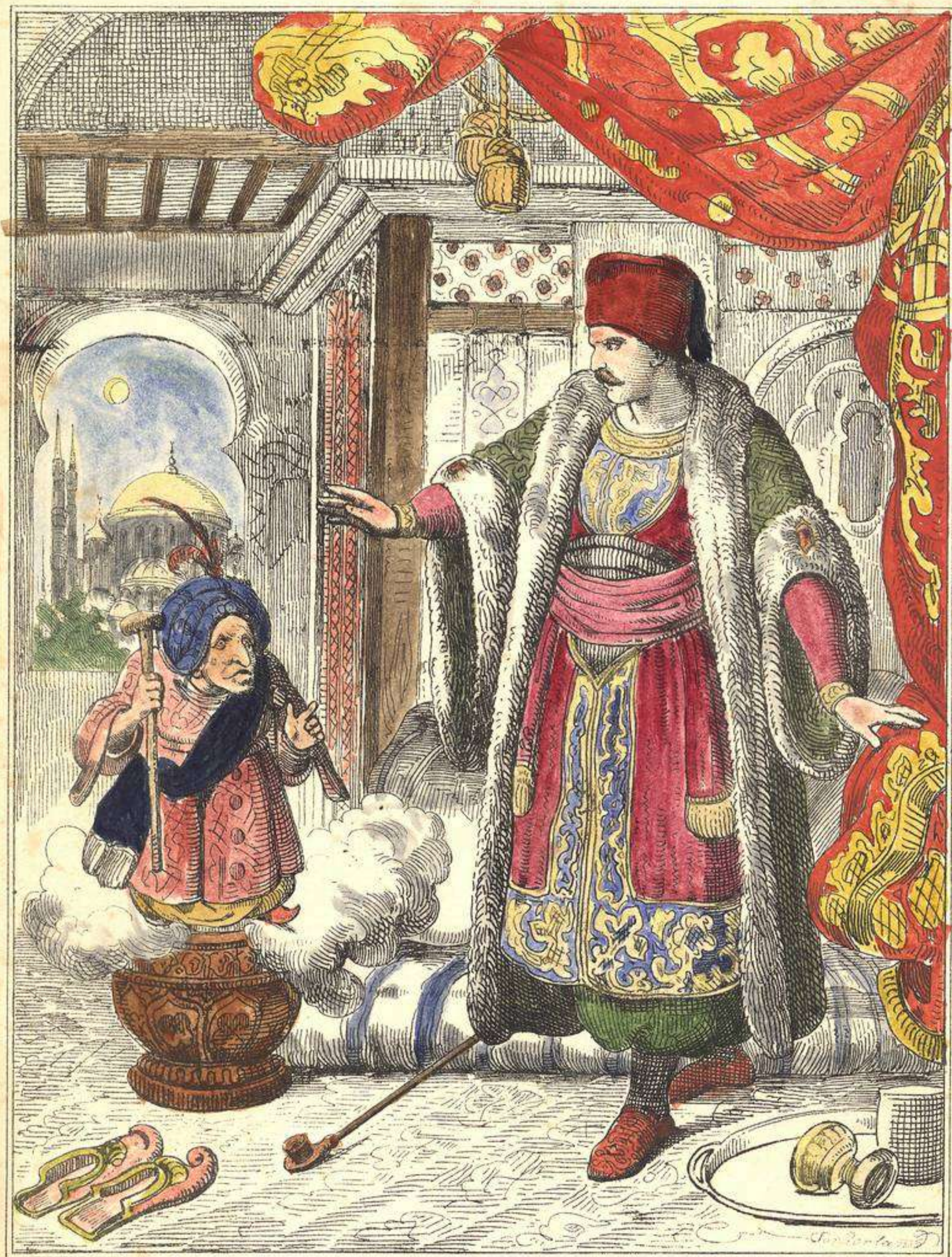


Spencer P. T. Nicholl

from

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TALES

FROM THE EASTERN-LAND,

BY A. L. GRIMM.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY H. V.

Illustrated with Four Pictures by

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THE MERCHANT OF BALSORA.

CHAPTER I.

MANY hundreds of years ago, about the time when the far-famed Caliph Harun al Raschid reigned over Bagdad, there dwelt in the city of Balsora a very celebrated merchant named Jussuf. His father had bequeathed him considerable wealth, and a splendid mansion for his residence, which for its extent and magnificent architecture was by no means inferior to the most stately palaces in the city, whilst it far surpassed them all in beauty of situation.

This merchant was proprietor of the largest sale-rooms in the grand bazaar, wherein he kept an immense stock of the most costly merchandize, which he procured from far distant countries, either by means of his ships, or on the backs of camels, of which he had a great number.

The visitor would behold among his stores the rarest productions of nature ranged side by side with the most elaborate works of art; there were the richest tissues and finest brocades, curiously wrought vessels in gold and silver, and valuable trinkets

and jewelry sparkling with precious gems, all arranged in the most tasteful manner, in order to tempt the purchaser.

It was therefore no wonder, in so large and rich a city, that Jussuf received great patronage ; indeed it was the usual custom with all those who studied the fashions of the place to resort to him, knowing that he could supply them with the best goods of all kinds. Thus his business continued to increase daily ; and as a natural result, his wealth also increased ; but his cares were multiplied in the same proportion, for it was no easy task to superintend the vast number of men that he was obliged to employ ; and what with seeing to the lading and unlading of his ships, and the continual arrival and departure of the caravans, both his mind and body were actively employed from morning till night.

In this way he continued for some years entirely absorbed in his business, forgetting all care of his health, until he found that the strength and energy which he had hitherto possessed, gradually began to decline ; and this, at length, suggested to him the necessity of devoting some portion of his time to recreation. It fortunately happened, at this very juncture, that a favourable opportunity offered for the purchase of a beautiful estate in the country, exactly suited to his taste. It was situated in an extensive and luxuriant plain a few miles up the river, where the fishing was excellent, and where the surrounding country offered plenty of sport ; having beside all these advantages, the great recommendation of being very cheap, he, without hesitation, at once concluded the purchase. He had the old country-house pulled down, and employed a skilful architect to erect on its site, which was on a gentle eminence, a larger and much more commodious mansion, surrounded by an extensive pleasure garden laid out in

the most tasteful style. As soon as all the alterations were completed, he concluded his business at the end of every week at an earlier hour than usual, and rode out to his new estate, where he sought repose from the fatigues of the previous days, and in the amusements of hunting and fishing endeavoured to renovate his health.

But custom has often greater power over us than even our own inclinations. Jussuf had so long been used to the activity of a business life, that he could not keep his mind from continually returning to the wares in his store-rooms, or anxiously wandering with his ships over the wide seas, and thus he soon lost all relish for the recreation which his new abode afforded. Hunting wild beasts soon appeared to him to be a very cruel pursuit; fishing was too tedious; there was too much sameness in rearing flowers; and when he regarded the birds imprisoned in his aviary, he only felt grieved that he had deprived such beautiful creatures of their liberty.

One day, after having vainly endeavoured to amuse himself with one thing or another, he sat down in a very discontented mood, beneath a verandah, whence he commanded a very extended view of the country lying beyond the garden. Through an opening in the foliage, he could see part of the river Chat al Arab, just at the point where, diverging from the Euphrates and the Tigris, it flows on between its own verdant banks. There were some large heavily-laden merchant ships stately sailing down the stream, and several small fishing smacks were seen tacking here and there.

“O, thou delightful stream!” sighed Jussuf, after thoughtfully regarding it for some time: “What a pity is it that so soon as thy

waters flow past yonder city of Balsora, they must be swallowed up by the wide sea beyond, where they are mingled with the deep, and soon forgotten. The sailor, who traverses the ocean, never reflects that the streams, near his own home, form part of the mighty waters through which his vessel glides. And," continued he after a short pause, "is my own case much better. Now I am the great merchant, my ships are sailing morning, noon, and night; my camels traverse the deserts of Arabia and Tartary, through Persia, and thence far over the wide plains of India; yet, when a few years have rolled by, my very name and existence will be forgotten, and like thy waters, will be mingled in the wide ocean of eternity."

