leave her in that miserable condition, proposed to her to return to the town, offering her his house and service.

She suffered herself to be prevailed on. The surgeon conducted her to his house, and, without knowing as yet who she was, treated her with all imaginable courtesy and respect. He used all his rhetoric to comfort her; but it was in vain to think of removing her sorrow, which was rather heightened than diminished. Madam, said he to her one day, be pleased to recount to me your misfortunes; tell your country and your condition: perhaps I may give you some advice, when I am acquainted with all the circumstances of your calamity. You do nothing but afflict yourself, without considering that remedies may be found for the most desperate diseases. [256]

The surgeon's words were so efficacious, that they wrought on the princess, who recounted to him all her adventures; and when she had done, the surgeon directed his discourse to her, saying, Madam, since this is the posture of affairs, give me leave to tell you, that you ought not thus to give way to your sorrow; you ought rather to arm yourself with resolution, and to perform what the name and the duty of a wife require of you. You are obliged to revenge your husband: if you please I will wait on you as your squire: let us go to the king of Harran's court; he is a good and just prince: you need only represent to him, in a lively manner, how prince Codadad has been treated by his brothers: I am fully persuaded he will do you justice. I submit to your reasons, answered the princess: it is my duty to endeavour to revenge Codadad; and since you are so obliging and generous as to offer to bear me company, I am ready to set out. No sooner had she fixed this resolution, than the surgeon ordered two camels to be made ready, on which the princess and he mounted, and repaired to Harran.

They alighted at the first caravansary they found; and inquiring of the host what news at court, It is, said he, in very great confusion. The king had a son, who lived a long time with him as a stranger, and none can tell what is become of that young prince. One of the king's wives, called Pirouze, is his mother; she has made all possible inquiry, but to no purpose. All men are concerned at the loss of that prince, because he was very deserving. The king has forty-nine other sons, all of them born of several mothers; but not one of them has worth enough to comfort the king for the death of Codadad: I say his death, because it is impossible he should

be alive, since no news have been heard of him, notwithstanding so much search has been made after him. [257]

The surgeon, having heard this account from the host, concluded that the best course the princess of Deryabar could take, was to wait upon Pirouze: but that method was not without some danger, and required much precaution; for it was to be feared, that if the king of Harran's sons should happen to hear of the arrival of their sister-in-law, and her design, they might cause her to be conveyed away before she could speak to Codadad's mother. The surgeon weighed all these particulars, and considered what risk he might run himself; and therefore, that he might manage the affair with discretion, he desired the princess to stay in the caravansary, whilst he went to the palace to observe which might be the safest way to conduct her to Pirouze.

He went accordingly into the city, and was walking towards the palace, like one led only by curiosity to see the court, when he spied a lady mounted on a mule richly accoutred. She was followed by several ladies mounted on mules, with a great number of guards and black slaves. All the people made a lane to see her pass along, and saluted her, prostrating themselves on the ground. The surgeon paid her the same respect, and then asked a calendar, who happened to stand by him, whether that lady was one of the king's wives. Yes, brother, answered the calendar, she is one of the king's wives, and the most honoured and beloved by the people, because she is mother to prince Codadad, of whom I suppose you have heard.

The surgeon asked no more questions, but followed Pirouze to a mosque, into which she went to distribute alms, and assist at the public prayers the king had ordered to be made for the safe return of Codadad. The people, who were highly concerned for that young prince, ran in crowds to join their vows to the prayers of the priests, so that the mosque was quite full. The surgeon broke through the throng, and advanced as far as Pirouze's guards. He staid out the prayers; and when that princess went out, he stepped up to one of her slaves, and whispered him in his ear, saying, Brother, I have a secret of moment to impart to the princess Pirouze; may not I, by your means, be brought into her apartment? If that secret, answered the slave, be relating to prince Codadad, I dare promise you shall have audience of her this very day; but if it concerns not him, it is needless for you to endeavour to be introduced to her; for her thoughts are all upon her son, and she will not hear talk of any other subject. It is only about that dear son, replied the surgeon, that I would discourse to her. If so, said the slave, you need only follow us to the palace, and you shall soon speak to her. [258]

Accordingly, as soon as Pirouze was returned to her apartment, that slave acquainted her that a person unknown had some important affair to communicate to her, and that it related to prince Codadad. No sooner had he uttered these words, than Pirouze expressed her impatience to see that stranger. The slave immediately conducted him into the princess's closet, who ordered all her women to withdraw, except two, from whom she concealed nothing. As soon as she saw the surgeon, she asked him abruptly what news he had to tell her of Codadad. Madam, answered the surgeon, after having prostrated himself on the ground, I have a long account to give you, and such as will be very surprising. Then he told her all the particulars of what had passed between Codadad and his brothers, which she listened to with an eager attention; but when he came to speak of the murder, that tender mother swooned away on her sofa, as if she had been herself stabbed like her son. Her two women used proper means, and soon brought her to herself. The surgeon continued his relation; and when he had ended it, Pirouze said to him, Go back to the princess of Deryabar, and assure her from me that the king shall soon own her for his daughter-in-law; and as for yourself, be assured that your service shall be well rewarded. [259]

When the surgeon was gone, Pirouze remained on the sofa in such a state of affliction as is not easy to imagine; and, relenting at the thoughts of Codadad, O! my son, said she, I must never then expect to see you more! Alas! when I gave you leave to depart from Samaria, and you took leave of me, I did not imagine that so unfortunate a death had awaited you at such a distance from me. Unfortunate Codadad! why did you leave me? It is true, you would not have acquired so much renown; but you had been still alive, and had not cost your mother so many tears. Whilst she uttered these words, she wept bitterly, and her two confidants, moved by her sorrow, mixed their tears with hers.

Whilst they were all three in that affliction, the king came into the closet, and seeing them in that condition, asked Pirouze whether she had received any bad news concerning Codadad. Alas! sir, said she, all is over; my

son has lost his life; and, to add to my sorrow, I cannot pay him the funeral rites; for, in all appearance, the wild beasts have devoured him. Then she told him all that she had heard from the surgeon, and did not fail to express herself fully at the inhuman manner in which Codadad had been murdered by his brothers.

The king did not give Pirouze time to finish her relation; but, being transported with anger, and giving way to his passion, Madam, said he to the princess, those perfidious wretches who cause you to shed these tears, and are the occasion of the mortal grief which oppresses their father, shall soon feel the punishment due to [260] their guilt. The king having spoken these words, with indignation appearing in his countenance, went directly to the presence-chamber, where all his courtiers attended, and such of the people as had any petitions to present to him. They were all astonished to see him in that passion, and thought his anger had been kindled against his people.

Their hearts failed them for fear. He ascended the throne, and causing the grand vizier to draw near, said, Hassan, I have some orders for you: go immediately, take a thousand of my guards, and seize all the princes my sons; shut them up in the tower appointed for a prison for murderers; and let this be done in a moment. All that were present quaked at the hearing of this surprising command; and the grand vizier, without answering one word, laid his hand on his head, to express his obedience, and went out of the presence to execute his orders, which were very surprising to him. In the mean time, the king dismissed those who attended to desire audience, and declared he would not despatch any business for a month to come. He was still in the presence-chamber, when the vizier returned. Are all my sons, said that prince, in the tower? They are, sir, answered the vizier; I have obeyed your orders. This is not all, replied the king, I have farther commands for you; and so saying, he went out of the presence-chamber, and returned to Pirouze's apartment, with the vizier following him. He asked that princess where Codadad's widow had taken up her lodging. Pirouze's women told him; for the surgeon had not forgot that in his relation. Then the king, turning to his minister, Go, said he, to that caravansary, and bring a young princess, who lodges there; but treat her with all the respect due to her quality.

The vizier was not backward in performing what he was ordered. He mounted on horseback, with all [261] the emirs and courtiers, and repaired to the caravansary where the princess of Deryabar was, whom he acquainted with his orders, and presented her, from the king, a fine white mule, whose saddle and bridle were adorned with gold, rubies, and diamonds. She mounted it, and went to the palace, attended by all those great men. The surgeon bore her company, mounted on a sprightly Tartar horse which the vizier had provided for him. All the people were at their windows, or in the streets, to see that noble cavalcade; and it being given out that the princess, whom they conducted in such state to court, was Codadad's wife, the city resounded with acclamations, the air rang with shouts of joy, which would certainly have been turned into lamentations, had that prince's fatal adventure been known; so much was he beloved by all men.

The princess of Deryabar found the king at the palace gate, waiting to receive her. He took her by the hand, and led her to Pirouze's apartment, where a very moving scene was acted among them. Codadad's wife found her affliction redouble upon her at the sight of her husband's father and mother; as, on the other side, those parents could not look on their son's wife without being much concerned. She cast herself at the king's feet, and having bathed them with tears, was so overcome with grief, that she was not able to speak one word. Pirouze was in no better condition; she seemed to be stunned with her sorrows; and the king, moved by those dismal objects, gave way to his passion: those three persons, mixing their tears and sighs, for some time observed a silence, which appeared extraordinary moving and pitiful. At length the princess of Deryabar, being somewhat recovered, recounted the adventure of the castle and Codadad's disaster. Then she required justice for the treachery of the princes. Yes, madam, said the king to her, those ungrateful wretches shall [262] perish, but Codadad's death must first be made public, that the punishment of his brothers may not cause my subjects to rebel; and, though we have not my son's body, we will not omit paying him the last duties. This said, he directed his discourse to the vizier, and ordered him to build a dome of white marble in a delightful plain, in the midst of which the city of Harran stands; then he appointed the princess of Deryabar a fine apartment in his palace, acknowledging her for his daughter-in-law.

Hassan caused the work to be carried on with such diligence, and employed so many workmen, that the dome was soon finished. Within it was erected a monument, and on it was placed a figure representing Codadad. As soon as all was perfected, the king ordered prayers to be said, and appointed a day for the obsequies of his

son.

On that day, all the inhabitants of the city went out upon the plain to see that ceremony performed; which was after this manner. The king, attended by his vizier and the prime persons of the court, proceeded towards the dome; and being come to it, went in, and sat down with them on carpets laid on the ground, made of black satin, with gold flowers. A great body of horse guards, hanging their heads, and looking down, drew up close about the dome, and marched round it twice, observing a profound silence; but at the third round, they halted before the door, and all of them with a loud voice pronounced these words: 'O prince, son to the king, could we by dint of sword and human valour any way retrieve your misfortune, we would bring you back to life; but the King of kings has commanded, and the angel of death has obeyed.' Having uttered these words, they drew off, to make way for a hundred old men, all of them mounted on black mules, and wearing long gray [263] beards.

These were anchorites, who lived all their days concealed in caves. They never appeared in the sight of the world, but when they were to assist at the obsequies of the kings of Harran, and of the princes of their family. Each of these venerable persons carried a book on his head, which he held with one hand. They took three turns round the dome without uttering one word; then stopping before the door, one of them said, 'O prince, what can we do for you? If you could be restored to life by prayers or learning, we would rub our gray beards at thy feet, and recite prayers; but the King of the universe has taken you away for ever.'

This said, the old men removed at a distance from the dome, and immediately fifty young beautiful maids drew near to it: each of them was mounted on a little white horse: they wore no veils, and carried gold baskets full of all sorts of precious stones. Thus they did also ride thrice round the dome; and, halting at the same place as the others had done, the youngest of them spoke in the name of all as follows: 'O prince, once so beautiful, what relief can you expect from us? If we could restore you to life by our charms, we would become your slaves. But you are no longer sensible to beauty, and have no more occasion for us.'

When the young maids were withdrawn, the king and his courtiers arose, and, having walked thrice round the figure representing Codadad, the king spoke as follows: 'O my dear son, light of my eyes, I have then lost thee for ever.' These words were attended with sighs, and he watered the tomb with his tears, his courtiers weeping with him. Then the gate of the dome was shut, and all the people returned to the city. The next day, there were public prayers in all the mosques; and the same was continued for eight days successively. [264] On the ninth, the king resolved to cause the princes his sons to be beheaded. All the people, being incensed at their cruelty towards Codadad, impatiently expected to see them executed. The scaffolds were erecting; but the execution was respited, on account that, on a sudden, news was brought, that the neighbouring princes, who had before made war on the king of Harran, were advancing with more numerous forces than the first time, and were not then far from the city. It had been long known that they were preparing for war, but no great notice had been taken of it. This advice occasioned a general consternation, and gave new cause to lament the loss of Codadad, by reason that prince had signalized himself in the former war against those enemies. Alas! said they, were the brave Codadad alive, we should little value those princes who are coming to surprise us. The king, nothing dismayed, raised men with all possible speed, formed a considerable army, and, being too brave to expect the enemy to come and attack him within his walls, marched out to meet them. They, on their side, being informed by their advanced parties that the king of Harran was marching to engage them, halted in the plain, and formed their army.

As soon as the king discovered them, he also drew up his forces, and ranged them in order of battle. The signal was given, and he attacked them with extraordinary vigour. Nor was the opposition inferior: much blood was shed on both sides, and the victory remained long dubious; but at length it seemed to incline to the king of Harran's enemies, who, being more numerous, were about hemming him in, when a good body of horse appeared on the plain, and drew near the two armies in good order. The sight of that fresh party daunted both sides, as not knowing what to think of them. But their doubts were soon cleared; for those horsemen fell [265] upon the flank of the king of Harran's enemies, giving such a furious charge, that they soon broke and put them to the rout; and, not so satisfied, they pursued them, and cut most of them in pieces.

The king of Harran, who had nicely observed all the action, admired the bravery of those horsemen, whose

unexpected arrival had given the victory to his side. But, above all, he was charmed with their chief, whom he had seen fighting with a more than ordinary valour. He longed to know the name of that generous hero. Being impatient to see and thank him, he advanced towards him, but perceived he was coming to prevent him. The two princes drew near, and the king of Harran finding Codadad in that brave warrior who had just then succoured him, or rather defeated his enemies, became motionless with joy and surprise. Sir, said Codadad to him, you have sufficient cause to be astonished, seeing a man appear on a sudden before your majesty whom perhaps you concluded to be dead. I should have been so, had not Heaven preserved me still against your enemies. O my son! cried the king, is it possible that you are restored to me? Alas! I despaired of seeing you any more. Having so said, he stretched out his arms to the young prince, who flew to his loving embraces.

I know all, my son, said the king again, after having long held him in his arms; I know what return my sons have made you for the service you did in delivering them out of the hands of the black; but you shall be revenged to-morrow. Let us now go to the palace; your mother, who has wept sufficiently for you, expects me, to rejoice with us for the defeat of our enemies. What a joy will it be to her to be informed that my victory is your handy-work! Sir, said Codadad, give me leave to ask you, how could you come to know the [266] adventure of the castle? Has any of my brothers, repenting, owned the thing to you? No, answered the king, the princess of Deryabar has given us an account of all things; for she is in my palace, and came thither to demand justice against your brothers. Codadad was in a transport of joy to understand that the princess his wife was at the court. Let us go, sir, cried he to his father in a rapture, let us go to see my mother, who waits for us. I have an ardent desire to dry up her tears, as well as those of the princess of Deryabar.