These reflections were somewhat abruptly put an end to by a very beautifully coloured butterfly, which Jussuf observed fluttering over one of the beds in the garden, seeming to hesitate as to which of the flowers it should alight on. He watched it anxiously, for he was much struck with the colours on its wings, which far exceeded anything of the kind that he had ever beheld. At length it settled on a poppy, which he had considered of a very fine hue, but this was quite thrown into the shade when compared with the splendid creature which rested upon it.

"What a display of colour! and how beautifully the wings are marked! How much I should like to possess the lovely creature." So saying, Jussuf arose, and approached it cautiously; and having nothing else at hand, he took off his turban, and with it quickly covered the butterfly and the flower, and pressed them both to the ground beneath it. He was sure the butterfly had not flown away, and was just about to raise the turban carefully on one side, in order to take the little prisoner out, when all at

once he observed that it was slowly rising from the earth, borne upwards by the ascending form of a human body. Quite overcome with fear and astonishment, Jussuf retreated a few paces, and the next moment beheld standing before him, a beautiful young damsel, fairer than any he had ever seen. Her face was unveiled, and on her head she wore his turban, which she took off, smiling as she did so, and held out to him, saying, "Here, friend Jussuf, take it back, it is accustomed to cover grave, serious-thinking brains, it may feel itself dishonoured by remaining on my giddy, thoughtless head."

"You do but jest with me, good Fairy," replied Jussuf; "for that you are no mortal being, your extreme beauty is sufficient to prove."

"It may be," answered the young girl; "but pray do not make yourself the least uneasy on that account. I am come to see if I cannot assist you to shake off that extraordinary gloom, which hangs over your mind—come, let us see who can run the faster." So saying, she picked up the poppy which he had crushed to the ground, and threw it in his face, and then ran off.

Jussuf remained somewhat bewildered, and called after her to return; she stopped, and turning round, cried out in reply, "What, are you a statue? cannot you run? if you can, follow and try to catch me." The winning tone in which she uttered these words had such an irresistible charm, that Jussuf started off after her as fast as his legs could carry him. She flew on before him; sometimes lessening her speed, she allowed him to come very near her, and then she bounded off in another direction, and escaped him. Sometimes when he came very near her, she ran right over the flower beds, trampling all the pretty flowers

under her feet. The more she twisted about, the more anxious he became to catch her. At last she seemed to be quite exhausted, and threw herself on a green bank quite out of breath. "This is freedom indeed!" cried she, as Jussuf, who was much fatigued by the chase, came up panting for breath, and seated himself beside her on the grass.

For some little time she amused herself by plucking the pretty flowers and twigs that grew around, and then she skilfully entwined them into a beautiful garland. "Come now," said she, as soon as she had completed it; "come, let us play at throwing the garland." She then arose and led him to the nearest open space, where, holding up the wreath at arm's length, she danced round several times, and cast it high in the air—chanting the following lines as it rose—

" Upon the wings of zephyrs soaring,
Magic wreath, now take thy flight,
Now return and gently falling,
Deck my brow with colours bright."

High above the shadow cast by the surrounding trees appeared the garland glistening in the sunshine, seeming as though it were balanced in the air, then it came gently waving down, and at last lighted on her head, adapting itself like a coronet to her brow, just as she finished the verse. She lifted it off directly, and offering it to Jussuf, said, "It is now your turn! throw it up and see if it will descend on your head in the same manner." Jussuf took it from her hand, and threw it up with all his might, but it did not ascend near so high as the trees, and fell immediately to the ground, at some distance from where he was standing.

Before he could make one step to regain the garland, the

damsel had already picked it up, at the same time laughing heartily at his unskilfulness. She then swung it again in the air in the same way as before, and chanted the same spell; and again the garland ascended high above the tops of the trees, and then sank gently down and rested on her head. Jussuf in his turn tried again, but succeeded no better than before. After having repeated the same feat several times, she said gaily to Jussuf, "Have you not yet discovered why you do not succeed? Why don't you chant my little spell when you throw up the garland? Try once more, and sing the same words as I did." Jussuf took the garland, and as he threw it up, sang as she had told him. Away it flew high above the tops of the trees, and then it sank gradually down until it settled on his turban.—"There you see," said the Fairy, smiling, "it is easy enough when once you know the secret." After repeating the game two or three times more, she told him that they had played long enough at that, "for," said she, "too much of the same thing is tedious;" so throwing up the garland, she changed the spell, and sang thus—

"Upon the wings of zephyrs soaring,
Magic garland take thy flight,
Hie to yon cypress clad in mourning,
Deck its boughs with blossoms bright."

The garland was instantly wafted through the air, and flew right across the open space that she had chosen for their play, presently it brushed against one of the trees in the surrounding forest, and fell to pieces, but the separated flowers, instead of descending to the ground, lighted on a dismal cypress, and hanging all about it, gave it the appearance of being in full blossom. "How is this, you wonder-working being," cried Jussuf,

in great astonishment, at seeing the sudden change in the appearance of the tree; "how is it possible that the cypress can bear such gay blossoms?" "There is nothing to wonder at in that," replied the fairy; "what is the use of reasoning so much about the cause of every little incident that may occur in our artless games. Come! let us now play at ball." So saying, she ran to a pomegranate tree that stood near, and plucked one of the ripe fruit, then taking her station against another tree, she threw the pomegranate to him, as though it had been a ball. In the days of his boyhood Jussuf had been very fond of this pastime, and having practised it a great deal, he caught the pomegranate very cleverly. "Well done," cried she; and although Jussuf was considerably out of his aim when he threw it back, she caught it with the greatest ease, as though it had fallen directly into her hands.

They continued this sport for some time, until Jussuf unluckily let the pomegranate fall to the ground.

"Ah! there you missed," cried she, "and whoever lets it fall, must, by the rules of the game, undergo some punishment!" And taking up the pomegranate, she pointed at him, saying, "Now quickly turn about, or else I'll throw it in your face." Jussuf, however, remained stock still, holding out his hands to protect his face, and began laughing at her. "Turn about quickly," cried she again; but as he did not move, she, after having muttered two or three words in a low voice over the pomegranate, threw it at his face with great violence. He endeavoured to avoid it by sinking his head, but it struck his forehead and was smashed all to pieces, and the vast number of seeds which this fruit contains were scattered all about on the ground.

These had no sooner touched the earth than they all became animated, and were changed into so many wasps, which rose simultaneously from the grass, and swarmed round his head. Jussuf, frightened out of his wits, and dreading the stings of the wasps, covered his eyes with his hands, and started off, running as fast as he could; but the swarm kept pace with him, buzzing about his head. "Throw your turban on the ground," cried the fairy, who now stood at some distance laughing loudly at his fright. He immediately obeyed her instructions, scarcely knowing what he was about; and directly the turban was down, all the wasps crept under it. Jussuf was completely confounded, and stood gazing at the turban. The Fairy then came running up to him, and still laughing immoderately, inquired, "What is the matter, friend Jussuf? Why in the world are you staring so intently on that turban? Is it not a shame that they are not bees underneath? What a supply of honey you would have! Come, pick up your turban, and put it on your head." He stooped, and with trembling hand gently raised the turban; but to his utter astonishment the wasps had all disappeared, and there was nothing underneath but a small green lizard, which crept away and was soon hid among the grass.

"How do you account for all this?" said Jussuf, very seriously. "How was it that those pomegranate seeds changed to wasps? And what has now become of them?"

"What!" replied the Fairy, "how account for it? Who would attempt to do so? Or who can tell how and why either pomegranates or wasps are in the world at all? Pray will you inform me why the blades of this beautiful grass grow from small seeds? Or why from every seed in a fig, another large fig-tree can be

produced? Yet such things are; and if a man would ask the cause of every thing he sees around him, where would be the end of his questions? These are deep mysteries, and mankind ought not to puzzle their brains about them. But, come," continued she, resuming her vivacity and playful tone, "look at yonder fig-tree, see how the fruit is hanging in ripe clusters from its branches, I want to see if you can leap high enough to pluck them."

There stood the fig-tree true enough, and the boughs seemed burdened with the fruit; but they were a great deal too high for Jussuf to reach by jumping. By assuring him that he could easily spring up to them, she induced him to make several attempts, amusing herself meanwhile by laughing at his unsuccessful exertions.

When at length he gave up the task, she retreated a few paces to take a spring; then bounding high in the air, as though borne on wings, she plucked a fig, and descended gracefully beyond the tree, without the least apparent exertion. "There, you see, I have got it," said she, holding out the fruit. "We will share it between us, for we have both worked hard to obtain it."

Jussuf rather hesitated about accepting the proffered half. "It is all fairly yours," he replied; "for you obtained it without any aid from me. I could not jump half high enough."

Then she answered somewhat sharply, "Do you wish to vex me? Did you not work as hard as I did for it? There, take some and eat!" So saying, she threw one half to him, and after having pressed the other to her own lips she cast it away. "Now," she exclaimed, "I have succeeded in my intentions. You *must* now think of me, whether you wish it or not!"

Thus she continued playing for some time, constantly discovering some new amusement, and Jussuf always took part in it with alacrity; leaping, dancing, and tearing about as though he had returned to the days of his childhood. At last they arrived at the margin of a fish-pond in the garden, when she immediately leapt into a small boat that was floating near the bank, and steered it with the greatest skill direct to the centre of the little lake; there she stopped and called to him, saying, "Come to me, good playmate! come here to me!" Jussuf stood on the bank hesitating what to do; he was half inclined to attempt to wade, but he saw that the water was very deep, and he knew that he could not swim. "Won't you come?" said she: "are you afraid of the water?"

"I cannot swim," he replied.

"It is not necessary that you should," was the answer: "do as I do!" So saying she sprung out of the boat, and walked about on the surface of the lake as though it had been firm land.

"Oh, how I wish I could do as you do," cried Jussuf; "but I am too heavy, and should sink immediately." Whilst he was speaking, the fairy resumed her seat in the boat, and replied, "If you will not come to me, neither will I return to you, nor shall you any longer be burthened with my company; for the day declines and darkness is coming on. Henceforward you may sit alone and indulge your solitary freaks and fancies; but if ever you should wish again to see your merry playmate, you must visit her in the native land of the butterfly, which you intended to have captured this morning, and who is now about to fly from you. But change your mind and come to me before I count three. One—two—three!"

The last number had scarcely escaped her lips when she vanished, and Jussuf saw nothing but the little butterfly fluttering over the lake toward the trees in the garden, amongst which he soon lost sight of it. The boat in the meantime floated slowly back to its former position near the bank. Jussuf, now left alone, remained standing at the edge of the lake gazing on the spot where the fairy had disappeared, quite lost in reflection and amazement, and it was not until the dark mantle of night had obscured all around him that he roused himself from his reverie, and became aware of his position. He then felt as if he had awakened from a deep sleep, and as if the past occurrences of the day had been a bright dream.

CHAPTER II.

RECLINING on his bed, in the calm stillness of his chamber, Jussuf revolved in his mind all that had transpired during the day. The wonderful appearance of the young lady was remarkable enough, but what appeared to him still more astonishing was that he, the grave and dignified merchant, whose mind had been hitherto absorbed in the cares and pursuit of business, should have wasted so many hours in the most trifling sports, which he had never engaged in since his earliest childhood. Thus musing, he gradually sunk to sleep.

It was very late when he awoke on the following morning; the sun shone high in the heavens, and the slave in attendance at

the door of his chamber had been long waiting for orders. No sooner had he opened his eyes than he recollected that he ought to have returned at an early hour to the city that morning, having made it a rule always to keep his sale-rooms open on that particular day of the week. It was very welcome news, therefore, when he was informed that his horse stood waiting ready saddled at the door.

Having hastily dressed himself and breakfasted, he mounted his beautiful Arabian steed, and galloped away to Balsora, attended by some of his slaves. On arriving at the bazaar, he found a rapidly increasing crowd of customers assembling, all so anxious to be served that it was with great difficulty he could supply their demands quick enough; he had not assistants sufficient to serve them, neither could his tongue reply to the host of inquiries on all sides, as to the quality and price of the different articles, and when a customer paid him for his purchase, Jussuf was positively obliged to throw the money uncounted in a heap on one side, trusting to the purchaser's honesty, for he could scarcely manage to receive the payments quick enough. It was some little time ere he could get his mind thoroughly settled to business, for his thoughts were ever and anon reverting to the events of the previous day; however, this unsettled state of mind gave way as he became more absorbed in the continual occupation which his business afforded. Several days passed over, and still the crowds that flocked to his warehouse seemed rather to increase than diminish. One day when he was very busy as usual, a man entered the bazaar carrying in his hand a frame containing a collection of beetles, butterflies, and other insects, and holding it up for sale, he cried out lustily, "Who'll buy? who'll buy? only

look at this beautiful collection of choice specimens! They are to be sold very cheap! Who'll buy?"

Jussuf was just at that moment busily occupied with a customer selling her a costly Persian shawl, and casually cast up his eyes to see what the man was making such a noise about, but what was his astonishment when he beheld among the numerous insects that were pinned within the frame the identical butterfly which he had seen in his garden. For some moments he stared at the man as though bewildered, but recovering himself, he called aloud for the pedlar to return and shew him the frame, when he took the opportunity of observing its contents minutely, in order to convince himself that he was not mistaken, and having carefully examined it, without waiting for the man to ask a price, he at once offered him a thousand sequins for the frame. The pedlar immediately accepted the offer, for he feared that if he allowed Jussuf time to reflect he might alter his mind. So bending over the frame, he joyously grasped the purse of gold which Jussuf proffered in exchange.

Jussuf immediately deposited the frame in a drawer, his eyes glistening with satisfaction as he did so. The by-standers could not believe that Jussuf had become such an enthusiastic entomologist all at once, but suspected that his sharp eyes must have discovered something very costly in the frame. From that moment, however, Jussuf could no longer give that attention to his business which it required, for his mind was completely unsettled; he made a great many mistakes, selling several valuable articles for a mere nothing, and frequently demanding an enormous price for the veriest trifles. Thus it was with the greatest difficulty that he could conceal his excitement from the customers,

and every one present remarked, as he closed his sale-rooms at an early hour, how unusually gay and good tempered he appeared to be.

Having seen the premises made secure, he carefully packed up the frame containing the insects, in a cloth, and ordered one of his slaves to carry it, and accompany him home.

Hitherto, the reflection had never occurred to Jussuf's mind, why he should have set so high a value on the butterfly. He had been solely actuated in making the purchase, by an ardent and most unaccountable desire to obtain it, never once questioning the utility of such a proceeding. It was not until he laid down on his bed at night, that he asked himself the question, "Of what use is it to me after all? for it was but two or three days ago that I saw the butterfly, which it resembles so exactly, alive in my garden, whereas this one has evidently been dead many years, for it is quite dry. What relation, then, can this lifeless insect have to my droll and lively companion, who, as she herself acknowledged, was a fairy?" Thus he lay for some hours, musing over the remarkable events that had occurred to him on that happy day, recalling the minutest incidents of the games he had joined in with the fairy, until he came to her wonderful disappearance. "And what were her last words," said he inwardly; "said she not, that if ever I wished to behold her again, I must seek her in the native land of the butterfly?" Now a thought crossed his mind that promised to clear up all the mystery:— "This fairy charmer left me," continued he soliloquizing, "of her own accord, without giving me any clue by which to trace her; but now by an apparent accident I have obtained possession of that which may lend me great assistance in finding her; for

how could the greatest naturalist have been able to have given me any information with regard to the native land of the butterfly, merely from my imperfect verbal description of the insect, without my shewing him one of the species?"

He recalled in his memory all the pretty fairy tales that he had heard in his childhood, which narrated how fairies had appeared on the earth in former times, and had become the wives of mortal men; how happily such men had lived to the end of their days, and when death had dissolved the union, how the wives had returned to fairy regions.

These pleasing reveries were at length terminated by his falling into a sound sleep.

The following morning Jussuf awoke with the firm resolution of immediately setting out in search of the fairy, and of asking her to become his wife. But the first great difficulty was, how to find out which was the native land of the butterfly, for it was there only that he could hope to meet with her.

After reflecting some time as to what should be the first step in the undertaking, he opened the frame, and took out the much valued butterfly; then having placed it in a costly little casket, he secured it in his belt, and proceeded with it to the outskirts of Balsora.