The king immediately returned to the city, with his army, which he dismissed; entering his palace victorious, amidst the acclamations of his people, who followed him in crowds, praying to Heaven to prolong his life, and extolling Codadad to the skies. These two princes found Pirouze and her daughter-in-law waiting for the king to congratulate him; but there is no expressing the transport of joy they felt when they saw the young prince come with him: they dissolved in embraces, mixed with tears, but of a different sort from those they had before shed for him. When these four persons had performed all that the ties of blood and love demanded of them, the question was asked of Pirouze's son, by what miracle he came to be still alive. He answered, that a peasant, mounted on a mule, happening accidentally to come into the tent where he lay senseless, and perceiving him alone, and stabbed in several places, had made him fast on his mule, and carried him to his house, where he applied to his wounds certain herbs chewed, which had recovered him in a few days. When I found myself well, added he, I returned thanks to the peasant, and gave him all the diamonds I had. Then I drew near the city of Harran; but being informed by the way that some neighbouring princes had gathered forces, and were [267] coming to fall upon the king's subjects, I made myself known unto the villagers, and stirred up those people to stand upon their guard. I armed a good number of young men; and heading them, happened to come in at that time when the two armies were engaged.

When he had done speaking, the king said, Let us return thanks to God for having preserved Codadad; but it is requisite that the traitors, who would have destroyed him, should perish this day. Sir, answered the generous son of Pirouze, though they are wicked and ungrateful, consider they are your own flesh and blood: they are my brothers; I forgive them the offence, and beg pardon of you for them. This generosity drew tears from the king, who caused the people to be assembled, and declared Codadad his heir. Then he ordered the princes, who were prisoners, to be brought, loaded with irons. Pirouze's son knocked off their chains, and embraced them all successively, with as much sincerity as he had done in the court of the black's castle. The people were charmed with Codadad's good nature, and highly applauded him. Next he nobly rewarded the surgeon, to requite the service he had done the princess of Deryabar.

The sultanness Scheherazade, having told the story of Ganem with so much address, and in so agreeable a manner, that the sultan of the Indies could not forbear showing the pleasure that relation gave him, said to that monarch, I doubt not but your majesty is very well satisfied to find the caliph Haroun Alraschid change his sentiments in favour of Ganem, his mother, and sister; and I believe you may be sensibly affected with their misfortunes, and the ill treatment they received; but am persuaded, if your majesty would hear the story of the Sleeper Awakened, it would, instead of exciting all those emotions of indignation and compassion in [268] your breast, on the contrary, afford you all the mirth and diversion imaginable. The sultan, who promised himself some new adventures from the title of that story, would have heard it that morning; but

perceiving day approached, deferred it till next, when Dinarzade called upon her sister, who began her story as follows.

THE STORY OF THE SLEEPER AWAKENED.

In the reign of caliph Haroun Alraschid, there lived at Bagdad a very rich merchant, who, having married a woman pretty well in years, had but one son, whom he named Abon Hassan, and educated with great restraint. When this son was thirty years old, the merchant died, and left him his sole heir, and master of great riches, which his father had amassed together by his industry, frugality, and great application to business.

Abon Hassan, whose views and inclinations were very much different from those of his father, was resolved to make another use of his wealth; for, as his father had never allowed him any money but what was just necessary for subsistence, and he had always envied those young persons of his age who wanted none, and who debarred themselves from none of those pleasures to which youth are too much addicted, he resolved, in his turn, to signalize himself by extravagances proportionable to his fortune. To this end, he divided his riches in two parts; with one half he bought houses in town and land in the country, with a promise to himself never to touch the income of his estate, which was considerable enough to live upon very handsomely, but lay it all by; with the other half, which he kept by him in ready money, he designed to make himself amends for the time he had lost in the severe restraint with which his father had always kept him.

With this intent, Abon Hassan associated himself in a few days with people of his age and condition, [270] and thought of nothing more than how to spend their time agreeably. Every day he gave them splendid entertainments, at which the most exquisite and delicate wines flowed in plenty, while concerts of the best vocal and instrumental music heightened their pleasures; and then this young band of debauchees, with glasses in their hands, sang and joined with the music; and these feasts generally ended with balls at night, to which the best dancers in Bagdad, of both sexes, were invited. These entertainments, renewed every day, were so expensive to Abon Hassan, that he could not support the extravagance above one year; and, in short, the great sum which he had consecrated to this prodigality and the year ended together. As soon as he left off keeping this table, his friends forsook him: whenever they saw him, they avoided him; and if by chance he met any of them, and would stop them, they always excused themselves on some pretence or other.

Abon Hassan, touched more to the quick at this strange behaviour of his friends, who had forsaken him so basely and ungratefully, after all the protestations of friendship they had made him, and their inviolable attachment to his service, than all the money he had foolishly squandered away, went, melancholy and thoughtful, into his mother's apartment, and sat down on a sofa a good distance from her. What is the matter with you, son? said his mother, reading his grief in his countenance: why are you so altered, so dejected, and so much different from yourself? You could not certainly be more concerned if you had lost all you had in the world. I know you have lived very profusely, and believe all your money is spent; yet you have a good estate; and the reason I did not so very much oppose your irregular way of living, was, I knew the wise precaution you had taken to preserve half your substance; therefore I do not see why you should plunge yourself [271] into this deep melancholy.

At these words, Abon Hassan melted into tears, and in the midst of his sighs cried out, Ah! mother, I see at last, by sad experience, how insupportable poverty is: I am sensible that it deprives us of joy, as much as the setting sun does of light. In poverty, we have no commendations and fine things said unto us: we endeavour to conceal all our actions, and spend our nights in tears and sorrow. In short, a poor man is looked upon, both by friends and relations, as a stranger. You know, mother, how I have used my friends for this year past: I have entertained them with all imaginable generosity, till I have spent all my money; and now they have left me, when I can treat them no longer. For my estate, I thank Heaven for having given me the grace to keep the oath I have made not to enter upon that; and now I shall know how to make a good use of it. But first, I will try the gratitude of friends, who deserve not that I should call them so: I will go to them one after another, and when I have represented to them what I have done for their sakes, I will ask them to make me up a sum of money among them, to relieve me out of the miserable condition I am reduced to: these are the steps I intend to take to

try their gratitude.

I do not pretend, son, said Abon Hassan's mother, to dissuade you from executing your design; but I can tell you before-hand, that you have no ground for any hope: believe me, you will find no relief, but from the estate you have reserved. I see you do not, but will soon know those people, whom we generally call friends; and I wish to Heaven you may, in the manner I desire; that is to say, for your own good. Mother, replied Abon Hassan, I am persuaded of the truth of what you say; but shall be certain of a fact which concerns me so nearly, when I shall inform myself better of their baseness. Upon this, Abon Hassan went immediately to his [272] friends, whom he found at home, represented to them the great need he was in, and begged of them to loose their purse-strings to assist him. He promised to give every one bonds to pay them the money they lent him, as soon as his affairs were made up; giving them to understand, at the same time, that it was, in a great measure, upon their accounts that he was undone; and forgetting not to allure them with the hopes of being once again entertained in the same manner as before.

Not one of his bottle companions was affected with the arguments which the afflicted Abon Hassan made use of to persuade them; and he had the mortification to find, that many of them told him plainly they scarce knew him.

He returned home again full of grief and rage; and, going into his mother's apartment, said, Ah! madam, you was in the right of it; instead of friends, I have found none but ungrateful, perfidious wretches, who deserve not my friendship; whom I renounce, and promise never to see them more. He resolved to be as good as his word; and, to that end, took all possible precautions to avoid falling into the same inconvenience, taking an oath never to give an inhabitant of Bagdad any entertainment again. Afterwards he opened a strong chest, in which he had put the rents he had received from his estate, and resolved to take every day a sum that was sufficient to defray the expense of a single person to sup with him; who, according to the oath he had taken, must be a stranger that came into Bagdad the same day, and must take his leave of him the next morning.

According to this project, Abon Hassan took care every morning to provide whatever he designed for night, and towards the close of the evening went and sat on Bagdad bridge; and, as soon as ever he saw a [273] stranger, of whatever condition he was, he accosted him civilly, and invited him to sup and lodge with him that night; and, after having informed him of the law he had imposed upon himself, took him home with him. The repast with which Abon Hassan regaled his guests was not costly, but always plain and neat, with plenty of good wine, and generally lasted till the night was pretty well advanced; when, instead of entertaining his guest with the affairs of state, his family or business, as is too frequent, he affected to talk of indifferent subjects, and was naturally of so gay and pleasant a temper, that he could give the most agreeable turns in conversation, and make the most reserved and melancholy persons merry. When he saw his guest again the next morning, he always said to him, God preserve you from all sorrow wherever you go: when I invited you yesterday to come and sup with me, I informed you of the law I have made; therefore do not take it ill if I tell you that we must never see one another again, nor drink together, for reasons best known to myself: so God conduct you.

Abon Hassan was very exact in the observation of this oath, and never looked upon, or spoke to, any stranger he had once entertained, wherever he met them; and had lived for a long time after this manner, when one afternoon, a little before sunset, as he was sitting upon the bridge, according to custom, the caliph Haroun Alraschid came by so disguised that nobody could know him: for that monarch, though his chief ministers and officers of justice acquitted themselves of their duty very punctually, yet would take notice of every thing himself; and, to that purpose, often disguised himself, and walked through the city and suburbs of Bagdad; and that day was dressed like a merchant of Moussel, who had but just disembarked, and was followed by a slave.

As the caliph had in his disguise a grave and awful air, Abon Hassan, who thought him to be a Moussel [274] merchant, went directly to him; and, after having saluted him with a smiling countenance, and kissed his hand, said, Sir, I congratulate you on your happy arrival, and beg of you to do me the honour to go and sup with me, and repose yourself at my home this night, after the fatigue of your voyage; and, to oblige him not to deny him that favour, he told him his custom of entertaining the first stranger he met with. The caliph found something so odd and singular in Abon Hassan's taste, that he was very desirous to know the bottom, without

quitting the character of a merchant; and told him, that he could not better answer that great civility, which he did not expect at his arrival at Bagdad, than by accepting the obliging offer that he made him.

Abon Hassan, who knew not that the guest which fortune presented to him was so very much above him, treated him as his equal, carried him home, and led him into a room very neatly furnished, where he set him on a sofa, at the upper end of a table that was ready laid for supper, which was soon after sent up by Abon Hassan's mother, who took upon herself the care of the kitchen, and consisted of three dishes. The first was a capon and four large pullets, which were set in the middle; and the second and third, placed on each side, were a fat roasted goose and boiled pigeons, all dressed very neatly, and with proper sauces.

Abon Hassan sat down over against his guest, and he and the caliph began to eat heartily of what they liked best, without speaking or drinking, according to the custom of the country. When they had done eating, the caliph's slave brought them water to wash their hands; and, in the mean time, Abon Hassan's mother sent up a dessert of all sorts of dried sweetmeats, and all the fruits then in season, as grapes, peaches, apples, pears, &c. As soon as it grew dark, wax-candles were lighted, and Abon Hassan, after charging his mother to take care of the caliph's slave, brought bottles and glasses. [275]

Then Abon Hassan, sitting down with the pretended Moussel merchant again, filled out a glass of wine, before he touched the dessert; and holding it out in his hand, said to the caliph, You know, sir, that the cock never drinks before he calls to his hens to come and drink with him; so I invite you to follow my example. I do not know what you may think; for my part, I cannot reckon him a wise man who does not love wine: come, let us leave those sort of people to their dull melancholy humours, and seek for mirth, which is only to be found in a brimmer.

While Abon Hassan was drinking, the caliph, taking the glass that was set by him, said, Now I like you, you are an honest fellow; I am mightily taken with your pleasant temper, and expect you should fill me as much. Abon Hassan, as soon as he had drunk, filled the caliph's glass, and giving it to him, Here, sir, said he, taste this wine; I will warrant it good. I am very well persuaded, replied the caliph, laughing, that you know how to make choice of the best. O, replied Abon Hassan, while the caliph was taking off his glass, one may easily find that you know what good living is, and have seen the world. Alas! how happy is my house in your presence, and how overjoyed am I for meeting with a man of so much merit.

The caliph, who was naturally a merry man, was mightily diverted with these sallies of Abon Hassan, and took great pleasure in promoting drinking, often asking for wine, thinking that when that began to work, he might penetrate so far into his discourse as to satisfy his curiosity. Therefore, to enter into conversation, he asked him his name, his business, and how he spent his life. My name, sir, replied he, is Abon Hassan: my father, whom I buried, was a merchant of Bagdad; and though he was not the richest, yet he lived very well. When he died, he left me enough in my station to live free from ambition; but as he always kept a very strict hand over me in his life-time, I was willing, when he was gone, to make up the time I thought I had lost. [276]

But notwithstanding, continued Abon Hassan, in this I was more prudent than most young people are, who give themselves unto debauchery without any thought, and who reduce themselves to the utmost poverty, and are forced to do penance all the rest of their lives after. Now I, to avoid this misfortune, divided what I had left me in two parts, and with one bought an estate, with a resolution not to finger my rents at that time; and kept the other in ready money to pursue my extravagances with. I associated myself with young people of my age, and with my ready money, which I spent profusely, treated them every day; and, in short, spared for no sort of pleasure. But these feastings did not last long; for by that time the year was out, I had got to the bottom of my cash, and then all my friends vanished. I made a visit to every one of them, and represented to them the miserable condition I was in, but none of them would relieve me. Upon this, I renounced their friendship, and retrenched so far as to live within the compass of my income, and obliged myself to keep company with none but the first stranger I could meet with, coming that day into Bagdad, and to entertain him but one night. I have told you the rest before; and I thank my good fortune this day for meeting with a stranger of so much worth.

The caliph was very well satisfied with this information, and said to Abon Hassan, I cannot enough commend the measures you have taken, and the prudence with which you have acted, by forsaking your [277]

debauchery; a conduct rarely to be met with in young persons; and I esteem you the more for being so just to yourself as you have been. It was a slippery path you trode in; and I cannot enough admire, how, after having seen the end of your ready money, you had so great a command over yourself not to enter upon your estate. In short, I must own I envy your happiness: you are the only happy man in the world, to enjoy every day the company of some one honest man, with whom you can discourse freely and agreeably, and to whom you give an opportunity to declare, wherever he goes, how handsomely he was received by you. But we talk too long without drinking; come drink, and pour out to me.

In this manner the caliph and Abon Hassan entertained each other, drinking and talking of indifferent matters till the night was pretty far advanced; when the caliph, pretending to be fatigued after his voyage, told his host he stood in need of a little rest; but, added he, that I may not deprive you of yours, before we part, because tomorrow I may be gone before you are stirring, I would be glad to show you how sensible I am of your civility, and the kind and obliging hospitality you have shown me. The only thing that troubles me is, that I know not which way to pay my acknowledgment; therefore I beg of you to let me understand how I may, and you shall see I will not be ungrateful; for certainly you must have some business in which you may be served, or must want something which you could wish for. Speak freely, and declare your mind; for, though I am but a merchant, it may be in mine or some friend's power to oblige you.