One of the last of the straggling houses in the direction which Jussuf had chosen, was occupied by an aged man, who was famed not only for his great knowledge in natural history, but was also reputed to possess some mystic knowledge, which enabled him to unravel the hidden designs of nature, and lay her secret workings open to his observation. This man had formerly been Jussuf's tutor, and it was to his instructions that he was indebted for the

correct judgment he possessed relative to the qualities of the various articles in which he traded. To his tuition, therefore, he was indebted for much of his prosperity in commerce.

Actuated by a feeling of gratitude, Jussuf had made the old man a present of a cottage and garden, which he had inherited from his father.

On arriving at the cottage, Jussuf knocked gently. The door was instantly opened by an aged slave, who conducted him to an apartment where he beheld his old tutor seated on an ottoman. A large table was covered with a black cloth, whereon lay several rolls of parchment, written all over with hieroglyphics, which to the merchant were quite unintelligible; there were also compasses, rules, and other instruments, strewed about in great disorder.

The old man bowed in a very friendly way as Jussuf entered; but without rising from his seat, he beckoned him to approach, and sit down beside him.

“Well, Jussuf,” said he, “’tis indeed a rare treat to have a visit from you. So you have at last contrived to absent yourself from business, and devote an hour or two of your valuable time to your old friend Modijah? If I have been rightly informed, your business is greatly increased since I last saw you; according to report, you are now the greatest merchant in Balsora, and what is still more praiseworthy, the most respected. This news pleases me greatly, for it is just as it should be.”

The feelings of respect that Jussuf always evinced when in the presence of his venerable instructor, prevented him at first from adverting to the real object of his visit, so he began by stating that he had long felt a great desire to see his old friend once

more, and to know how the world had been using him ; at the same time apologizing for not having come before ; he then reverted to his business, and expressed great regret that he had never had an opportunity of shewing the old man the many curiosities which his store-rooms contained, assuring him that he might there find many articles worthy of his acceptance, which he should feel himself greatly honoured in presenting to him.

Modijah, unable to suppress a smile, replied, "As for those curiosities you mention, I have no need of them, for you have already granted me all that I require in giving me this house to dwell in. Here, unannoyed by the idle curiosity of mankind, I can pursue my studies and researches undisturbed, and that is all I desire in this world ; my time has been so completely occupied, that I have not been able to visit you ; and even had I done so, I should doubtless have found you fully engaged with your business, which certainly has the greatest claim. But," said the old man in conclusion, "speak your mind more freely, for I can see by your countenance, that you have some particular motive in coming to see me."

Jussuf blushed deeply on finding his attempt at concealment so utterly useless ; and told the old man, that his constant application to business having greatly impaired his health, he had found it necessary lately to devote some portion of his time to rest and recreation ; and among other amusements to occupy these leisure hours, he had resumed the study in which he had taken so much interest in his younger years, that of collecting and classifying rare butterflies, and other insects. But," continued he, "I find myself very deficient in the necessary knowledge for correctly arranging these creatures. The other day, for instance, I bought

a frame, containing a very pretty collection, from a man in the bazaar, and in it I find a most beautiful-marked butterfly, of whose name I am quite ignorant, neither can I ascertain in what country it is to be found. Remembering your great skill and learning in these matters, I have taken this opportunity of bringing the specimen, to see if you are able to tell me the country in which the species is to be found." With these words Jussuf drew out the casket, and opening it, requested his tutor to examine the butterfly.

Modijah scarcely caught sight of the contents of the box, when his eyes reverted inquiringly to Jussuf; then, shaking his head mournfully, as if he doubted the truth of his tale, he said, "Poor Jussuf, and so you merely took a casual opportunity of bringing this? as though I did not know that to make this inquiry was the sole object of your coming to see me. Are things so strangely altered with you that you find it necessary to dissemble with your old teacher?"

"It is true," replied Jussuf, in a faltering voice, "I certainly am very anxious to discover the native country of this butterfly."

Then the old man arose, and regarded Jussuf with such a heart-searching look, that he felt quite ashamed, and remained silent, not daring to raise his eyes from the ground. "Yet, it were great injustice in me to blame you," said Modijah, "for well I know that you are guiltless in this affair. But it grieves me sorely to find that you have fallen into the snare that my most implacable enemy has set for you. She, in order to gain a victory over me, and render my labours in your education fruitless, will exercise all her arts that she may lead you to destruction."

Having uttered these words, he placed his hand across his forehead, and remained some minutes absorbed in thought.

Jussuf at length broke the silence, by saying, "I do not understand you. To what enemy do you refer? Oh! I have been both unkind and foolish, in not coming candidly to you, and telling the whole truth; however, now you shall know all." Accordingly he proceeded to narrate all the events of the preceding days, without disguise or concealment.

As soon as Jussuf had concluded the narration, the old man replied, "Now you have acted justly towards me, and it is but right that I should exhibit the same frankness towards you. Though I well know that whilst your present state of excitement and delusion continues, you are quite incapable of following the sober dictates of truth, your eyes being so blinded that my counsels would fail of influencing you in the slightest degree; should I, on the other hand, refuse to comply with your request, I well know that you will find other ways and means of obtaining the information you desire. Yes, you will seek her who is your direst enemy, fondly believing her to be your warmest friend. I myself will tell you the way to her, and at the same time try to devise some method of shielding you from her wicked designs. I must first know your age. If the kind feelings which once warmed your heart towards your old preceptor are not entirely obliterated, tell me the exact day and hour in which you were born."

Jussuf instantly complied with his request, feeling greatly pleased at Modijah's promise, to tell him the country of the butterfly. As to what the old man had said about the malice of

his enemy, he set it down as merely the caprice of his odd fancy, and did not attach much importance to it. In the meantime, Modijah had retired to the adjoining room, and shortly after he returned, bringing with him a large dark blue cover, which, after having cleared away the scrolls and instruments, he spread upon the table. There were a number of intersecting circles drawn all over this cover, and innumerable gold and silver stars worked in between. After having carefully smoothed it, he retired again, and brought in a small ebony chest, beautifully inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

“I have calculated your age,” said he, “and find that you are exactly thirty years, nine months, seven days, and eight hours old. The numbers of all these years, months, days, and hours, when added together, produce fifty-four. Allah be praised, and his great Prophet! this is by no means an unfortunate number.” During this address the old man resumed his seat, and beckoned Jussuf to sit down directly opposite to him. With this he complied. Modijah then pressed a concealed spring in some part of the little ebony chest, which caused the lid to fly open, and he strewed the contents before Jussuf; they consisted of crescents, stars, triangular, and other geometrical figures, all cut in ivory. “Now,” said he, “count out fifty-four of these.” Jussuf obeyed. As soon as the old man had gathered up the remaining figures, he desired him to cast up those he had selected, so that in descending, they might all fall on the aforesaid cover.

Jussuf did as he was desired, and the figures, in falling, were spread all over the table.

Modijah appeared to study them for some time attentively, and then commenced repeating in a low singing tone several sentences

of a language Jussuf could not understand, alternately touching one and another of the figures as though occupied with some deep calculation; then he picked out several of them and replaced them in the ebony chest; he repeated the same sentences twice more, each time going through the same ceremony of touching the figures and gathering certain of them up, until there remained but nine upon the table. After a pause, he commenced another incantation, which sounded to Jussuf's ears as being in a different language to the former. This he also repeated three times, and at each successive repetition he selected certain of the figures, placing them on the gold and silver stars with which the chart was interwoven. When at length he concluded, they all lay arranged on three of the stars very near to each other. "It is well!" exclaimed the old man, "I have now found out what I desired, and now also I can inform you of that which you are so anxious to know. Since you are so determined on finding your vain and trifling companion, take your way directly towards sunrise, and proceed onwards till you arrive at a town in Persia, situated near the ruins of what was formerly a city of great renown. There you must halt, nor may you proceed further till the third day after the new moon. On the evening of that day go to the ruined city, and on the eastern boundary you will find standing apart from the rest of the ruins, a curiously sculptured stone that once formed the capital of a stately column. Seat yourself on this stone, and at the moment when the moon's first feeble ray illumines the mountain tops in the distant horizon, you will behold a small ship in flames apparently skimming over their summits. Then repeat aloud the word 'Haschanascha,' in answer to which a guide will shortly after come to conduct you

further,—for although you will then have made considerable progress, you will still be far, far off the end of your journey. I sincerely trust that the fatigues you will undergo on your way will in some measure abate your foolish ardour, and render you more disposed to listen to the advice of a friend ever anxious for your welfare; and remember, he is always at hand whenever you may require his aid.”