To these offers of the caliph, Abon Hassan, taking him still for a Moussel merchant, replied, I am very well persuaded, good sir, that it is not out of a compliment that you make me these generous tenders; but, [278] upon the word of an honest man, I have nothing that troubles me, no business nor desires, and want not any thing. I have not the least ambition, as I told you before, but am very well satisfied with my condition. Therefore, I can only thank you for your obliging proffers, and the honour you have done me to come and take a slight repast with me. Yet I must tell you, pursued Abon Hassan, there is one thing gives me great uneasiness. You know the town of Bagdad is divided into several parts and divisions, to each of which there belongs a mosque, and an iman to read prayers at certain hours. The iman of the division I live in is an old man, of an austere countenance, and the greatest hypocrite in the world. This man, and four old men of this neighbourhood, who are people of the same stamp, meet every day at the iman's house; there they vent their slander, calumny, and malice against me and the whole division, to the disturbance of the public peace of the neighbourhood, and the promotion of dissension. Some they threaten, others they rail against; and, in short, would be lords paramount, and have every one govern himself according to their caprice; and, at the same time, know not how to govern themselves. Indeed, I would have them meddle with nothing but their Alcoran, and let the world live quietly.

Well, I suppose, said the caliph, you would willingly put a stop to this disorder. You have guessed it, answered Abon Hassan; and the only thing I should desire, would be to be caliph only for one day, in the stead of our sovereign lord and master Haroun Alraschid, the commander of the faithful. What would you do if you were? said the caliph. I would make them examples, answered Abon Hassan, to the satisfaction of all honest men. I would punish the four old men with each a hundred bastinadoes on the soles of their feet, and the [279] iman with four hundred, to learn them not to disturb and abuse their neighbours any more.

The caliph was extremely well pleased with this thought of Abon Hassan's; and, as he was a prince who loved adventures, he fancied to make this a very singular one. Indeed, said he, I approve very much of your wish, which I see proceeds from an upright mind, that cannot bear to see the malice of wicked people go unpunished. I could like to see it take effect, and that is not so impossible a thing as you imagine. I am persuaded that the caliph would willingly put his authority for twenty-four hours into your hands, if he knew your good intentions, and the just use you would make of it. I see, said Abon Hassan, you laugh at my foolish fancy; and the caliph himself would laugh at my extravagance too if he knew it; but yet it would be a means of informing him of the iman's and his companions' behaviour, and he might chastise them.

Heaven forbid, replied the caliph, that I, who have been so handsomely entertained by you, should laugh at you; neither do I believe, as much a stranger as I am, that the caliph would be displeased. But let us lay this discourse aside; it is almost midnight, and time to go to bed. With all my heart, said Abon Hassan, I would not be any hindrance to your going to rest; but there is still some wine in the bottle, and, if you please, we will drink it off first. The only thing that I have to recommend to you is, that, when you go out in the morning, if I am

not up, you will give yourself the trouble of shutting the door after you, which the caliph promised; and while Abon Hassan was talking, took the bottle and two glasses, and filled his own first, saying, Here is a cup of thanks to you; and then filling the other, put artfully a little powder, which he had about him, into it, and giving it to Abon Hassan, said, you have taken the pains to fill for me all this night, and it is the least I can do to save you the trouble once; come, drink to our good repose. [280]

Abon Hassan took the glass, and, to show his guest with how much pleasure he received the honour he did him, whipped it off at once; but had scarcely set the glass upon the table before the powder began to work, and he fell into so sound a sleep, that his head knocked against his knees. The caliph ordered the slave that he had brought along with him, and who came again into the room as soon as he had supped, to take him upon his back, and follow him; but to be sure to observe the house, that he might know it again when he should bring him back; and in this manner the caliph, followed by the slave with Abon Hassan on his back, went out of the house, but without shutting the door after him, as Abon Hassan desired, and went directly to his palace, and, by a backdoor, into his own apartment, where all the officers of his apartment were waiting for him, whom he ordered to undress him, and put him in his bed, which they immediately performed.

Then the caliph sent for all the officers and ladies of the palace, and said to them, I would have all those whose business it is to attend my levee wait to-morrow morning upon this man who lies in my bed, and pay the same respect to him as to myself, and obey him in whatever he commands; let him be refused in nothing that he asks for, and be spoken to and answered in every thing he says or does, as if he was the commander of the faithful. In short, I expect you to look upon him as the true caliph, and neglect not the least circumstance.

The officers and ladies presently understood that the caliph had a mind to divert himself, and made low bows to show their obedience, and then withdrew, every one full of the part they were to act. [281]

Then he sent for the grand vizier: Giafar, said he, I have sent for you to instruct you, and to prevent your being surprised to-morrow when you come to an audience, to see this man, that is laid here in my bed, seated on my throne in my royal robes: accost him with the same reverence and respect you pay to myself; observe, and punctually execute, whatever he bids you do, the same as if I commanded you, even if his liberality should extend so far as to empty all the coffers in my treasury; and remember to acquaint all my emirs and huissirs, all the officers without the palace, to pay him the same honour at audience as the commander of the believers himself; and to carry on the matter so well, that he might not perceive the least thing that may interrupt this joke which I am diverting myself with.

Afterwards the grand vizier retired, and the caliph went to bed in another apartment; and ordered Mesrou, the chief of his eunuchs, to take care to manage things so well, that he might see how Abon Hassan would use the power and authority of the caliph for the time he desired to have it; and, above all, charged him to awake him at the usual hour, before he awakened Abon Hassan, because he had a mind to be present when he rose.

Mesrou failed not to do as the caliph had commanded; and, as soon as the caliph went into the room where Abon Hassan lay, he placed himself in a little closet, from whence he could see all that passed. All the officers and ladies who were to attend Abon Hassan's levee, took their posts according to their rank, with great silence, and discharged themselves as punctually of their offices as if the caliph had been to rise.

As it was just day-break, and time to rise to morning prayer before sun-rise, the officer that stood nearest to the head of the bed, put a sponge steeped in vinegar to Abon Hassan's nose; who, presently turning his head about without opening his eyes, sneezed heartily, which was generally the effect of the caliph's powder, and which lasted longer or shorter in proportion to the dose. Then opening his eyes, he found himself, by the small light that appeared, in a stately room magnificently furnished, the ceiling of which was finely painted, and the floor covered with a rich silk tapestry, and surrounded by a great many young and handsome ladies, with all sorts of instruments of music in their hands, and black eunuchs richly clothed, all standing with great modesty and respect. After casting his eyes on the quilt of the bed, he perceived it was cloth of gold, richly embossed with pearls and diamonds; and that there was laid by the bed a habit of the same stuff and trimmings, with a caliph's turban. [282]

At the sight of these glittering objects, Abon Hassan was in the most inexpressible confusion and amazement, and looked upon all he saw as a dream. So, said he to himself, I am caliph; but, added he a little after, it is only a dream, the effect of the wish I entertained my guest with last night; and then he turned himself about to sleep again. At the same time, the eunuch said very respectfully, Commander of the Faithful, it is time for your majesty to rise to prayers; the morning begins to advance.

These words very much surprised Abon Hassan. Am I awake, or do I sleep? said he to himself. Ah! certainly I am asleep! continued he, keeping his eyes shut; there is no reason to doubt of it.

Immediately the eunuch, who saw he had no inclination to get up, and that he gave him no answer, said again, Your majesty, I hope, will not be angry, if I tell you once more that it is time to rise to morning prayer, [283] which you never neglect, and the sun is just upon rising. I am mistaken, said Abon Hassan presently; I am not asleep, but awake: for those that sleep do not hear, and I hear very distinctly. Then opening his eyes, he saw plainly by broad daylight, what appeared but uncertain before, and rising upon his breech, with a smiling countenance, like a man overjoyed at a sudden promotion, pleased the caliph, who penetrated into the bottom of his thoughts.

Then the ladies of the palace prostrated themselves with their faces to the ground before Abon Hassan, and those who had the instruments of music in their hands, wished him a good-morrow, by a concert of soft flutes, hautboys, theorboes, and other harmonious instruments, with which he was ravished, and was in such an ecstasy, that he knew not himself, nor where he was; but, recovering at last his first idea, he doubted whether what he saw was a dream or matter of fact. He clapped his hands before his eyes, and lowering his head, said to himself, What means all this? where am I? and whom does this palace belong to? What can these eunuchs, officers, beautiful ladies, and musicians signify? How is it possible for me to distinguish whether I am in my right senses or in a dream? When he took his hands from his eyes, the sun shone full in at the chamber-window; and at that instant, Mesrour, the chief of the eunuchs, came in, prostrated himself before Abon Hassan, and said, Commander of the Faithful, your majesty will excuse me for representing to you, that you used not to lie so long, and that the time of prayer is over; I am afraid your majesty has had an ill night, and has been indisposed, and may not be able to ascend your throne in council as usual: all your generals, governors, and other officers of state, wait your presence in the council-hall.

At this discourse of Mesrour's, Abon Hassan was verily persuaded that he was neither asleep nor in a dream; but, at the same time, was very much embarrassed and confused. At last, looking earnestly at Mesrour, he said to him in a serious tone, Who is it you speak to, and call the commander of the faithful? For my part, I do not know you, and you mistake me for somebody else. [284]

Any person but Mesrour would have been dashed at these questions of Abon Hassan's; but he had been so well instructed by the caliph, that he played his part to a wonder. My worthy lord and master, said he, your majesty only speaks thus to try me: is not your majesty the commander of the faithful, monarch of the world, and the prophet's vicar on earth? Mesrour, your slave, has not forgot you, after so many years that he has had the honour and happiness to serve and pay his respects to your majesty; and should think himself the most unhappy of all men if he has incurred your displeasure, and begs of you most humbly to remove his fears; but is apt to believe that you have been disturbed by some troublesome dream last night.

Abon Hassan burst out a-laughing at these words of Mesrour's, and fell backwards upon the bolster, which pleased the caliph so much, that he would have laughed as loud himself, if he had not been afraid of putting a stop to the pleasant scene he promised himself.

Abon Hassan, when he had tired himself with laughing, sat up again on his breech, and, speaking to a little black eunuch that stood by him, said, Hark ye, tell me who I am. Sir, answered the little boy modestly, your majesty is the commander of the believers, and God's vicar on earth. You are a liar, sooty face, said Abon Hassan. Then he called the lady that stood the nearest to him: Come hither, fair one, said he, holding out [285] his hand, bite the end of my finger, that I may feel whether I am asleep or awake.

The lady, who knew the caliph saw all that passed, was overjoyed to show how capable she was of diverting

him, and went with a grave countenance, and putting his finger between her teeth, she bit so hard that he cried out; and, snatching his hand quickly back again, said, I find I am awake, and not asleep. But by what miracle am I become caliph in a night's time? This is certainly the most strange and surprising thing in the world! Then addressing himself to the same lady, he said, I conjure you, for Heaven's sake, not to hide the truth from me; am I really the commander of the faithful? It is so true, answered the lady, that we, who are your slaves, are amazed to find that you will not believe yourself to be so. Ah! you are a deceiver, replied Abon Hassan; I know very well who I am.

As the chief of the eunuchs perceived that Abon Hassan had a mind to rise, he lent him his hand, and helped him to get out of bed. No sooner were his feet set on the floor, than the chamber rang again with repeated acclamations of the officers and ladies, who cried out, God preserve your majesty, and give you a good day. O Heaven! cried Abon Hassan, what a strange thing is this! Last night I was Abon Hassan, and this morning I am the commander of the believers! I cannot comprehend this sudden and surprising change. Presently some of the officers began to dress him; and when they had done, Mesrour led him through all the eunuchs and ladies, who were ranged on both sides quite to the council-chamber door, which was opened by one of the huissirs. Mesrour walked before him to the foot of the throne, where he stopped, and putting one hand under one arm, while another officer did the same by the other, they helped him to ascend the throne. [286]

The caliph, in the mean time, came out of the closet where he was hid, and went into another which looked into the council-hall, from whence he could hear all that passed, and see Abon Hassan, who filled his throne with all the gravity imaginable.

As soon as Abon Hassan had seated himself, the grand vizier Giafar prostrated himself at the foot of the throne, and addressing himself to him, said, God shower down blessings on your majesty in this life, receive you into his paradise in the other world, and confound your enemies!

Abon Hassan, after all that had happened that morning, and these words of the grand vizier, never doubted but he was caliph, as he wished to be; and so, without examining any farther, how, or by what adventure or sudden change of fortune, he immediately began to exercise his power, and looking very gravely upon the vizier, asked him what he had to say. Commander of the Faithful, replied the grand vizier, the emirs, viziers, and other officers who are of your majesty's council, wait at the door, until your majesty give them leave to come in, and pay their usual respects to you. Abon Hassan presently bade that the door be opened, and the grand vizier gave the sign to the huissir that waited for it.

When the door was opened, the viziers, emirs, and principal officers of the court, all dressed magnificently in their habits of ceremony, went in their order to the foot of the throne, and paid their respects to Abon Hassan; and bowing their heads down to the carpet, kneeling on one knee, saluted him with the title of Commander of the Faithful, according to the instruction of the grand vizier, and afterwards took their seats.

When this ceremony was over, the grand vizier, standing before the throne, began with papers in his [287] hand to make his report of affairs, which at that time were of very little consequence. Nevertheless, Abon Hassan acquitted himself in his great post without the least embarrassment; and gave judgment so well in all matters, that the caliph could not help wondering at his address. But before the grand vizier had finished his report, Abon Hassan called the judge of the police, whom he knew by sight, as he sat in his place: Hold, said he to the grand vizier, I have something to order the judge of the police. The judge of the police perceiving that Abon Hassan looked at him, and hearing his name mentioned, arose from his seat, and went gravely to the foot of the throne, where he prostrated himself with his face to the ground. Judge of the police, said Abon Hassan, go immediately to such a division, and seize the iman of the mosque, and four old men, (whom he described,) and give each of the old men a hundred bastinadoes with a bull's pizzle, and the iman four hundred: after that, mount them all five on camels, with their faces to the tails; and lead them through the whole city, with a crier before them, who shall proclaim, This is the punishment of all those who trouble their heads with other people's affairs, and make it their business to create disturbances and misunderstandings in families in their neighbourhood. My intention is also, that you enjoin them to leave that division, and never to set a foot more in it; and while your lieutenant is conducting them through the town, return, and give me an account of the execution of my orders. The judge of the police laid his hand upon his head, to show his obedience, and,

prostrating himself a second time, went away.

The caliph was extremely well pleased at this order; and perceived by Abon Hassan's strictness and expedition, that he was resolved not to lose the opportunity of punishing the iman and the other four old hypocrites. In the mean time, the grand vizier went on with his report, and had just done when the judge of the police came back from executing his commission. He went to the throne with the usual ceremony, and said, Commander of the Faithful, I found the iman and his four companions; and for a proof that I have punctually obeyed your commands, I have brought an instrument signed by the principal inhabitants of that division: at the same time, he pulled out a paper, and presented it to the pretended caliph. [288]

Abon Hassan took the paper, and reading over the names of the witnesses, who were all people that he knew very well, said to the judge of the police, It is very well; return to your seat. These old hypocrites, said he to himself, with a great deal of satisfaction in his looks, who must be censuring my actions, and finding fault with my entertaining honest people, deserved this punishment. The caliph all the time penetrated into his thoughts, and conceived a sensible joy in this expedition.

Then Abon Hassan, addressing himself afterwards to the grand vizier, said, Go to the high treasurer for a purse of a thousand pieces of gold, and carry it to the mother of Abon Hassan, who is known by the name of the Debauchee; she lives in the same division into which I sent the judge of the police: return immediately.

The grand vizier, after laying his hand upon his head, and prostrating himself before the throne, went to the high treasurer, who gave him the money, which he ordered a slave to take, and follow him to Abon Hassan's mother, to whom he gave it, saying only, The caliph makes you this present. She received it with the greatest surprise imaginable, and could not tell what to think of this liberality of the caliph. [289]

During the grand vizier's absence, the judge of the police acted for him, in making the report, which lasted till the vizier returned. As soon as he came into the council-chamber, and had assured Abon Hassan he had done as he had bade him, Mesrour, the chief of the eunuchs, who returned to the palace after he had conducted Abon Hassan to the council, came again, and made a sign to the viziers, emirs, and other officers, that the council was done, and that they might all retire; which they all did, by making the same reverence and obedience as when they entered.

Abon Hassan sat not long after them, but came down from the throne, supported in the same manner as he went up to it, by Mesrour and another eunuch, who attended him back again to the apartment from whence he came, preceded all the way by the grand vizier: but before he reached the apartment, he was taken with a pressing occasion; upon which they showed him into a convenient closet, paved with white marble; and while Abon Hassan was there, the grand vizier went to acquaint the caliph with what had passed, though he had been an eye-witness all the time.

When Abon Hassan came out of the closet, Mesrour went before him, to show him the way into an inner apartment, where there was a table spread. Several eunuchs ran before, to tell the musicians that the sham caliph was coming, who immediately began a concert of vocal and instrumental music, with which Abon Hassan was so charmed and transported, that he could not tell what to think at all he saw and heard. If this is a dream, said he, it is a long one: but certainly, continued he, it is no dream; for I can see and feel, walk, hear, and argue reasonably. Whatever it is, I trust in God: yet I cannot believe but I am the commander of the faithful; for no other person could live in this splendour. The honour and respect that is given me, and the obedience paid to my commands, are sufficient proofs. [290]

In short, Abon Hassan took it for granted that he was caliph, and the commander of the faithful; and was fully convinced of it, when he entered that magnificent and spacious hall, which was finely painted. Seven bands of musicians were placed round the hall, and as many gold branches hung down from the ceiling, which was painted with blue and gold. In the middle of the hall there was spread a table, which was served up with all manner of rarities, in massy gold plates and dishes; and seven young beautiful ladies, dressed in the richest habits, of the most lively colours, stood round this table, each with a fan in her hand, to fan Abon Hassan when at dinner.

If ever mortal was charmed, Abon Hassan was: at every step he took in that stately hall, he could not help stopping to contemplate on all the wonders that regaled his eyes, and turned his head first on one side and then again on the other, which made the caliph almost split his sides with laughing. At last he went and sat down at the table, and presently all the ladies that stood about it began to fan him. He looked first at one and then at another, and admired the grace with which they acquitted themselves; and told them, with a smile, that he believed one fan was enough to cool him, and would have six of the ladies sit at table with him, three on his right hand and three on his left; that, as the table was round, which way soever he turned, his eyes might be saluted with agreeable objects.

The six ladies obeyed; and Abon Hassan taking notice that, out of respect, they did not eat, helped them himself, and invited them to eat in the most pressing and obliging terms. Afterwards, he asked their names; which they told him were, White neck, Coral Lips, Fair Face, Sun Shine, Heart's Delight, Sweet Looks, and she who fanned him was Sugar Cane. The many soft things he said upon their names, showed him to be a man of a sprightly wit, and very much increased the esteem which the caliph (who saw every thing) had for him. [291]

When the ladies saw that Abon Hassan had done eating, one of them said to the eunuch who waited, the commander of the faithful will go into the next hall to the desert: bring some water. Upon which they all rose from the table, and taking from the eunuchs, one a gold basin, another an ewer, and a third a towel, kneeled down before Abon Hassan, and presented them to him to wash his hands; who, as soon as he had done, got up, and after an eunuch had opened the door, went, preceded by Mesrour, who never left him, into another hall, as large as the former, adorned with the best paintings, gold vessels, silk tapestry, and other rich furniture. There seven other bands of music began a new concert, as soon as Abon Hassan appeared. In this hall there were seven gold branches, and a table full of dried sweetmeats, and the most choice and exquisite fruits, raised in pyramids, in seven gold basins, and seven ladies, more beautiful than the others, standing round it, with fans in their hands.

These new objects put Abon Hassan into a greater admiration than ever; who, after he had made a full stop, and given the most sensible marks of his surprise and astonishment, went directly to the table; where, sitting down, he gazed a considerable time at the seven ladies, with an embarrassment that plainly showed he knew not which to give the preference to. At last he ordered them all to sit and eat with him, telling them that it was not so hot but he could spare them that trouble. [292]

When the ladies were all placed about him, the first thing he did was to ask their names, which were different from the other seven, and expressed some perfection of either mind or body, which distinguished them from one another; and upon which he took an opportunity, when he presented them with fruit, &c. to say somewhat that was handsome. Take this fig, said he to Chain of Hearts, who sat on his right hand, and render the fetters with which you loaded me at first sight more supportable; and so went on to the rest. By these ways, Abon Hassan pleased and diverted the caliph more and more, who was resolved to carry on this scene which entertained him so agreeably.

After Abon Hassan had tasted of all the fruits, &c. he got up and followed Mesrour into a third hall, much more magnificently furnished than the other two; where he was received by the same number of musicians and ladies, who stood about a table covered over with all manner of sweetmeats. After he had looked about him with new admiration, he advanced to the table, the music playing all the time, which ceased when he sat down. The seven ladies sat down with him, by his order, and helped themselves, as he desired them, to what they liked best; and afterwards he informed himself of their names, which pleased him as much as the others had done.

By this time the day began to close, and Abon Hassan was conducted into the fourth hall, much more stately and magnificently furnished, lighted with wax-candles, in seven gold branches and sconces, which were placed all around it, all which made a glorious light. Abon Hassan found the same number of musicians here as he had done in the other halls, and saw also as many ladies standing round a table, furnished with such things as were proper to promote drinking. There he saw a beaufet, which he had not observed in any of the other halls, which was set out with seven large silver flagons full of the choicest wines, and seven [293]

crystal glasses by them.

All the day long, Abon Hassan had drunk nothing but water, according to a custom observed at Bagdad, from the highest to the lowest; who never drink wine till the evening, it being accounted the most scandalous thing in the world to be seen drunk in the streets in the day-time.

As soon as Abon Hassan entered the fourth hall, he went directly to the table and sat down, and was a long time in a kind of ecstasy at the sight of those seven ladies, who were much more beautiful than all he beheld in the other halls. He was very desirous to know all their names; but the music playing then so very loud that he could not hear them speak, he made a sign for them to leave off playing: then taking one of the ladies who sat next to him by the hand, he made her sit down by him, and presenting her with some of those relishing viands before him, asked her name. Commander of the Faithful, said the lady, I am called Cluster of Pearls. No name, replied Abon Hassan, could have more properly expressed your worth; and indeed your teeth exceed the finest pearls. Cluster of Pearls, added he, since that is your name, oblige me with a glass of wine from your fair hand. The lady went presently to the beaufet, and brought him a glass with a pleasant air. Abon Hassan took the glass with a smile, and looking passionately upon her; said, Cluster of Pearls, your health; I desire you to fill out as much for yourself, and pledge me. Accordingly she went to the beaufet, and returned with a glass in her hand; but before she drank, she sang a song, and by the sweetness of her voice ravished his senses. [294]

After Abon Hassan had drunk, he made another lady sit, and presenting her with some of the viands, asked her name, which she told him was Morning Star. Your bright eyes, said he, shine with greater lustre than that star you bear the name of. Do me the pleasure to bring me some wine; which she did, with an extraordinary grace. Then turning to the third lady, whose name was Daylight, he ordered her to do the same; and so on to the seventh, to the extreme satisfaction of the caliph.

When they had all filled him round, Cluster of Pearls went to the beaufet, poured out a glass of wine, and putting in a pinch of the same powder the caliph had used the night before, presented it to Abon Hassan. Commander of the Faithful, said she, I beg of your majesty to take this glass of wine; and, before you drink it off, do me the favour to hear a song I have made to-day, and which may not displease you. With all my heart, said Abon Hassan, taking the glass; and, as commander of the faithful, I command you to sing it: for I am persuaded that so beautiful a lady as yourself must abound with wit and humour. The lady took a lute, and tuning it to her voice, sang with so much justness and grace, and with such delicate turns of thought and expression, that Abon Hassan was in perfect ecstasy all the time, and was so much delighted, that he ordered her to sing it again.

When the lady had done, Abon Hassan drank off his glass, and, turning his head towards her, to give her those praises which he thought due to her, fell fast asleep with his mouth open gaping, and his eyes close shut, just in the same condition as when the caliph brought him from home; who took a greater satisfaction in this scene, than he could have promised himself. One of the ladies stood ready to catch the glass, which fell out of [295] his hand; and then the caliph, who was all along a spectator of what had passed, came into the hall to them, and ordered Abon Hassan to be dressed again in his own clothes, and to be carried back again to his own house by the same slave that brought him, charging him to lay him on a sofa in the same room, and to leave the door open.

The slave took Abon Hassan upon his shoulders, and carried him home by a back-door of the palace, and returned with speed to acquaint the caliph he had executed his commands. Well, said the caliph, Abon Hassan wished only to be caliph for one day, to punish the iman of the mosque, and the four scheiks or old men of his division, who had displeased him: I have procured him the means, and he ought to be content.

In the mean time, Abon Hassan, who was laid upon a sofa by the slave, slept very late the next morning. When the powder was worked off, Abon Hassan opened his eyes, and finding himself at home, was in the utmost surprise. Cluster of Pearls! Morning Star! Coral Lips! Fair Face! cried he, calling the ladies of the palace by their names, as he remembered them: Where are you? Come hither.

Abon Hassan called so loud, that his mother, who was in her own apartment, heard, and running to him upon

the noise he made, said, What do you mean, son? What is the matter? At these words, Abon Hassan lifted up his head, and looking haughtily at his mother, said, Good woman, who is it you call son? Why, you, answered his mother, very calmly; are not you Abon Hassan, my son? It is a strange thing that you have forgot yourself. I your son, old trull! replied Abon Hassan; thou art mad, and knowest not what thou sayest: I am not Abon Hassan, I tell you, but the commander of the faithful. [296]

Hold your tongue, son, answered the mother; one would think you were a fool, to hear you talk thus. You are an old fool yourself, replied Abon Hassan: I tell you once more, I am the commander of the faithful, and God's vicar on earth. Ah! child, cried the mother, is it possible that I should hear you utter such words, that show you are distracted? What evil genius possesses you, to make you talk at this rate? God bless you, and preserve you from the power of Satan. You are my son Abon Hassan, and I am your mother.

After she had made use of all the arguments she could think of to bring him to himself, and to show how great an error he was in, she said, Do not you see that the room you are now in is your own, and is not like a chamber fit for the commander of the believers? Think seriously of what I have said to you, and do not fancy things that are not, nor ever can be.

Abon Hassan heard all these remonstrances of his mother very patiently, holding down his eyes, and clapping his hands before his face, like one who was looking into himself to examine the truth of what he saw and heard. At last, said he to his mother, just as if he was come out of a deep sleep, and with his hands in the same posture, Methinks I am Abon Hassan, you are my mother, and I am in my own room. Then looking about him again, he added, I am Abon Hassan, there is no doubt of it; and I cannot comprehend how this fancy came into my head.

The mother really believed that her son was cured of that disorder of mind, and began to laugh, and ask him questions about his dream; when, all on a sudden, he started up on his breech, and looking crossly at his mother, said, Old sorceress, thou knowest not what thou sayest. I am not thy son, nor thou my mother, but the commander of the faithful; and thou shalt never persuade me to the contrary. For heaven's sake, son, said the mother, let us leave off this discourse, and talk of something else, for fear some misfortune should happen to us. I will tell you what fell out yesterday in our division to the iman of the mosque, and the four scheiks our neighbours: the judge of the police came and seized them, and gave each of them I do not know how many strokes with a bull's pizzle; and afterwards led them through all the streets, with a crier before them, who proclaimed, that that was the punishment of all those who troubled themselves about other folks' business, and set their neighbours at variance; and ordered them never to come into our division again. Abon Hassan's mother could not imagine that her son had any share in this adventure, and therefore turned the discourse this way to put him out of the conceit of being the commander of the faithful; but instead of effacing that idea, she rather strengthened it. [297]

Abon Hassan no sooner heard this relation, than he cried out, I am neither thy son, nor Abon Hassan, but certainly the commander of the believers: I cannot doubt of it, after what you have told me. Know then, that it was by my order that the iman and the four scheiks were punished; and I tell you, I am certainly the commander of the faithful; therefore do not tell me any more of its being a dream. I was not asleep, but as much awake as I am now. You do me a pleasure to confirm what the judge of the police told me he had executed according to my order; and I am overjoyed that the iman and the four scheiks, those great hypocrites, were so chastised, and would be glad to know how I came here. God be praised for all things! I am certainly commander of the faithful, and all thy arguments shall not convince me to the contrary. [298]

The mother, who could not divine or imagine why her son supported and maintained himself so strenuously to be caliph, never disputed but that he had lost his senses, when she found he insisted so much upon a thing that was so incredible; and in this thought said, I pray God to have mercy upon you, son! pray do not talk so madly. Beseech God to forgive you, and give you grace to talk more reasonably. What would the world say to hear you rave in this manner? Do not you know, they say walls have ears?

These remonstrances only enraged Abon Hassan the more; and he was so provoked at his mother, that he said, Old woman, I have bid you once already hold your tongue; if you do not, I shall rise and give you cause to

repent it all your life-time. I am the caliph, and the commander of the believers; and you ought to believe me when I say so.

Then the good woman perceiving that he was more lunatic than ever, abandoned herself to tears; and beating her face and breast, expressed the utmost grief and astonishment to see her son in that distraction. Abon Hassan, instead of appeasing and being moved by his mother's tears, on the contrary, lost all the respect due from a son to his mother; and getting up hastily, and laying hold of a cane, ran to his mother in great fury, and in a threatening manner said, Tell me presently, wicked woman, who I am. I do not believe, son, replied she, looking at him tenderly, and void of fear, that you are so abandoned by God as not to know your mother, who brought you into the world. Indeed you are my son Abon Hassan; and are very much in the wrong to arrogate to yourself the title of our sovereign lord the caliph Haroun Alraschid, after the noble and generous [299] present that monarch made us yesterday. In short, I forgot to tell you, that the grand vizier Giafar came to me yesterday, and putting a purse of a thousand pieces of gold into my hands, bade me pray for the commander of the faithful, who made me that present.

At these words, Abon Hassan grew quite mad. The circumstance of the caliph's liberality his mother told him of, persuaded him more than ever that he was caliph, remembering how he had sent the vizier. Well, old hag, cried he, will you be convinced when I tell you that I sent you those thousand pieces of gold by my grand vizier Giafar, who obeyed my commands, as I was commander of the faithful? But, instead of believing me, thou endeavourest to distract me by thy contradictions, and maintainest with obstinacy that I am thy son; but thou shalt not go long unpunished. After these words, he was so unnatural, in the height of his frenzy, as to beat her cruelly with his cane.