Jussuf had no sooner heard the way pointed out than he arose hastily to take leave of Modijah, intending to commence his journey without delay; as for the caution and advice he scarcely heeded it. “Stop! stop!” cried the old man earnestly, “who knows if ever we shall meet again; you are about to go to far distant countries, and I am very old and cannot expect to live many more years: you also are but mortal, and the many dangers that you are certain of encountering may overcome you!—here take this as a souvenir from me.”

Thus saying, he held out a small leathern pouch. “What is this?” exclaimed Jussuf, who on opening it found a small milky white stone, almost transparent, with a deep red spot glittering like a spark of fire in its centre, “it is surely a talisman.”

“It is a talisman,” replied Modijah, “and for my sake keep and use it with discretion. Whenever you find your own understanding insufficient to guide you, apply to it for aid and direction; so long as you can distinguish the red spark in the centre, rest assured that you are proceeding in the right way, neither will any danger overcome you; but should ever you find this spark extinct, be sure you are unsafe. Then you must instantly breathe the word ‘Haschanascha,’ over it. Allow it not to depart from your possession either by subtilty or force, and above all things let me

warn you against presenting it as a free gift to a stranger ; rather throw it over your head behind you.”

Jussuf returned his teacher many thanks, and concealed the talisman within the folds of his vest, next his heart, then after taking tender leave of the old man, he hastily returned home. He lost no time in making the necessary arrangements for his departure : the entire charge of his house during his absence he confided to a trustworthy old slave, and shutting up the warehouse himself, he commenced his journey on the evening of the same day ; his suite consisted of twenty slaves, well armed and mounted, besides forty others who had the charge of the gold and treasures, and the accoutrements necessary for the journey. Thus followed by a train of well laden camels, Jussuf departed from Balsora by the eastern gate.

Whosoever met him on the way, or heard of his intention to make a long journey, concluded at once that he was going in quest of some very rare merchandize, which he considered too costly to entrust in the custody of any of his travellers, and every one was curious to ascertain what sort of a treasure it could be which could induce so experienced a merchant to leave his home accompanied by so small a retinue.

CHAPTER III.

JUSSUF strictly adhered to the directions of his old tutor, and proceeded direct towards sun-rise. He arrived without encountering any adventure worth recording, on the borders of the vast

plains that stretched away from the mountains to the Persian sea ; here, however, the summer heat became so oppressive as to induce him to alter slightly his course, bearing a little off to the left in a north-easterly direction, so that he might avail himself of the grateful shade afforded by the lofty trees with which the mountain bases were skirted, but more especially to have at command the numerous rivulets which here rushed dashing and foaming down from the springs above.

Having gained this pleasant tract of country he resumed his easterly route, and continued journeying onward day after day without meeting anything in the shape of a disaster or impediment deserving notice till towards the close of one day's march, when the cavalcade was brought to a stand-still by arriving on the banks of a river, the course of which ran directly through the hitherto continuous chain of mountains, dividing them, as it were, in twain. As it was getting late, and Jussuf was quite uncertain which way to proceed, he ordered the tents to be raised, and determined to pass the night there, hoping that before morning some traveller would chance to pass by who could tell him the right way.

While the slaves were preparing the evening meal Jussuf took a stroll upon one of the mountains, and feasted his eyes by contemplating the beautiful tints of the wild flowers that bedecked the earth on every side, and with the fine prospect afforded by the surrounding country. He felt himself quite invigorated by the cool balmy air ascending from the valley beneath. Whilst wandering onwards and gazing around, he struck his foot accidentally against a ripe melon, which still clung to its withered stalk. "Oh, oh!" thought he, "a juicy melon is very delicious after the heat of a summer's day;" so stooping down he plucked it and

carried it back to the tent. On arriving he gave it to one of his slaves, with orders to take out all the seeds, and get it properly served with the other dishes for his supper.

Then he retired to his tent which was now ready, and stretched himself on the soft silken couch, to obtain a little repose. Tired by the fatigues of the day, he soon slept soundly; but he had not laid long ere he was aroused in the midst of an agreeable dream. Two of the slaves stood by the bedside, shouting at the top of their voices, "Master, master, come forth and behold the wonder!"

"What is the matter there?" inquired he, rising up. "Oh, Sir, the melon!" cried they simultaneously. "Well, what of the melon? Is it rotten or unfit to eat? Then throw it away. Is that of so much importance, that I should have my rest disturbed on account of it?"

"Oh, no, good master, be not angry, that is not the reason why we disturbed you!" cried the slaves. "Possibly then, some one has eaten it, not knowing that I had plucked it for myself." "No, Sir, no, Sir," replied the slaves both together; "who would dare do that? Only come and see with your own eyes."

"It seems quite certain, that if I wish to know what has happened, I must go and see!" said Jussuf, somewhat angrily, and rising from his couch, he followed them outside the tent; they led him to the place where they had been making preparations for the supper. There he beheld a melon truly of the same form as the one he had found, but of such an enormous size that he had never beheld the like before.

"From whence came this monstrous melon?" inquired he of the slaves, who all stood together, at some distance off, gazing at

it in terror. "Good master, it is the same melon that you yourself brought here," answered several voices at once.

"But that was so small that I carried it easily in my hand," said he, "whereas this is so enormously large, that three men could scarcely span it round with their extended arms."

They all assured him again and again that it was the very same melon he had brought.

"There is doubtless some deep mystery connected with this," said he, "for it is unnatural that a ripe melon should grow after it is plucked." Then the slave who had received the melon from him, told him, that he had placed it where this large one now stood, and had left it; that after a short time he had returned, intending to dress it, when he observed a large wasp settle on the melon, and thrust its sting into it; this had scarcely flown away, when a great bee came and did the same; and then also flew away. From that moment the melon commenced increasing gradually, till it attained the gigantic size he now beheld. Adding, that they would have aroused him sooner but terror and astonishment had rivetted them to the spot.

They now inquired of Jussuf what had better be done with it, expressing their unwillingness either to peel or cut it. "That we dare not," cried they in conclusion, "for it is clearly the work of enchantment; who knows what may be concealed within it."

"Oh, ye faint-hearted cowards!" cried Jussuf, enraged at the terror of his servants. "Shame on you! You are here in a country which is strange to you, and imagine that everything must occur in the same order as in your own native land. What in the world do you suppose can be concealed therein. Outside is the peel, inside is the pulp, having in its centre the cellular

web, containing the seeds. Here give me that!" said he angrily, at the same time snatching a short broad sabre, from the slave who stood nearest. "I will cut a piece out of it, then you will see that it is as I have told you." Thus saying, he made two incisions in the melon, and then two crosswise, so that a large square piece could easily be detached. He now commanded one of the slaves to go and pull it out. The man timidly approached to obey his master's orders, when suddenly the piece was forced out violently, as if by some internal power, and passed swiftly over his head, so the poor slave fell to the earth quite senseless with terror.

"Great Prophet Mahomed, stand to our aid!" cried the other slaves, as they beheld this—but their astonishment soon turning to fear, they all ran away as fast as their legs would carry them. Then from the opening in the melon, emerged a curious monster of a man, who bounded with one spring directly in front of Jussuf, who frightened as much by the sudden as the unnatural appearance of the creature, started back some little distance.

The principal features in the man's face were two enormous eyes with long black eyebrows, on his short upper lip grew thin moustachios, which were so long that they curled right up to the top of his head, where, mingling with his hair, they stuck out like two horns. His dress consisted of a kind of glossy armour, covered all over with black and yellow stripes; whilst from his shoulders hung a long transparent robe, divided in two parts, reaching nearly to the ground, and very much resembling wings. This clothing fitted so closely to his body, that it seemed to form part of it; the middle finger on each hand was much longer than the others, and his nails were so hooked, that they resembled

birds' claws. In fact he looked for all the world just like a gigantic wasp.