The poor mother, who could not have thought that her son would have come so soon from words to blows, called out for help so loud, that the neighbours ran in to her assistance. But in the mean time, Abon Hassan, at every stroke, asked her if he was the commander of the faithful. To which she always answered tenderly, that he was her son.

By the time the neighbours came in, Abon Hassan's rage began to abate. The first who entered the room got between him and his mother; and taking the cane out of his hand, said to him, What are you doing, Abon Hassan? Have you no fear of God, nor reason? Did ever a son, so well brought up as you, ever dare to strike his mother? Are you not ashamed to treat yours so, who loves you so tenderly? Abon Hassan looked at him that spoke, without returning an answer; and then staring on all that followed him, said, Who is that Abon [300] Hassan you speak of? Is it me you call by that name?

This question put the neighbours a little to a stand. How! said he that spoke first, do not you know your mother, who brought you up, and with whom you have always lived? Be gone, you are impertinent people, replied Abon Hassan; I neither know her nor you, and will not know you; I am not Abon Hassan; but will make you know, to your cost, I am the commander of the faithful.

At this discourse, the neighbours no longer doubted but that he was mad; and to prevent his being guilty of the like actions, seized him, notwithstanding his resistance, and bound him hand and foot, while one in the mean time ran for the keeper of the hospital for mad folks, who came presently with a bull's pizzle, chains, and handcuffs, and a great many attendants. When they entered the room, Abon Hassan, who little expected such treatment, endeavoured all he could to unloose himself; but after the keeper had given him two or three smart strokes upon his shoulders with the bull's pizzle, he lay so quiet, that the keeper and his people might do what they would with him; who as soon as they had bound and manacled him, took him with them to the hospital; where, before the keeper put him into a room, he regaled him with fifty strokes of the bull's pizzle on his shoulders, which he repeated every day without pity for three weeks, bidding him to remember that he was not the commander of the faithful.

Abon Hassan's mother went every day to see her son, and could not forbear crying to see him fall away daily, and to hear him sigh and complain at the hardships he endured. In short, his shoulders, back, and sides were so black and blue and bruized, that he could not turn himself. His mother would willingly have talked with him, to comfort him, and to sound him whether he still retained the notion of being caliph; but whenever she [301]

opened her mouth, he rebuked her with so much fury, that she was forced to leave him, and return home disconsolate at his obstinacy.

At last those strong and lively ideas which Abon Hassan entertained of being clothed in the caliph's habit, and having used all his authority, and being obeyed very punctually, and treated like the true caliph, and which persuaded him when he waked that he was so, all began to be insensibly effaced. Sometimes he would say to himself, If I was the caliph, and commander of the believers, how came I home dressed in my own apparel? Why should I not have been attended by eunuchs and ladies? Why should my grand Vizier Giafar, and all those emirs and governors of provinces, who prostrated themselves at my feet, forsake me? Undoubtedly if I had any authority over them, they would have delivered me all this time out of this miserable condition I am in: certainly I ought to look upon all this as a dream. It is true, I commanded the judge of the police to punish the iman and four old men his companions: I ordered Giafar the grand vizier to carry my mother a thousand pieces of gold: and all my commands were executed. All these things are obstacles to my believing it a dream; but yet there are so many things that I cannot comprehend, nor ever shall, that I will put my trust in God, who knows all things.

Abon Hassan was taken up with these thoughts and sentiments, when his mother came to see him, who found him so much altered and changed from what he had been, that she let fall a torrent of tears; in the midst of which she saluted him as she used to do, and he returned her salute, which he had never done before while he had been in the hospital. This civility she looked upon to be a good sign. Well, son, said she, how do you do, and how do you find yourself? Have you renounced all those whims and fancies which some cursed [302] demon had put into your head? Indeed, mother, replied Abon Hassan, very rationally and calmly, I acknowledge my error, and beg of you to forgive the execrable crime which I have been guilty of towards you, and which I detest. I ask pardon also of my neighbours whom I have abused. I have been deceived by a dream; but by so extraordinary a one, and so like to truth, that any other person, to whom such a thing might have happened, would have been guilty of as great extravagances: and I am at this instant so much perplexed about it, that I can hardly persuade myself but that it was matter of fact. But whatever it was, I do and always will look upon it as a dream and illusion. I am convinced that I am not that shadow of a caliph and commander of the faithful, but Abon Hassan, your son; and shall never forget that fatal day which covered me with shame and confusion; but honour and respect you all my life as I ought.

At these sensible words, the mother of Abon Hassan changed the tears of her sorrow and affliction into those of joy, to find her son so well recovered. My dear child, said she, transported with pleasure, my satisfaction and comfort is inexpressible, to hear you talk so reasonably, and gives me as much joy as if I had brought you into the world a second time. But I must observe one thing in this adventure, which you may not have taken notice of: the stranger that you brought home one night to sup with you, went away without shutting the chamber-door after him as you desired him; which I believe gave some demon an opportunity to enter, and put you into that horrible illusion you were in: and therefore, my son, you ought to return God thanks for your deliverance, and beseech him to keep you out of the snares of the evil spirit.

You have found out the source of my misfortunes, answered Abon Hassan; it was that very night I had [303] this dream, which turned my brain. I bade the merchant expressly to shut the door after him; and now I find he did not do it. I am persuaded, as well as you, some devil came in, and filled my head full of these fancies. For they at Moussel are not so well convinced that the devil is the cause of troublesome dreams, as we are at Bagdad. But since, mother, you see I am so well recovered, for God's sake get me out of this hellish place. The mother, glad to find her son so well cured of his foolish imagination of being caliph, went immediately to the keeper, and assuring him that he was very sensible and well, he came and examined him, and afterwards gave him his liberty.

When Abon Hassan came home, he staid within doors some days, to comfort himself by better food and nourishment than what he had at the hospital. But when he had recovered his strength, and refreshed himself after his harsh treatment, he began to be weary with spending his evenings alone, and so entered again upon the same way of living as before; which was to provide enough every day to regale a stranger at night.

The day on which Abon Hassan renewed this custom, happened to be the first day of the month, which was the

day that the caliph always sets apart to go disguised through the town, to observe what irregularities were committed in the government of the city. Towards the evening he went to the bridge, and set himself on a bench which was fixed to the parapet; where, looking about him, he perceived the caliph disguised again like a Moussel merchant, and followed by the same slave: and, persuaded that all his misfortunes were owing to the caliph's leaving his door open, whom he took for a merchant, he swooned at the sight of him. God [304] preserve me, said he to himself; if I am not deceived, there is the magician again that enchanted me! and thereupon got up, and looked over the parapet into the river, that he might not see him.

The caliph, who had a mind to carry on his joke farther, had taken a great deal of care to inform himself of all that had happened when Abon Hassan waked at home, and conceived a great pleasure at the relation given him, especially at his being sent to a mad-house. But that monarch was both just and generous, and had taken a great liking to Abon Hassan: he designed, after he had carried on this scene, to take him into his palace; and to pursue this project, he had dressed himself again like a merchant of Moussel. He perceived Abon Hassan at the same time that he saw him, and presently guessed by his actions that he was angry with him, and wanted to shun him. This made him walk close to the parapet Abon Hassan leaned over; and when he came nigh him, he put his head over to look him in the face. Ah, brother Abon Hassan, said he, is it you? give me leave to embrace you. Not I, replied Abon Hassan roughly, without looking at the pretended Moussel merchant: I will not embrace you; I have nothing to say to you; go along.

What! answered the caliph, do you not know me? Do you not remember the evening we spent together at your house this day month, where you did me the honour to treat me very generously? No, replied Abon Hassan, I do not know you, nor what you talk about: go, I say again, about your business.

The caliph was not to be dashed with this rude behaviour of Abon Hassan. He knew very well the law he had imposed on himself, never to have any commerce again with a stranger he had once entertained; but though Abon Hassan had declared so much to him, he pretended to be ignorant of it. I cannot believe, said he, [305] but you must know me again; it is not possible that you should have forgot me in so short a time. Certainly some misfortune has befallen you, which gives you this aversion. However, you ought to remember that I show my acknowledgment by my good wishes; and that I have offered you my interest, which is not despicable, in an affair which you had very much at heart.

I do not know, replied Abon Hassan, what your interest may be, and I have no desire to make use of it; but I am sensible the utmost of your wishes was to make me mad. In God's name, I say once more, go your way, and trouble me no more.

Ah! brother Abon Hassan, replied the caliph, embracing him, I do not intend to part with you in this manner, since I have had the good fortune to meet with you a second time: you must exercise the same hospitality towards me again that you showed me a month ago, when I had the honour to drink with you.

I have protested against it, said Abon Hassan, and have so much power over myself as not to receive such a man as you. You know the proverb, Take up your drum and be gone: make the application to yourself. God be with you; you have been the cause of my misfortune, and I will not venture myself with you again. My good friend Abon Hassan, said the caliph, embracing him again, I beg of you not to treat me after this injurious manner, but be better persuaded of my friendship. Do me the favour to tell me what has happened to you; for I assure you, I wish you well, and would be glad of an opportunity to make you amends for the trouble I have caused you, if it has been actually my fault. Abon Hassan yielded to the pressing instances of the caliph, and bade him sit down by him. Your incredulity and importunity have tired my patience; and what I am [306] going to tell you, will show you that I do not accuse you wrongfully.

The caliph sat down by Abon Hassan, while he told him all that happened to him, from his waking in the palace to his waking again in his own house, all as a mere dream, with all the circumstances, which the caliph knew as well as himself, and which renewed his pleasure. He exaggerated afterwards upon the impression that dream of being caliph made upon him, which, he said, threw him into such extravagances, that he was carried to the mad-house, and used very barbarously. But, said he, what will surprise you, and what you little think of, is, that it was altogether your fault that these things fell out: for, if you remember, I desired you to shut the door

after you, which you neglected; and some devil finding it open, put this dream into my head, which, though it was very agreeable, was the cause of the misfortune I complain of; therefore you, for your negligence, are answerable for the horrid and detestable crime I was guilty of, in lifting my hand against my mother, whom I might have killed, and committed parricide, because she said I was her son, and she would not acknowledge me for the commander of the faithful: besides, I blush when I think of it, and that all my neighbours were witnesses of my folly. In short, Abon Hassan complained of his misfortunes with great heat and vehemence, and did not forget the least circumstance; which pleased the caliph to find he had succeeded so well, who could not help bursting out a-laughing at the simplicity wherewith he related them.

Abon Hassan, who thought that his story should rather move compassion, and that every one ought to be as much concerned at it as himself, very much resented the pretended Moussel merchant's laughter. What! said he, do you make a jest of me, to laugh in my face, or do you believe that I do not speak seriously? If you [307] want proofs of what I advance, look and see whether or no I tell you the truth: with that, stooping down, and baring his shoulders, he showed the caliph the strokes and weals the bull's pizzle had made.

The caliph could not behold these objects of horror without pitying poor Abon Hassan, and being sorry for carrying the jest so far. Come, rise, dear brother, said he, hugging Abon Hassan friendly in his arms; let me go and enjoy the happiness of being merry with you to-night; and to-morrow, if it please God, all things will go well.

Abon Hassan, notwithstanding his resolution and oath, could not resist the caliph's caresses. I will consent, said he to the pretended merchant, if you will swear to shut my door after you, that no demon may come in to distract my brain again. The caliph promised that he would; upon which they both got up, and, followed by the caliph's slave, reached Abon Hassan's house by the time it was dark.

As soon as Abon Hassan entered the doors, he called for candles, and desired his guest to sit down upon a sofa, and then placed himself by him. A little time after, supper was brought up, and they both fell to without ceremony: afterwards there came up a small dessert of fruit, wine, and glasses. Abon Hassan first filled out his glass, and then the caliph's; and after they had drunk some time, and talked of indifferent matters, the caliph perceiving that his host grew warm with liquor, began to talk of love, and asked him if he had never been sensible of that passion.

Brother, replied Abon Hassan familiarly, I never looked upon love or marriage but as bondage or slavery, to which I was always unwilling to submit; and must own to you that I never loved any thing but good [308] cheer and good wine; in short, to divert and entertain myself agreeably with my friends. But yet I do not tell you that I am so indifferent for marriage, or incapable of an inclination, if I could meet with a woman of such beauty and sweetness of temper as those I saw in my dream that fatal night I first saw you, and received you into my house, and you, to my misfortune, left my door open, who would pass the whole night with me, drinking, and singing, and playing on some instrument, and who would study to please and divert me: I believe, on the contrary, I should change all my indifference to a perfect attachment to such a person, and I believe should live very happily with her. But where is such a woman to be found, but in the caliph's palace, or in those of the grand vizier, or some other great lords of the court, who want no money? I choose rather to stick close to my bottle, which is a pleasure much cheaper, and which I can enjoy as well as they. In saying, these words, he filled out his own and the caliph's glass, and said, Come, take your glass, and let us pursue this charming pleasure.

When they had drunk off their wine, It is a great pity, said the caliph, that so gallant a man as you, who owns himself not insensible of love, should lead so solitary a life. I prefer the easy quiet life I live, replied Abon Hassan, before the company of a wife, whose beauty might not please, and who, besides, might create me a great deal of trouble by her imperfections, and perhaps ill humour. This subject lasted a long time; and the caliph, seeing Abon Hassan had drunk up to the pitch he wanted to have him, said, Let me alone; since you have so good a taste, I warrant you I will find you one that shall please you: and then taking Abon Hassan's glass, and putting a pinch of the same powder into it again, filled him up a bumper, and presenting it to [309] him, said, Come, let us drink first the fair lady's health who is to make you happy.

Abon Hassan took the glass laughing, and shaking his head, said, Come, I will drink the lady's health you promised me, though I am very well contented as I am, and do not rely on your promise; but cannot be guilty of so great a piece of incivility, as to disoblige a guest of so much merit, in such a trifling matter. But as soon as he had drunk off his liquor, he was seized with as deep a sleep as before; and the caliph ordered the same slave to take him and carry him to the palace, and in the mean time shut the door after him, as he had promised, and followed him.

When they arrived at the palace, the caliph ordered Abon Hassan to be laid on a sofa, in the fourth hall, from whence he was carried home: but first he bade them put him in the same habit which he acted the caliph in. After that, he charged all the eunuchs; officers, ladies, and musicians, who were in the hall when he drank the last glass of wine, to be there by daybreak, and to take care to act their parts well; and then went to bed, charging Mesrour to wake him before they went into the hall, that he might hide himself in the closet as before.

Mesrour wakened the caliph at the hour appointed; who immediately rose, and went to the hall where Abon Hassan was laid fast asleep; and when he had placed himself in his closet, Mesrour and the other officers and ladies placed themselves about the sofa, so that the caliph might see what passed.

Things being thus disposed, and the caliph's powder having had its effect, Abon Hassan began to stir, and the music to play a very agreeable concert. Abon Hassan was in a great surprise to hear that charming harmony; but when he opened his eyes, and saw the ladies and officers about him, and which he thought he knew [310] again, his amazement was redoubled. The hall that he was in seemed to be the same he dreamed of; and he observed the same branches, and the same furniture and ornaments.

When the concert was ended, he bit his finger and cried loud enough for the caliph to hear him, Alas! I am fallen again into the same dream and illusion that happened to me a month ago, and must expect again the bull's pizzle and mad-house. Almighty God, added he, I commit myself into the hands of thy divine providence. He was a wicked man that I entertained at my house last night, who has been the cause of this illusion, and the miserable hardships I must undergo. The base wretch swore to shut the door after him, and he did not do it; and the devil came in, and filled my head full of this wicked dream of being commander of the faithful, and other phantoms, which bewitch my eyes. May thou be confounded, Satan, and crushed under some mountain!

After these words, Abon Hassan closed his eyes, and remained some time thoughtful, and very much perplexed; then opening them again, and looking about him, cried out a second time, Great God! I commit myself into the hands of thy providence; preserve me from the temptation of Satan. Then shutting them again, he said, All that I know is, I will go and sleep till Satan leaves me, and returns as he came; when one of the ladies approached, and sitting down on a sofa by him, said to him, Commander of the Faithful, I beg of your majesty to forgive me for taking the liberty to tell you not to go to sleep; day appears, and it is time to rise. Be gone, Satan! answered Abon Hassan, raising his voice: but looking upon the lady, he said, Is it I you call the commander of the faithful? Certainly you take me for somebody else. It is to your majesty I give that title, replied the lady, to whom it belongs, as you are sovereign of the world and the Mussulmans, and I am [311] your most humble slave. Undoubtedly your majesty, added she, pretends to have forgot yourself, or this is the effect of some troublesome dream; but if you would but open your eyes, the mists which may disturb your imagination will soon be dispelled, and you will find yourself in your own palace, surrounded by your officers and slaves, who all wait your commands: and that your majesty may not be surprised to find yourself in this hall, and not in bed, I beg leave to tell you, that you fell so suddenly asleep last night, that we were unwilling to wake you, to conduct you to your own chamber, but laid you carefully upon this sofa. In short, she urged so many things to him that were so very probable, that at last he sat upon his breech, and knew all the ladies again. Then she who spoke first, assuming the discourse, said, Commander of the Faithful, and the prophet's vicar on earth, be not displeased if I acquaint your majesty once more, that it is time to rise, for day appears.

You are very troublesome and importunate, replied Abon Hassan, rubbing his eyes: I am not the commander of the faithful, but Abon Hassan; and you shall not persuade me otherwise. We do not know that Abon Hassan your majesty speaks of, answered the lady; but know you to be the commander of the believers.

Abon Hassan looking about, and finding himself in the same hall, attributed all he saw and heard to be such a dream as he had before, and feared very much the dreadful consequences. Heaven have mercy on me! said he, lifting up his hands and eyes, like a man who knew not where he was; after what I have seen, there is no dispute but that devil who came into my chamber possesses me, and fills my imagination full of all these visions.

The caliph, who saw him all the time, and heard these exclamations, almost killed himself with laughing; and had much ado to forbear bursting out into so loud a laughter, that the false caliph must have heard him. [312]

Afterwards Abon Hassan laid himself down again, and shutting his eyes, the same lady said again, Since your majesty does not rise, after we have, according to our duty, told you it was day, and the dispatch of business requires your presence, we shall use the liberty you give us in such like cases. Then taking him by one arm, and calling to one of the other ladies to do the same by the other, they lifted him up, and carried him into the middle of the hall, where they set him on his breech, and all taking hands, danced round him while the music played.

Abon Hassan was in an inexpressible perplexity of mind, and said, What! am I indeed caliph, and commander of the faithful? and in the uncertainty he was in, would have said something more, but the music was so loud that he could not be heard. At last he made a sign to two of the ladies who were dancing, that he wanted to speak with them; upon which they forbore, and went to him. Do not lie, now, said he, but tell me truly who I am.

Commander of the Faithful, replied one of the ladies, your majesty would either surprise us by asking this question, or else you must have had some very extraordinary dream to-night; which may very well be, considering that your majesty has slept longer to-night than ordinary: however, if you will give me leave, I will refresh your memory with what passed yesterday. Then she told him how he went to the council, punished the iman and the four old men, and sent a present by his grand vizier, of a thousand pieces of gold, to the mother of one Abon Hassan: after that, continued she, your majesty dined in the three halls, and, in the fourth, did us the honour to make us sit down by you, to hear our songs, and receive wine from our hands, till your majesty fell so fast asleep, that you never awaked, contrary to custom, before day. All your slaves and officers can confirm what I say; and it is now time you should go to prayers. [313]

Very well, replied Abon Hassan, shaking his head, you would have me believe all this but I can tell you, you are all fools or mad; and that is a great pity, for you are very handsome: for I can tell you, that since I saw you, I have been at home, where I used my mother so ill, that they sent me to a mad-house, and kept me three weeks, and beat me every day with a bull's pizzle; and yet you would make me believe all this to be a dream. Commander of the Faithful answered the lady, we are all ready to swear by what your majesty holds most dear, that all you tell is a dream; for you never stirred out of this hall since yesterday, but slept here all night long.

The confidence with which the lady assured Abon Hassan that all she said was truth, and that he had never been out of the hall since that time, made him not to know what to believe, but bewildered his senses. O Heaven! said he to himself, am I Abon Hassan, or the commander of the faithful? Almighty God, enlighten my understanding, and inform me of the truth. Then he bared his shoulders, and showed the ladies the livid weals. Look, and judge, said he, whether these strokes could come to me in a dream, or when I was asleep. For my part, I can affirm that they were real blows; for I feel the smart of them yet, and that is a testimonial there is no room to doubt of. Now, if I received these strokes in my sleep, it is the most surprising and extraordinary thing in the world, and what I cannot understand.

In this uncertainty, Abon Hassan called to one of the officers that stood round him: Come hither, said he, and bite the tip of my ear, that I may know whether I am asleep or awake. The officer obeyed him, and bit so hard that he made him cry out horridly: the music struck up at the same time, and the officers and ladies all began to dance, and skip about Abon Hassan, and made such a noise, that he was in a perfect enthusiasm, and played a thousand merry tricks. He tore off his caliph's habit, threw off his turban, and jumped [314]

up in his shirt and drawers, and taking hold of two of the ladies' hands, fell a-dancing and singing, and jumping and cutting capers, that the caliph could not contain himself, but burst into so violent a laughter at this sudden pleasantry of Abon Hassan's, that he fell backwards, and made a greater noise than the musicians and all of them together, and lay in that condition for some time. At last he got up again, and putting out his head, cried out, Abon Hassan, Abon Hassan, what! have you a mind to kill me with laughing?

As soon as the caliph's voice was heard, every body was silent, and Abon Hassan among the rest; who, turning his head to see from whence the voice came, knew the caliph and the Moussel merchant, but was not in the least dashed; but, on the contrary, found that he was awake, and all that had happened to him was matter of fact, and not a dream. He entered into the caliph's pleasantry and intentions: Ha! ha! said he, looking at him with a good assurance, you are a merchant of Moussel, and complain that I would kill you, who have been the occasion of my using my mother so ill, and being sent to a mad-house. It was you who treated the iman and the four scheiks in the manner they were used, and not I; I wash my hands of it. It was you who have been the cause of all my disorders: in short, you are the aggressor, and I the injured person.

Indeed you are in the right of it, Abon Hassan, answered the caliph, laughing all the while; but to [315] comfort thee, and make thee amends for all thy troubles, I call Heaven to witness, I am ready and willing to make thee what reparation thou pleasest to ask. After these words, he came out of the closet into the hall, and ordered one of his most magnificent habits to be brought, and commanded the ladies to dress Abon Hassan in it; and when they had done so, he said, embracing him, Thou art my brother; ask what thou wilt, and thou shalt have it.

Commander of the Faithful, replied Abon Hassan, I beg of your majesty to do me the favour to tell me what you did to disturb my brain in that manner, and what was your design; for that is a thing of the greatest importance for me to know, that I may perfectly recover my senses.

The caliph promised to give him that satisfaction, and said, First you ought to know, that I often disguise myself, and particularly at night, to observe what irregularities are committed in Bagdad; besides, I set apart the first day of every month to make a tour about it, sometimes on one side and sometimes on another, but always return by the bridge. That evening that you invited me to supper, I had been taking my rounds; and in our discourse you told me, that the only thing you wished for was to be caliph for four and twenty hours, to punish the iman of your mosque and his four counsellors. I fancied that this desire of thine would afford me a great deal of diversion, and thought immediately how I might procure thee that satisfaction. I had about me a certain powder, which throws immediately the person that takes it into a sound sleep for such a time. I put a dose of it, without being perceived by thee, into the last glass I presented to thee; upon which you fell fast asleep, and I ordered my slave to carry you to my palace, and came away without shutting the door. I [316] have no occasion to repeat what happened at my palace when you waked: but after you had been regaled all day, one of the slaves, by my order, put another dose of the same powder at night into a glass she gave you; you fell asleep as before, and the same slave carried you home, and left the door open. You told me all that happened to you afterwards. I never imagined that you could have suffered so much as you have done. But as I have a great regard for you, I will make you amends; and that you may have no cause to remember your ill treatment, think of what would please you, and ask me boldly for it.

Commander of the Faithful, replied Abon Hassan, how great soever my tortures may have been, they were all blotted out of my remembrance, as soon as I understood my sovereign lord had any share in them, and doubt not in the least of your majesty's bounty; but as interest had never any sway over me, and I have the liberty to ask a favour, I beg that it may be that of having access to your person, to have the happiness of admiring, all my life-time, your grandeur.

This last proof of Abon Hassan's generosity completed the esteem the caliph had entertained for him. I am mightily pleased with thy request, said the caliph, and grant thee free access to my person at all times and all hours. In short, he assigned him an apartment in the palace; and, in regard to his pension, told him, that he would not have him to have any thing to do with his treasurer, but to come always to him for an order upon him. Abon Hassan made a low bow, and the caliph left him to go to council.

Abon Hassan made use of this time to go and inform his mother of his good fortune, and what had happened, which, he told her, was not a dream; for that he had actually been caliph, and had acted as such, and received all the honours; and that she had no reason to doubt of it, since he had it confirmed, by the caliph himself. [317]

It was not long before this new story of Abon Hassan was spread all about Bagdad, and was carried into all the provinces both far and near, and not one single circumstance scarce omitted.

The new favourite Abon Hassan was always with the caliph; for as he was a man of a pleasant temper, and created mirth by all his words and actions, the caliph could not live without him, and often carried him along with him to see his spouse Zobeide, to whom he told his story, and who was mightily pleased with him, and observed that every time he came with the caliph he had his eyes always fixed upon one of her slaves, called Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, (which is to say, Renewed Pleasure,) and resolved to tell the caliph of it. Commander of the Faithful, said that princess one day, you do not observe so well as I, that every time Abon Hassan attends you in your visits to me, he never keeps his eyes off Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, and makes her blush, which is almost a certain sign that she entertains no aversion for him. If you approve of it, we will make a match between them.

Madam, replied the caliph, you put me in mind of a thing which I ought to have done before now. I know Abon Hassan's taste of marriage from himself, and have always promised him a wife that should please him. I am glad you mentioned it, for I know not how I came to forget it. But it is better that Abon Hassan has followed his own inclination, and chose for himself; and if Nouz-hatoul-aonadat is not averse to it, we ought not to hesitate upon their marriage; and since they are both present, let them declare that they give consent.

Abon Hassan threw himself at the caliph's and Zobeide's feet, to show the sense he had of their bounty; and, rising up, said, I cannot receive a wife from better hands, but dare not hope that Nouz-hatoul-aonadat will give me hers. After these words, he looked upon the princess's slave, who showed, by her respectful silence, and the sudden blush that rose in her cheeks, that she was disposed to obey the caliph and her mistress Zobeide. [318]

The marriage was solemnized, and the nuptials celebrated in the palace, with great rejoicings, which lasted several days. Zobeide, in respect to the caliph, made her slave considerable presents, and the caliph did the same to Abon Hassan. The bride was conducted to the apartment the caliph had assigned Abon Hassan, who waited for her with all the impatience of a bridegroom, and received her with the sounding of trumpets and all sorts of instruments, which played in concert, and made the air echo again their sweet and harmonious notes.

After these feasts and rejoicings, which lasted several days, the new-married couple were left to pursue their loves peaceably. Abon Hassan and his spouse were charmed with each other, and lived together in perfect union, and seldom were asunder, but when either he paid his respects to the caliph, or she to Zobeide. Indeed Nouz-hatoul-aonadat was endued with all the qualifications capable of gaining Abon Hassan's love and attachment, and was just such a wife as he desired; therefore they could want nothing to render their lives agreeable. They always ate the nicest and choicest rarities in season, and had the best meats tossed up in fricasees and ragouts, &c. by an excellent cook, who took upon him to provide every thing. Their beaufet was always stored with exquisite wines. At dinner they enjoyed themselves in this manner, and afterwards entertained each other with some pleasantry or other: and in the evenings, which they consecrated to mirth, they had generally some slight repast of dried sweetmeats, choice fruits, and other light meats, and invited each other by songs and catches to drink, and sometimes played to their voices on a lute, or other instruments which they could touch. [319]

Abon Hassan and Nouz-hatoul-aonadat lived a long time in this manner, when the caterer, who disbursed the money for these expenses, put them in mind that he had gone his length, and parted with all his money; which they found, but too late, to be so considerable a sum, that all the presents that the caliph and the princess Zobeide had given them at their marriage, were but just enough to pay him. This made them reflect on what was past, and which at that time they could not remedy. However, they agreed to pay the cook; and sent for him, and paid him all they owed him, without showing the least trouble.

The caterer went away very well pleased to receive so large a sum of money, though Abon Hassan and his wife were not so over-well satisfied with seeing the bottom of their purse, but remained a long time silent and very much embarrassed, to find themselves reduced to that condition the first year of their marriage. Abon Hassan remembered very well that the caliph, when he took him into the palace, promised never to let him want any thing. But when he considered how prodigal he had been of his money in so short a time, he was unwilling to expose himself to the shame of telling the caliph the ill use he had made of what he had given him, and that he wanted more. Besides, he had made over his patrimony to his mother, as soon as the caliph had received him nigh his person; and was afraid to go to her, lest she should find that he had returned to the same extravagance he had been guilty of after his father's death. His wife, on the other hand, looked upon Zobeide's generosity, and the liberty she had given her to marry, as more than a sufficient recompense for her service, and thought she could not ask any more. [320]

Abon Hassan at last broke silence, and looking upon his wife, said, I see you are in the same embarrassment as myself, and am thinking what we must do in this unhappy juncture. I do not know what your sentiments may be; but mine are, let what will happen, not to retrench our expenses in the least; and, I believe you will come into my opinion: the point is, how to support them without asking the caliph or Zobeide; and I fancy I have thought on the means: but we must both assist each other.

This discourse of Abon Hassan's very much pleased his wife, and gave her great hopes. I was thinking so as well as you, said she; but durst not explain my thoughts, because I did not know how to help ourselves; and must confess, that what you tell me gives me a great deal of pleasure. But since you say you have found out a way, and my assistance is necessary, you need but to tell me, and I will do all that lies in my power.