This creature no sooner observed that Jussuf retreated before him, than he hopped after him, seeming almost to fly as he did so. Jussuf was much too frightened to put any questions to him. After a short time, however, the man commenced singing in a kind of buzzing tone ; on account of his indistinct utterance Jussuf had great difficulty in understanding him, but as near as he could make out his song ran thus —

“ My queen sends me to bid thee heed,
Lest the bee should thee mislead.
Thou fain wouldst know, what few men do,
The better course they should pursue ;
But if thou wilt in me confide,
I will thy steps in safety guide,
Proceed along the path that ——”

But Jussuf lost the remainder of the verse, for his attention was attracted by another loud humming noise, which seemed to proceed from the melon. On looking towards the opening, he espied another creature emerging from it, very similar in form, but more slender, and of a dark olive green colour, in fact, though tall as a full grown man, he had all the appearance of a gigantic bee. Having hopped up to where they were standing, he also began singing somewhat louder, but accompanied with the same buzzing noise, and this was his song —

“ To my advice now lend thine ear,
Of wasps that only plague, beware ;
A wanton roving life they lead,
And wisdom's counsels never heed.

Not so do we industrious bees,
For useful labour doth us please—
Then let me guide thee on thy way,
And from the path thou ne'er shalt stray.'

As he reached this verse, the one that had appeared first began buzzing loudly and interrupted him, but Jussuf could not understand what he said.

They then approached quite near together, staring in each other's face, buzzing and humming at so fearful a rate that it soon increased to a perfect growl. Jussuf having by this time become a little more accustomed to this strange society, ventured to address them, saying, "Good gentlemen, you seem both to have excellent intentions, but——" here he was interrupted by their buzzing, which now seemed to be all addressed to him, and from what he could understand, they were exerting their utmost energies in trying to lower each other in his estimation; presently they recommenced abusing one another, furiously humming out all sorts of hard names, until they both became maddened with rage, then from words they came to blows. Jussuf now saw them hopping and twisting about, the one armed with a sharp spear, the other with a dagger, alternately parrying and thrusting, and the next moment they both lay at his feet pierced through by each other's weapons: the last words they uttered were, "Bury us in our cradle," he nodded assent, and immediately they both expired.

Jussuf now called to his slaves, who were anxiously waiting at some distance, and desired them to come and take up the bodies and replace them in the melon. This they positively refused to do, making the most humble excuses, and using every entreaty

they could to dissuade him from his purpose. "In all natural service," said they, "we are willing to obey your commands strictly, but do not require us to meddle with those things so supernatural in appearance!"

He then represented to them that it was impossible that he alone could raise the bodies and thrust them into the opening, therefore 'twas absolutely necessary that some one should help him. But they still remained obstinate in their refusal, not one of them daring to render him any assistance. Jussuf became so provoked by their cowardly disobedience, that he was about to rush on the slave who had last spoken with his drawn sabre, when some of the others cried out, "Hold! hold, good master, for the bodies are no longer there!" This was quite true, for they had both disappeared while his back was turned, but on closely examining the place where they had lain, he discovered a dead wasp and bee side by side. "Is it possible!" cried Jussuf, quite astounded, "Were it not for the large melon I should certainly think that the whole affair had been but a dream, and that my foolish fancy alone had conjured these little insects into the gigantic size they appeared to me. With these words he turned his head in the direction where the melon lay, but behold! that had also disappeared. On approaching nearer he found in its stead the little melon he had gathered, exactly the same in form and size as when he plucked it, with the exception of a small square opening in its side. As soon as he perceived this he returned immediately to the dead insects, and picking them up, he pushed them into the small aperture in the melon. "Now," said he to himself, "I care not what may come of it. I promised

you that I would bury your bodies in the melon, and now is my promise fulfilled !”

“Do you still purpose eating this enchanted melon, sir ?” inquired one of the slaves, but Jussuf shook his head, and retired wrapt in deep meditation, to his tent ; so the man without further ceremony, gave the melon a good kick, which bounded up high in the air and then descended into the river beneath, where it was quickly borne off by the tide.

CHAPTER IV.

JUSSUF retired to rest shortly after, but his mind was so unsettled that it was some time before he could get to sleep ; at last however, his weary body overcame his mind, and he slept soundly till morning, for nothing occurred during the night to disturb his repose.

At the commencement of the journey he made it a rule that every night four of his slaves should by turns keep watch ; so as soon as he had risen, he called to those who had been on guard the previous night, and anxiously inquired of them, whether they had seen any one pass, or if aught had occurred to decide them in selecting their future course ; but the men had not seen any one, nor had they discovered any means of obtaining the information he required. He was now quite tired of this uncertainty, and determined on proceeding forthwith one way or the other ; so after reflecting a moment, he said, at the same time striking

his hand on his bosom, "We will trust our fortunes to the course of the river."

His hand had by accident struck against the pouch containing the talisman which he had received from Modijah, and which hitherto he had entirely forgotten : he instantly pulled out the little leathern bag, saying, as he opened it, "I have discovered thee at a highly acceptable time. Come now, let thy light inform me whether I am right in choosing this way through the valley along the course of the river?" Then after peeping into the bag, he cried to his followers, "Yes, my decision is right, for the spark in the stone shines brightly."

So he issued orders for their immediate departure, and then rode off before them through the valley.

As they proceeded on, they found the travelling much more agreeable than during the previous part of the journey ; the gentle breezes rising from the smooth surface of the water were cool and refreshing, the ground covered with moss and verdant herbage felt soft and elastic to their tread.

They had not gone very far ere they came to a place that was inhabited, and upon enquiry they found they were approaching very near the small town contiguous to the old ruined city.

Although Jussuf was much pleased on hearing this news, he felt somewhat troubled on another account, for he recollected, how on the evening of his adventure with the melon, the moon had appeared at the full, therefore in all probability he would arrive at the town several days too soon. The question with him was, how he should pass the time until the third day of the new moon, when he was to meet the guide who should direct him further? Disliking very much the idea of having to abide several

days in a strange place, without any means of occupying his time, he slackened the speed at which they were progressing, and took longer rests than he had hitherto done. But he soon arrived at the town, where he took up his abode with his attendants at the principal caravansary. While his slaves were busily employed in unloading the camels and making the necessary preparations for their sojourn in this place, he strolled out to look at the town; whilst sauntering along without any particular destination in view, a young man joined him, and accosting him, volunteered to be his guide to all the objects worth seeing in the locality.

Jussuf readily accepted his offer, and they walked onwards, but in the course of conversation it turned out that they were not such strangers to each other as they had at first imagined, for Jussuf on enquiry learnt that his companion's name was Hassan Assad, a name that his agents in Persia had often mentioned in their letters, as one to whom they were much indebted for the trouble he had taken, not only in directing them to the best manufactures, but often in assisting their judgment in selecting the various wares they sent home. Jussuf gladly availed himself of this opportunity of thanking him in person; Hassan, being equally pleased to find himself in the company of the far-famed merchant of Balsora, begged that he might have the honour of acting as guide to him during his stay there.

“By the way, though,” said Hassan, after a moment's reflection, “I shall be obliged to quit this place for Schiraz to-morrow morning on very important business that I am unable to defer; but, perhaps, as you have not yet visited that city, and doubtless intend to make large purchases in silks, and gold and silver orna-

ments, for the manufacture of which its natives are so famed, you would not object to accompany me, and be introduced personally to the artizans whose works you prize so much. I should extremely regret the speedy termination of our friendship that must ensue if I go alone, and I think, moreover, that you will derive much advantage and pleasure by the visit, for I am well known in that city."

Although Jussuf's mind was at this time occupied with thoughts not at all relating to his business, these remarks awakened many of the feelings with which his previous life had been so entirely engrossed ; he recollected the names of several merchants in Schiraz whom he knew by reputation. Then he was also very desirous of keeping the real motive of his journey a secret, so he allowed Hassan to retain the idea that he was travelling to execute large orders and settle other matters which he could not entrust to his agents, and agreed to meet Hassan early on the following morning to visit with him the renowned city of Schiraz, and remain there a few days.