I believe, replied Abon Hassan, that you will not fail in this affair, which concerns us both; and therefore I must tell you this want of money has made me think of a trick we will put upon the caliph and Zobeide, and at which, I am sure, they will both be pleased, and be diverted with the cheat; which is, you and I will both die. Not I indeed, interrupted Nouz-hatoul-aonadat; you may die by yourself, if you will. I am not so weary of this life; and whether you are pleased or not, will not die so soon. If you have nothing else to propose than that, you may do it by yourself; for I shall not meddle with it.

You are so quick and hasty, replied Abon Hassan, that you will not give me time to explain my meaning: have but a little patience, and you shall find that you will be ready enough; for sure you did not think I meant a real death. Well, said his wife, if it is but sham death you design, I am at your service, and you may depend on my zeal: but I must tell you truly, I am very unwilling to die as I apprehended you meant at first. [321]

Be but easy a little, said Abon Hassan, and I will tell you what I propose. I will feign myself dead, and you shall lay me out on a white sheet, in the middle of my chamber, with my feet towards Mecca, and my turban upon my face, just ready to be buried. When you have done so, you must cry and take on, as is usual in such cases, and tear your clothes, and with your hair loose about your ears, go to Zobeide. The princess will ask you the cause of your grief; and when you have told her, with words intermixed with sighs, she will pity you, and give you some money to defray the expense of my funeral, and a piece of gold brocade, to cover my body with, that my interment may be the more magnificent, and to make you a habit in the room of that you had torn; and as soon as you return with the money and the brocade, I will get up and lay you in my place, and go and act the same part with the caliph as you have done with Zobeide; and I dare say the caliph will be as generous to me as Zobeide will be to you.

Nouz-hatoul-aonadat liked this project very well, and said to Abon Hassan, Come, lose no time; strip to your shirt and breeches, while I prepare a sheet. Abon Hassan did as his wife bade him, and laid himself all along on his back, with his feet towards Mecca, on the sheet which his wife spread on the carpet, just in the middle of the room. As soon as he had crossed his arms, his wife wrapped him up, and put a fine piece of muslin and his turban upon his face. After this, she pulled her hair over her face, and with a dismal crying and lamentation, ran across the court of Zobeide's apartment; who, hearing the voice of a person crying very loud, commanded some of her women to see who it was, who returned, and told her that it was Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, who was coming in a deplorable condition. [322]

The princess, impatient to know what had happened to her, rose up immediately, and went to meet her at the door of the antechamber. Nouz-hatoul-aonadat played her part excellently well. As soon as she saw Zobeide, she redoubled her cries, tore her hair off by handfuls, beat her face and breast, and threw herself at her feet, bathing them with her tears.

Zobeide, amazed to see her slave in so extraordinary an affliction, asked her, what misfortune had happened to her. But, instead of answering, she continued sighing and sobbing; and at last, feigning to strive to check herself, said, with words intermixed with sighs, Alas! my most honoured lady and mistress, what greater misfortune could have befallen me than this, which obliges me to throw myself at your highness's feet? May God prolong your days, my most respectable princess, in perfect health, and grant you many happy years. Abon Hassan! poor Abon Hassan! whom you honoured with your esteem, and gave me for a husband, is no more!

Then Nouz-hatoul-aonadat redoubled her tears and sighs, and threw herself again at the princess's feet. Zobeide was extremely surprised at this news. Abon Hassan dead! cried she, that agreeable pleasant man! indeed I did not in the least expect his death so soon; he seemed to promise a long life, and well deserved one. Then she burst out also into tears, as did all her women, who had been often witnesses of Abon Hassan's pleasantries, when the caliph brought him to see the princess Zobeide, and continued a long time [323] bewailing the loss of him. At last Zobeide broke silence, and ordered one of her slaves to go to her treasure, and fetch a hundred pieces of gold, and a piece of rich brocade.

The slave returned soon with a purse and piece of brocade, which, by Zobeide's order, she put into Nouz-hatoul-aonadat's hand; who threw herself again at the princess's feet, and thanked her with a great deal of satisfaction, to think she had succeeded so well. Go, said Zobeide, make use of that brocade to cover the corpse of thy husband, and with that money bury him handsomely, and as he ought to be. Moderate the transports of thy affliction: I will take care of thee.

As soon as Nouz-hatoul-aonadat got out of the princess's presence, she dried up her tears, and returned with joy to Abon Hassan, to give him an account of her good success. When she came into her own apartment, and saw her husband still stretched out in the middle of the floor, she ran to him laughing, and bade him rise, and see the fruits of his project. Upon which he arose, and rejoiced with his wife at the sight of the purse and brocade, who, for her part, could, not contain herself. Come, husband, said she laughing, let me act the dead part, and see if you can manage the caliph as well as I have done Zobeide.

This is the temper of all women, replied Abon Hassan, who, we may well say, have always the vanity to believe they can do things better than men, though, at the same time, what they do is by their advice. It would be odd indeed, if I, who laid this plot myself, could not carry it on likewise. But let us lose no time in idle discourse: lie down in my place, and see if I do not come off with as much applause.

Abon Hassan wrapped up his wife as she had done him; and with his turban undone, and set awry on [324] his head, and like a man in the greatest affliction imaginable, he ran to the caliph, who was holding a private council with the grand vizier Giafar and some other viziers, and he having free access wheresoever he was, went with his handkerchief before his eyes, to hide the feigned tears which trickled down his cheeks, and striking his breast with the other, expressed an extraordinary grief.

The caliph, who was ever used to see Abon Hassan gay and merry, was very much surprised to behold him in that sorrowful state, and asked him the cause of his grief. Commander of the Faithful, answered Abon Hassan, with repeated sighings and sobbings, may God preserve your majesty on the throne, which you fill so gloriously! Alas! Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, whom you in your bounty gave me for a wife, is ——. At this exclamation, Abon Hassan pretended to have his heart so full that he could not utter one syllable more, but poured forth a flood of tears.

The caliph, who presently understood that Abon Hassan came to tell him of the death of his wife, seemed very much concerned, and said to him, God comfort thee; she was a good slave, and we gave her to thee with an intention to make thee happy: she deserved a longer life. Then the tears ran down his face, so that he was obliged to pull out his handkerchief to wipe them off. In short, Abon Hassan dissembled so well, that the

caliph, who did not in the least doubt of his sincerity, ordered his treasurer, who was then present, to give Abon Hassan a purse of a hundred pieces of gold, and a piece of brocade. Abon Hassan immediately cast himself at the caliph's feet, and thanked him for his present. Follow the treasurer, said that monarch; throw the brocade over the corpse, and with the money show the last testimony of thy love for thy wife.

Abon Hassan made no reply to these obliging words of the caliph, but retired with a low bow, and followed the treasurer; and as soon as he had got the purse and piece of brocade, went home, very well pleased with having found out so quick and ready a way of supplying his necessity, which had given him some trouble. [325]

Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, weary with lying so long in that posture, never waited till Abon Hassan bade her rise; but as soon as she heard the door open, got up and ran to her husband, and asked him if he had cheated the caliph as well as she did Zobeide? You see, said he, showing her the stuff, and shaking the purse, that I can act a sorrowful husband as well as you can an afflicted wife. But for fear this trick of theirs should be attended with some ill consequences, he thought it would not be amiss to instruct his wife with what might happen, that they might act in concert. For, added he, the better we succeed in embarrassing the caliph and Zobeide, the more they will be pleased at last, and perhaps may show their satisfaction by a greater liberality. And this last consideration induced them to carry on this scene further.

The caliph, though he had a great deal of business to transact in council, was nevertheless so impatient to go and condole with the princess upon the death of her slave, that he rose up as soon as Abon Hassan was gone, and put off the council to another day. Follow me, said he to Mesrour, who always attended him wherever he went, and let us go and share with the princess the grief which the death of her slave Nouz-hatoul-aonadat causes her.

Accordingly, they went to Zobeide's apartment, whom the caliph found seated on a sofa, very much afflicted, and all in tears. Madam, said the caliph, going up to her, it is necessary to tell you how much I partake with you in your affliction; since you are not insensible that what gives you pleasure or trouble, has the same effect on me. But we are all mortals, and must surrender up to God that life he gives us, when he requires it. Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, your faithful slave, was endued with qualifications that deserved all your esteem, and I do not disapprove your expressing it after her death; but consider, all your grief will not bring her to life again. Therefore, madam, if you love me, and would take my advice, be comforted for this loss, and take care of a life which you know is precious to me. [326]

If the princess was charmed with these tender sentiments which the caliph expressed in his compliments, she was much more amazed to hear of Nouz-hatoul-aonadat's death. This news put her into so great a surprise, that she was not able to return an answer for some time. At last, recovering, she said, Commander of the Faithful, I am very sensible of all your tender sentiments; but cannot comprehend the news you tell me of the death of my slave, who is in perfect health. My affliction is for the death of Abon Hassan, her husband, your favourite, whom you was so kind to let me know, who often diverted me very agreeably, and for whom I have as great a value as you yourself. But, sir, the little concern you show for his death, and your so soon forgetting a man in whom you have often told me you took a great deal of pleasure, amazes and surprises me very much; and this insensibility seems the greater, by your changing his death for that of my slave.

The caliph, who thought that he was perfectly well informed of the death of the slave, and had just reason to believe so, because he had both seen and heard Abon Hassan, fell a-laughing and shrugging up his shoulders, to hear Zobeide talk after this manner. Mesrour, said he, turning himself about to that eunuch, what dost thou think of the princess's discourse? Do not women sometimes lose their senses? for, in short, thou hast heard and seen all as well as myself. Then turning about to Zobeide, Madam, said he, do not shed any more tears for Abon Hassan, for I can assure you he is well; but rather bewail the death of your dear slave. It is not many moments since her husband came all in tears, and the most inexpressible affliction, to tell me of the death of his wife. I gave him a purse of a hundred pieces of gold, and a piece of brocade, to comfort him, and bury her with; and Mesrour here, who was by, can tell you the same. [327]

The princess took this discourse of the caliph to be all a jest, and that he had a mind to impose upon her

credulity. Commander of the Faithful, replied she, though you are used to banter, I must tell you this is not a proper time. What I tell you is very serious: I do not talk of my slave's death, but of Abon Hassan her husband's, whose fate I bewail, and so ought you too. Madam, said the caliph, putting on a grave countenance, I tell you, without raillery, that you are deceived; Nouz-hatoul-aonadat is dead, and Abon Hassan is alive, and in perfect health.

Zobeide was very much piqued at this answer of the caliph. Commander of the Faithful, replied she smartly, surely you would make me think that you were mad; give me leave to repeat to you once more that it is Abon Hassan who is dead, and that my slave Nouz-hatoul-aonadat is living; it is not an hour ago since she went from hence; she came here in so disconsolate a state, that the sight of her was enough to have drawn tears from my eyes, if she had not told me her affliction. All my women, who cried with me, can bear me witness, and tell you also, that I made her a present of a hundred pieces of gold, and a piece of brocade; and the grief which you found me in was upon the death of her husband; and just that instant that you came in, I was going to [328] send you a compliment of condolence.

At these words of Zobeide, the caliph cried out, in a fit of laughter, This, madam, is a strange piece of obstinacy; but, continued he seriously, you may depend upon Nouz-hatoul-aonadat's being dead. I tell you not, sir, replied Zobeide instantly; it is Abon Hassan that is dead, and you shall never make me believe otherwise.

Upon this the caliph began to be angry, and set himself upon a sofa, some distance from the princess, and, speaking to Mesrour, said, Go immediately, and see which it is, and bring me word; for though I am certain that it is Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, I would rather take this way, than be any longer obstinately positive. For my part, replied Zobeide, I know very well that I am in the right, and you will find it to be Abon Hassan. And for mine, replied the caliph, I am so sure that it is Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, that I will lay you what wager you will that Abon Hassan is well.

Do not think to come off there, said Zobeide: I accept of your wager, and I am so well persuaded of his death, that I would willingly lay the dearest thing in the world to me. You know what I have in my disposal, and what I value most; propose the bet, and I will stand to it.

Since it is come to that, said the caliph, I will lay my garden of pleasures against your palace of paintings, though the one is worth much more than the other. It is no matter for that, replied Zobeide; if your garden is more valuable, you have made choice of what you thought fit, and what belonged to me, as an equivalent against what you lay; and I say done to the wager, and will not turn back. The caliph said the same, and both waited until Mesrour returned.

While the caliph and Zobeide were disputing so earnestly, and with so much heat, Abon Hassan, who [329] foresaw their difference, was very attentive to whatever might happen. As soon as he perceived Mesrour through a window, over against which he sat, talking with his wife, and observed that he was coming directly to their apartment, he presently guessed what he was coming about, and bade his wife make haste to act the dead part once more, as they had agreed on; and, in short, they were so pinched for time, that Abon Hassan had much ado to wrap up his wife, and lay the piece of brocade upon her, before Mesrour came. As soon as he had done that, he opened the door of his apartment, and with a melancholy dejected countenance, and his handkerchief before his eyes, went and sat down at the head of the pretended deceased.

By that time he was seated Mesrour came into the room. The dismal sight that saluted his eyes gave him a secret joy, on account of the errand the caliph sent him on. As soon as Abon Hassan perceived him, he rose up to meet him, and kissing his hand out of respect, said, sighing and groaning, You see me, sir, in the greatest affliction that ever could befall me; the death of my wife Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, whom you honoured with your favours.

Mesrour, softened by this discourse, could not refuse some tears to the memory of the deceased. He lifted up the pall a little at the head, which was uncovered, and peeping under it, let it down again, and said, with a deep sigh, There is no other god but God; we must all submit to his will, and return to him. Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, my good sister, added he, thy days have been very few: God have mercy on thee. Then turning to

Abon Hassan, who was all the time in tears, We may well say, said he, that women sometimes have whims, and lose their senses; for Zobeide will maintain to the caliph, that you are dead, and not your wife; and [330] whatever the caliph can say to the contrary, he cannot persuade her otherwise. He called me to witness the truth of what he affirms; for you know I was by when you came and told him the sorrowful news: but all signifies nothing; they are both positive; and the caliph, to convince Zobeide, has sent me to know the truth; but I fear I shall not be believed; for when women once take a thing, they are not to be beat out of it.

God keep the commander of the faithful in the right use of his senses, replied Abon Hassan, still sighing and crying; you see how it is, and that I have not imposed upon his majesty; and I wish to heaven, continued he, to dissemble the better, that I had no occasion to tell him the melancholy and afflicting news. Alas! I cannot enough express my irreparable loss. That is true, replied Mesrour; and I can assure you, I have a great share in your affliction; but you must comfort, and not abandon yourself to your grief. I leave you against my will, to return to the caliph; but I beg the favour of you not to bury the corpse until I come again, for I will assist at the interment.