The distance to Schiraz was not very great ; by starting early the next morning they arrived there before noon. Hassan immediately conducted Jussuf to one of the principal merchants who had often received extensive orders from him. The merchant received him with evident satisfaction, and throughout all the town it was soon known that the renowned Jussuf of Balsora had arrived. Feasts were prepared in his honour, and not a day passed but Jussuf received some new demonstration of respect from the inhabitants. In order to conceal the real motive of his journey he made many large purchases, and insisted upon paying for the goods, but he ordered them not to be sent off for some

months. At length, the new moon appeared, and Jussuf had still so many invitations on hand, that if he had accepted all of them he must have remained until the full moon. But he remembered that the third evening of the new moon was predicted by his tutor as being too eventful for him to allow its passing over in neglect. So notwithstanding Hassan's repeated entreaties, accompanied by the solicitations of those who had invited him, he was quite firm in his determination to depart; he excused himself by stating that he had yet much farther to travel, and was therefore quite unable to remain any longer in their city. Accordingly he started early on the third day of the moon, and returned to the little town where he had left his slaves with the camels and all his luggage.

He rested himself during the remainder of the day, and set off in the evening without any attendant, to visit the ruins of the ancient city. The sun was just setting as he reached the eastern boundary, and at a little distance he discovered the stone just as it had been described to him: he immediately seated himself upon it, and the sun had scarcely sunk below the horizon when the moon shone forth, presenting the exact appearance of a golden ship floating through the dark blue sky. His heart beat high with impatience as he sat with his eyes fixed on the western horizon anxiously waiting the moment when the ship should appear to rest on the ridge of the mountains. The instant it did so, he called aloud, "Haschanascha."

Impatiently expecting the appearance of the guide who should come in answer to this call he sat for some time in silence; but although he looked in every direction he could see no one near. He remained until the moon sank again behind the mountains,

and the stars shone forth in all their brilliance, illuminating the dark concave of heaven, rendering the outline of each object almost as clearly distinct as at noon-day.

At length, tired of waiting, he arose from the stone, and feeling somewhat ill-tempered at his great disappointment, he resolved to return immediately to his slaves in the small town, when just as he was about to depart he heard a well-known voice call out his name. Turning quickly in the direction from whence the sound came, who should he behold but his friend Hassan, whom he thought he had left in Schiraz that very morning.

“Ha! ha!” said Hassan, laughing, as he came nearer; “I thought you had something in reserve, for whenever I broached the subject of your intended journey, you always evaded it. Now I understand all. In future you need not attempt to make any secret of this affair with me, for the circumstance of my meeting you here on the third day of the moon at once explains everything. Truly it grieves me that I must be your leader on this occasion, for I have conducted many who have started on this same road, but not one of them has ever returned.”

“What! Hassan Assad, are you then the guide appointed to meet me here? Is it you that can lead me to the object of my wishes?”

“No,” replied Hassan, “I cannot do that, but I can put you in the right way; so follow me.”

He conducted him back to the widely scattered ruins of the old city, which they entered by a pathway bearing traces of its having been the principal thoroughfare in former days, but now it was so choked up by heaps of ruins, that it was with great difficulty they could proceed; his guide, however, persevered, and overcame

every obstacle, climbing over the huge piles of dust and rubbish which intercepted their path at every step.

They had continued this toil for about an hour, when Hassan at last stopped in front of a massive door covered all over with nails ; it was quite uninjured, and not in the least in keeping with the ruins around. He pulled out a small silver hammer and knocked nine times on the head of one of the large nails in the door, pausing several seconds between each stroke, when Jussuf heard a most mysterious kind of echo, which seemed to resound at a great distance inside the door.

Immediately after the last blow of the hammer, the door flew open, discovering a long flight of damp mouldy steps leading downwards, like the entrance to a vault.

“ We must descend these steps,” said Hassan, “ you will see many people within, and have costly gifts presented to you. But mind, you must not refuse anything that is offered you nor speak a word, except when you are asked if you are content, then always answer, No ! until you are accused of being covetous, and asked what it is you do require. Then answer with the word, Retlafgat. This is the name of a talisman without which you can never reach the object of your wishes.”

Jussuf paid particular attention to the word and promised his guide to attend strictly to his instructions. They then commenced the descent, but they had not gone down more than two or three steps when the door swung to behind them with a tremendous slam which made the place resound again.

As they were proceeding downwards in the dark Jussuf be-thought him of the talisman that he had received from Modijah, and being desirous to know whether he was going in the right

way, he pulled it out of his pocket; and notwithstanding the intense darkness, he could see the red spark shining brightly in the stone, so he stepped forward with renewed courage.

They had descended about fifty steps when they landed in a spacious vaulted apartment, the form of it was perfectly round, the walls rose in arches from the ground and terminated by a central point overhead, from which was suspended a lamp with twelve branches, each emitting a brilliant silvery flame. The vaulted sides of the cavern reflected myriads of other lights, as though the whole interior were lined with mirrors. But on Jussuf's stepping aside to examine what it was that reflected the light so beautifully, he discovered that the walls were lined throughout with large eastern pearls of immense value, all of them arranged in the same design, a small one forming a centre, round which were placed four others of a larger size. He endeavoured to detach one of the largest, but found it resist his utmost efforts.

In the meantime his guide advanced to a secret door, and tapped on a certain part of it with his silver hammer. The door flew open, and they passed into a large square apartment, the roof of which was supported by numerous massive gold columns, the ground work of the walls was of the same costly material, tastefully decorated with polished stones of a bright green colour, which Jussuf, on a near inspection, to his great surprise found to be pure emeralds.

Hassan allowed him but a short time to examine these rarities, for in a few seconds he had, by means of his silver hammer, obtained entrance into another chamber of an octagon form, its walls and pilasters glittered with burnished silver, thickly set with

stones of a beautiful blue colour, which Jussuf at once recognized as being real turquoise.

Thus they proceeded from one saloon to another, finding each they entered more spacious than the preceding, till they had traversed twelve of these apartments without meeting a single living creature. The most solemn stillness reigned over all this magnificence, and to so painful a degree that Jussuf was frequently on the point of inquiring the cause of so dreary a silence. But Hassan continued onwards with such serious mien, and apparently so intent on what he was engaged in, that Jussuf feared to interrupt him by speaking.

As soon as they arrived at the twelfth apartment, Hassan tapped his silver hammer three times on the floor, which was paved with jasper, arranged in the most fantastic manner; immediately a square portion of it rose, and fell back like a trap door, discovering a long flight of steps made of beautiful crystal. They commenced this second descent, and the trap door closed over them. Jussuf could not understand by what means this staircase was lighted, neither a lamp nor window were visible, and yet it was not dark. After a while he observed that every step as they trod on it seemed to emit a pale phosphoric light, but on closely inspecting this he discovered it to proceed from a small luminous ball which gently rolled before them, and every time it fell from one step to another, gave forth a bright bluish light, which lasted until it struck upon the next step.

Arriving at length at the bottom of the steps, they found themselves in a long straight passage, at the far end of which were two glass doors, which flew open on their approach. They

then entered a beautiful garden, laid out with rare plants and flowers, the like of which Jussuf had never beheld.

Two slaves advanced towards them, bowing respectfully, but without uttering a word, and beckoned them to follow. They conducted them to a spacious greenhouse, wherein some men were sitting, whom Jussuf, from their appearance, supposed to be dervishes. These men all rose and bowed to them; then one of them addressing Jussuf, enquired, "Art thou come to seek treasure on account of thy poverty? Then thy desires shall be gratified." So saying, he looked expressively at his companions, who immediately arose and disappeared by different doors. "Mankind are very foolish," continued he, "they set their hearts on such trifling toys, and the more they have of them the more dissatisfied they become." And he concluded his remarks with a scornful shake of the head.

The other dervishes now returned, one conveying a heavy load of purses full of sequins, another two costly caskets filled with pearls, a third two similar caskets containing large diamonds, the fourth carried a like quantity of emeralds, and all the others brought articles of equal value. Jussuf accepted all these valuables, and loaded his garments with the purses and boxes.

"Art thou satisfied?" enquired the dervish who had spoken to him before. Jussuf answered, "No." "I thought as much," grumbled the dervish; and signalled to the others, who again departed, and shortly after returned, laden with purses of gold and boxes of jewels as before. "There, hast thou enough now?" said the dervish. And Jussuf, who had scarcely secured all the new supply of treasures, again answered, "No!" At this the dervish displayed signs of great indignation, and intimated to the

others in the same way as formerly, who went away and soon returned with another load. "Now," said he, "art thou satisfied at last?" But Jussuf, recollecting Hassan's instructions, still replied, "No!" Then the dervish arose in great anger, and after rapidly turning himself round two or three times on one foot, cried out, "Why, thou greedy man! art thou not yet satisfied? Thou canst not carry away what thou hast already received, but must also burden thy guide with the trash, art thou still discontented? Thou insatiable mortal!" Then all the other dervishes formed a ring round Jussuf, and exclaimed with one voice, "Greedy! shameless! discontented man!"