Abon Hassan waited on him to the door, and told him that he did not deserve the honour that he did him; and for fear Mesrour should return to say something else to him, he followed him with his eyes for some time, and then returned to his wife, and unloosed her. This is already, said he, a new scene of mirth; but I fancy it will not be the last; for certainly the princess Zobeide will not believe Mesrour, but laugh at him, since she has too substantial a reason to the contrary; therefore we must expect some new event. Whilst Abon Hassan and Nouz-hatoul-aonadat were talking thus, she had time enough to put on her clothes again; and both went and sat down on a sofa, opposite to the window, where they could see all that passed. [331]

In the mean time, Mesrour reached Zobeide's apartment, and going into her closet laughing, clapped his hands, like one who had something very agreeable to tell.

The caliph, who was naturally impatient, would presently be informed of the truth of the matter; for he was piqued a little at the princess's diffidence: therefore, as soon as he saw Mesrour, Vile slave, said he, is this a time to laugh? Why do you not tell me which is dead, the wife or the husband?

Commander of the Faithful, answered Mesrour, putting on a serious countenance, it is Nouz-hatoul-aonadat who is dead; for the loss of whom Abon Hassan is as much afflicted as when he appeared before your majesty. The caliph, not giving him time to pursue his story, interrupted him, and cried out, laughing heartily, Good news; Zobeide was a moment ago mistress of the palace of paintings, which she staked against my garden of pleasures, since you went, and now it is mine; therefore thou couldst not have done me a greater pleasure: but give me a true account of what thou sawest.

Commander of the Faithful, said Mesrour, when I came to Abon Hassan's apartments, I found the door open, and he bewailing the death of his wife Nouz-hatoul-aonadat. He was seated at the head of the deceased, who was laid out in the middle of the room, with her feet towards Mecca, and was covered with that piece of brocade which your majesty made a present of to Abon Hassan. After I had expressed the share I had in his grief, I went and lifted up the pall at the head, and knew Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, though her face was very much swelled. I exhorted Abon Hassan the best I could to comfort himself; and when I came away, I told him I would attend at his wife's funeral, and desired him not to stir the corpse till I came. This is all I can tell [332] your majesty. I ask no more, said the caliph, laughing heartily; and I am very well satisfied with thy exactness. Then addressing himself to Zobeide, Well, madam, said he, have you yet any thing to say against so certain a truth? Will you always believe that Nouz-hatoul-aonadat is alive, and that Abon Hassan is dead? And will you not own that you have lost your wager?

How, sir, replied Zobeide, who would not believe one word Mesrour said, do you think that I regard that impertinent slave, who knows not what he says? I am not so blind or mad. With these eyes I saw Nouz-hatoul-aonadat in the greatest affliction: I spoke to her myself, and she told me that her husband was dead.

Madam, replied Mesrour, I swear to you by your own life, and that of the commander of the faithful, which are both dear to me, that Nouz-hatoul-aonadat is dead, and Abon Hassan is living.

Thou art a base despicable slave, said Zobeide, in a rage, and I will confound thee immediately; and thereupon she called her women, by clapping her hands together, who all came in. Come hither, said the princess to them, and speak the truth: Who was that who came and spoke with me a little before the caliph came here? The women all answered, that it was poor afflicted Nouz-hatoul-aonadat. And what, added she, addressing herself to her that was treasurer, did I order you to give her? Madam, answered the treasurer, I gave Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, by your orders, a purse of a hundred pieces of gold, and a piece of brocade, which she carried along with her. Well then, sorry slave, said Zobeide to Mesrour, in a great passion, what hast thou to say to all this? What dost thou think now, that I ought to believe thee, or my treasurer, my other women, or myself?

Mesrour did not want for arguments to contradict the princess; but, as he was afraid of provoking her too much, he chose rather to be silent, though he was satisfied within himself that the wife was dead, and not the husband. [333]

All the time of this dispute between Zobeide and Mesrour, the caliph, who heard what was said on both sides, and was against the princess, because he had seen and spoke to Abon Hassan himself, laughed heartily to see Zobeide so exasperated against Mesrour. Madam, said he to Zobeide, I know not indeed who was the author of that saying. That women sometimes lose their wits; but I am sure you make it good. Mesrour came just now from Abon Hassan's, and tells you that he saw Nouz-hatoul-aonadat lying dead in the middle of the room, Abon Hassan alive, and sitting by her; and yet you will not believe this evidence, which nobody can reasonably refuse: I think it is very strange.

Zobeide would not hear what the caliph represented. Pardon me, Commander of the Faithful, replied she, if I suspect you: I see very well that you have contrived with Mesrour to chagrin me, and try my patience. And as I perceive that this report was concerted between you, I beg leave to send a person to Abon Hassan's, to know whether or no I am in the wrong.

The caliph consented, and the princess charged an old nurse, who had lived a long time with her, with that important commission. Hark ye, nurse, said she, you see the dispute between the caliph and me; therefore go to Abon Hassan's, or rather Nouz-hatoul-aonadat's, for he is dead, and clear up this matter. If thou bringest me good news, a handsome present is thy reward. Make haste and return quickly.

The caliph was overjoyed to see Zobeide in this embarrassment; but Mesrour, extremely mortified to find the princess so angry with him, did all he could to appease her, insomuch that she and the caliph were both satisfied with him. He was overjoyed when Zobeide sent the nurse; because he was persuaded that the report she would make would agree with his, and would justify him, and restore him to her favour. [334]

In the mean time, Abon Hassan, who watched the window, perceived the nurse at a distance, and guessing that she was sent by Zobeide, called his wife, and told her that the princess's nurse was coming to know the truth; therefore, said he, make haste and lay me out. Accordingly Nouz-hatoul-aonadat did so, and covered him with the piece of brocade Zobeide had given her, and put his turban upon his face. The nurse, eager to acquit herself of her commission, came a good round pace, and entering the room, perceived Nouz-hatoul-aonadat all in tears, her hair dishevelled, and seated at the head of her husband, beating her breast, and expressing a violent grief.

The good old nurse went directly to the false widow. My dear Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, said she, with a sorrowful face, I come not to interrupt your grief and tears for a husband who loved you so tenderly. Ah! good mother, replied the counterfeit widow, you see my misfortune, and how unhappy I am by the loss of my beloved Abon Hassan. Abon Hassan, my dear husband! cried she, what have I done that you should leave me so soon? Have I not always rather obeyed your will than my own? Alas! what will become of poor Nouz-hatoul-aonadat?

The nurse was in a great surprise to see every thing quite the reverse of what the chief of the eunuchs had told the caliph. This black-faced Mesrour, said she, lifting up her hands, deserves to be impaled for having made so great a difference between my good mistress and the commander of the faithful, by the notorious lie he told them. I will tell you daughter, said she, the wickedness of that villain Mesrour, who has asserted, with [335]

an inconceivable impudence, before my mistress's face, that you were dead, and Abon Hassan was alive.

Alas! my good mother, cried Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, I wish to heaven that it was true! I should not be in this sorrowful state, nor bewail a husband so dear to me. At these words she burst out into tears, and feigned a most desperate trouble.

The nurse was so much concerned for her tears, that she sat down by her, and cried too: then gently lifting up the turban and cloth, looked on the face of the corpse. Ah! poor Abon Hassan, cried she, covering the face again, God have mercy upon thee. Adieu, child, said she to Nouz-hatoul-aonadat; if I could stay longer with you, I would, with all my heart: but I am obliged to return immediately, to free my mistress from the uneasiness that black villain has given her by his impudent lie, assuring her with an oath that you was dead.

As soon as the nurse was gone, and had pulled the door after her, and Nouz-hatoul-aonadat thought she would not come back again, she wiped her eyes, and went and unloosed Abon Hassan, and then both went and sat down on a sofa against the window, expecting what would be the end of this cheat, and to be ready to act according as things should offer.

The nurse, in the mean time, made all the haste she could to Zobeide. The pleasure of carrying the princess good news, and hopes of a good reward, added wings to her feet; and running into the princess's closet, quite out of breath, there gave her a true account of all she had seen. Zobeide hearkened to the old woman's relation with a most sensible pleasure; and when she had done, she said, Repeat it once more before the caliph, who looked upon us all to be fools, and would make us believe we have no sense of religion, nor fear of God; and tell your story to that wicked black slave, who had the insolence to assert a falsity, and which I know to [336] be one.

Mesrour, who expected the nurse's report would prove favourable on his side, was very much mortified to find it so much the contrary. He was so vexed at the rage Zobeide expressed against him, for a thing he believed to be very true, that he was glad of having an opportunity of speaking his mind freely to the nurse, which he durst not do to the princess. Old toothless, said he to the nurse, thou tellest lies, and there is no truth in what thou sayest; for I saw Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, with these eyes, laid out in the midst of the room.

Thou art a notorious liar thyself, replied the nurse, with an insulting air, to dare to maintain before my face so great a falsity, since I saw Abon Hassan dead, and laid out, and left his wife alive. Thou art an impostor, replied Mesrour, and endeavourest to put us all into confusion.

There is impudence for you, said the nurse, to dare to tell me I lie, in the presence of their majesties, when I saw just now, with my own eyes, what I have had the honour to tell them. Indeed, nurse, answered Mesrour again, you had better hold your tongue, for you certainly dote.

Zobeide, who could not support this want of respect in Mesrour, who, without any regard to her, treated her nurse injuriously, without giving the nurse time to reply to so gross an affront, said to the caliph, Commander of the Faithful, I demand justice for this insolence in our presence; and could say no more, she was so enraged, and burst out into tears.

The caliph, who had heard all this dispute, thought it very intricate, and mused some time, and could not tell what to think of so many contradictions. The princess, for her part, as well as Mesrour, the nurse, and all the women slaves who were present, were as much puzzled, and remained silent. At last the caliph taking [337] up the cudgels, and addressing himself to Zobeide, said, I see very well we are all liars; myself first, and then you, Mesrour, and your nurse; or at least it seems not one can be believed before the other: therefore, let us go ourselves to know the truth; for I can see no other way to clear up these doubts.

After these words the caliph got up, the princess followed him, and Mesrour went before to open the doors. Commander of the Faithful, said he, I am overjoyed that your majesty has taken this course, and much more, when I shall make it plainly appear that the nurse dotes, though the expression is displeasing to my good mistress.

The nurse, who wanted not to reply, said, Hold thy tongue, black face; thou dotest thyself.

Zobeide, who was very much provoked at Mesrour, could not bear to hear him attack her nurse again without taking her part. Vile slave, said she, say what thou wilt, I maintain my nurse is in the right, and look upon thee as a liar. Madam, replied Mesrour, if the nurse is so very certain that Nouz-hatoul-aonadat is alive, and Abon Hassan is dead, I will lay her what she dare of it. The nurse was as ready as he; and, in short, they laid a piece of gold and silver stuff.

The apartment the caliph and Zobeide came out of, though it was a great way from Abon Hassan's, was nevertheless just over against it, and Abon Hassan could perceive them coming, and told his wife, that the caliph and Zobeide, preceded by Mesrour, and followed by a great number of women, were coming to do them the honour of a visit. At this news she seemed frightened, and cried out, What shall we do? we are ruined! Fear nothing, replied Abon Hassan: What! have you forgot what we agreed on? We will both be dead, [338] and you shall see all will go well. At the slow rate they come, we shall be ready before that time they get to the door. Accordingly Abon Hassan and his wife wrapped up and covered themselves with the piece of brocade, and waited patiently for their visitors.

Mesrour, who came first, opened the door, and the caliph and Zobeide, followed by their attendants, entered the room; but were extremely surprised, and stood motionless, at the dismal sight which saluted their eyes. At last, Zobeide breaking silence, said to the caliph, Alas! they are both dead! You have done finely, continued she, looking at the caliph and Mesrour, to endeavour to make me believe that my slave was dead; and I find it true at last: it is dangerous jesting with edge-tools: the grief of losing her husband has certainly killed her. Say rather, madam, answered the caliph, prepossessed to the contrary, that Nouz-hatoul-aonadat died first, and the afflicted Abon Hassan could not survive his dear wife: therefore you ought to agree that you have lost your wager, and your palace of paintings is mine.

Hold there, answered Zobeide, animated with the same spirit of contradiction; I will maintain it, you have lost your garden of pleasures to me. Abon Hassan died first; since my nurse told you, as well as me, that she saw her alive, and crying for the death of her husband.

The dispute of the caliph and Zobeide brought on another between Mesrour and the nurse, who had wagered as well as they; and each pretended to win, and came at last to abuse each other very grossly.

After all, the caliph reflecting on what had passed, began to think that Zobeide had as much reason as himself to maintain that she had won. In the embarrassment he was, of not being able to find out the truth, he advanced towards the two corpses, and sat himself down at the head, searching after something that might gain [339] him the victory over Zobeide. Well, cried he, presently after, I swear, by the holy name of God, that I will give a thousand pieces of gold to him that can tell me which of these two died first.

No sooner were these words out of the caliph's mouth, but he heard a voice under Abon Hassan's pall, say, Commander of the Faithful, I died first, give me the thousand pieces of gold. At the same time he saw Abon Hassan throw off the piece of brocade, and come and prostrate himself at his feet, while his wife did the same to Zobeide, keeping on her pall of brocade, out of decency. The princess at first shrieked out, and frightened all about her; but recovering herself at last, expressed a great joy to see her slave rise again alive. Ah! wicked Nouz-hatoul-aonadat, cried she, what affliction have I been in for thy sake! However, I forgive thee from my heart, and am glad to see thee well.

The caliph, for his part, was not so much surprised when he heard Abon Hassan's voice; but thought he should have died away with laughing at this unravelling of the mystery, and to hear Abon Hassan ask so seriously for the thousand pieces of gold. What, Abon Hassan, said he, hast thou conspired against my life, to kill me a second time with laughing? How came this thought into your head, to surprise Zobeide and me thus, when we least thought on such a trick?

Commander of the Faithful, replied Abon Hassan, I will declare to your majesty the whole truth, without the least reserve. Your majesty knows very well, that I always loved to eat and drink well; and the wife you gave

me rather increased than restrained that inclination. With these dispositions, your majesty may easily suppose we might spend a good estate; and, to make short of my story, we were not the least sparing of what your majesty so generously gave us. This morning, accounting with our caterer, who took care to provide every thing for us, and paying what we owed him, we found we had nothing left. Then reflections of what was past, and resolutions to manage better for the future, crowded into our thoughts apace, and after them a thousand projects, all which we refused. At last, the shame of being reduced to so low a condition, and not daring to tell your majesty, made us contrive this trick to relieve our necessities, and to divert your majesty, hoping that you would be pleased to pardon us. [340]

The caliph and Zobeide were very well satisfied with Abon Hassan's sincerity; and then Zobeide, who had all along been very serious, began to laugh, and could not help thinking of Abon Hassan's scheme; when the caliph, who had laughed his sides sore at the singularity of this adventure, rising up, said, Follow me both of you, and I will give you the thousand pieces of gold I promised you. Zobeide desired him to let her make her slave a present of that sum. By this means Abon Hassan and his dear wife Nouz-hatoul-aonadat preserved the favour of the caliph Haroun Alraschid and the princess Zobeide; and by their liberalities were made capable of pursuing their pleasures.

Footnotes

[1] A famous player on the lute, that lived at Bagdad at that time.

[2] Giauhara, in Arabic, signifies a Precious Stone.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.

Transcriber's notes

- Silently corrected several palpable typos.
- Retained publisher's names, although this text is in the public domain.

[The end of *The Arabian Nights*, vol. III by anonymous]