"And pray, then, what wouldst thou have?" resumed the dervish. Jussuf, recollecting the word Hassan had taught him for this occasion, answered, "Retlafgat." As soon as he had uttered the word, the dervish who had questioned him quitted the greenhouse, and after a few seconds returned with a small casket, made of common wood, without any ornament. This he gave to Jussuf.

"Here is what thou desirest!" said he, as he handed him also a small gold key. "In future thou wilt not require a guide. Proceed in whatever direction thine inclination leads thee, for thou mayest rest assured that thou art on the right way so long as thou dost not open the casket with this key. Only when thou art in doubt, and hast no hope of arriving at thy destination, then mayest thou open it."

The dervish beckoned with his hand, and the two slaves advanced to conduct them away. Hassan took charge of the jewels and purses which Jussuf was unable to carry, and they bowed to take their departure. As they were going, the dervish called

after them, saying, "Thus have many before thee borne off the Retlafgat; but it has always returned to us, as it will from thee also."

The slaves led them by a different path to the one they had entered by to the mouth of a cavern, the door of which closed behind them as soon as they had passed it, leaving them to grope their way alone through a dark passage. After proceeding a short distance they felt about, and soon found a door, on which Hassan tapped nine times with his silver hammer, when it instantly flew open; and to Jussuf's great astonishment they passed into the open air, at the opposite extremity of the ruined city to that by which they had entered.

"Now that we dare speak again," said Hassan, "what do you intend doing? It will soon be daylight, therefore I think you had better return immediately to the town where your slaves are anxiously waiting for you, and there deposit this treasure."

But Jussuf shook his head thoughtfully, exclaiming, "What can I do? What can I say? I have lately witnessed so many wonderful things that I am fairly bewildered. I am no longer the man that I was, possessing the command of my own will, but am tossed about like a ball by superhuman power."

"The same may be said of all mankind," replied Hassan. "Yet I must beg of you to come to some decision. Look how I am burdened with your treasures; I cannot carry them for you much longer, for, as perhaps you are aware, I must be in Schiraz early in the morning. Therefore let us hasten to the little town, where you will be able in some measure to compose yourself."

Jussuf followed him, wrapt in deep thought, until they arrived at the little town and entered the caravansary.

The slaves were rejoiced to behold their master again, for his hurrying out without any attendance, and not returning all night, had created great alarm among them, fearing, as they did, that he might have been overtaken by some accident.

While Jussuf was unburdening himself of the purses and caskets of jewels, he said to Hassan, "You have already shewn me so much kindness, that I am emboldened to ask one more favour of you. Now, I am convinced that all these attendants will be rather a trouble to me, than in any way facilitate my long journey. And as I cannot leave them here alone, I beg of you to take all these slaves, camels, and the treasures that you will find in those bales, and depart with them, commanding them and using them just as if they were all your own. If by good fortune I should return and require it, you can, if you are so disposed, give me back some portion as a free-will offering. But if, on the contrary, I should not return, then I shall have no more need of such things."

After some little remonstrance, Hassan agreed to this proposal, and ordered the camels to be laden, to accompany him forthwith to Schiraz. Jussuf selected a few of the caskets containing the precious stones, and a good number of the purses of sequins, not forgetting to secure the talisman Retlafgat; then mounting his horse, he commanded the slaves to obey their new master, took a farewell embrace of Hassan, heartily thanking him for all his kindnesses, and rode off in the direction of the sun, which was just then darting its first bright rays above the horizon.

CHAPTER V.

JUSSUF continued his route for ten successive days, without encountering any adventure worth noticing. On the eleventh day, in order to avoid deviating from his course, he was obliged to ascend a high mountain. In the evening he arrived on a wide plain, utterly destitute of trees or shrubs, neither was there anything visible that would serve as a shelter as far as his eye could reach. He was therefore obliged to pass the night in the open air. Vainly he looked about for something to which he might fasten his horse, for, although he knew the beast was very faithful, still he feared it might stray away during the darkness of the night. Finding that there was no alternative, he unbuckled the pack-saddle, and allowed the animal to wander loose, and graze as best he could on the scanty sun-burnt herbage that the place afforded. Then Jussuf stretched himself on the earth, and soon fell fast asleep. But he had not lain long ere he was suddenly aroused, and, on looking round for his horse, found it had disappeared; then he turned his eyes to the place where he had laid the saddle, but that also was gone. Feeling convinced from this that some robber must have led the horse away, he jumped up, and searched in every direction, but by the moon's feeble light he could discover nothing.

This loss grieved him more than anything he had yet undergone; while reflecting on it, he said to himself, "'Tis, after all, nothing more than I deserved, seeing that I had plenty of trusty servants to accompany me, and very imprudently parted with

them all. I was also in possession of great treasures, and gave them away to a person quite unknown to me, who now is, doubtless, in the full enjoyment of them, while I must suffer want." These self-upbraidings, however, soon gave place to more contented reflections. "Still," continued he, "what, after all, is the use of the world's greatest wealth to me? I prize the treasure I am in search of far above it all, and as the Dervishe informed me, I am now in the right way of obtaining it. If the talisman Retlafgat does but prove its virtue, by saving me when surrounded by danger, then I have nothing to fear."

This soliloquy was put an end to by his observing at some distance a whole troop of horsemen, whom he quickly discovered were directing their course directly to where he stood, as hard as their horses could gallop. He threw a hurried glance around, in search of a retreat, but the barren waste he was on afforded no prospect of concealment. The horsemen were now coming quite near, forming themselves into a crescent as they approached. When they were within a little distance of him they halted, and two or three dismounted, drew their weapons, and walked up to him. Seeing that all defence was now useless, he took off his sabre and cast it away; then throwing himself on his knees, he bowed his head like a supplicating slave. "Bind him," cried the chief of the horsemen, "and place him on the unoccupied horse; your lives shall answer if he escape."

The two men to whom the chief addressed these words, bowed respectfully, and then turning to Jussuf, bound his hands and mounted him on a horse. They had no sooner accomplished this, than they remounted their own steeds, and taking their positions one on each side of him, they rode off at full gallop,

holding his horse's bridle by turns as they went. The rest of the cavalcade followed at a short distance.

With no farther interruption than sufficed for the occasional repose and refreshment of the men and horses, they proceeded at this rate for several days. In the course of the journey they traversed pleasant and fruitful valleys, watered by the mountain streamlets; but these were soon passed, and were succeeded by a toilsome ascent, which brought them to the level of another long dreary plain.

After travelling at a rapid pace for about ten days, they at length entered a wide valley, the bosom of which formed the bed of a broad deep river. Jussuf was admiring the splendid dwellings and beautiful gardens that abounded on the river's banks, when the company suddenly came to a halt, and after unbinding his hands, ordered him to dismount; as soon as he had done so, they led him into an adjoining house, where he was immediately provided with a bath, and fragrant oil to anoint his beard.

He was then conducted into a garden, where a man who, from his appearance, he judged to be the master of the household, approached him. After steadfastly regarding Jussuf a few moments, he turned to those who led him, saying—" 'Tis well! It is the right man. Keep ye careful watch over him until the ninth day, then will we take him to the place of sacrifice, and make an offering of him to the great God of Fire!" He then made signs to those who had charge of Jussuf, and they led him back to the room where the bath was; and a strong guard was kept constantly posted at the door.

Jussuf, now left alone, began once more to reproach himself with want of discretion in undertaking a journey, through a

strange land, without any attendants; bitterly bewailing the cruel destiny which had thrown him into the hands of the Fire-worshippers. He was several times on the point of opening the little box with the golden key. "For," said he, "what reasonable hope is there now left of reaching the object of my wishes. Here am I imprisoned and closely guarded; the only prospect before me, that of being led out in a few days to be offered as a sacrifice to Fire." Occasionally his mind dwelt on brighter hopes. He was still possessed of the treasure, which he had concealed about his person, and that was by no means a trifle; he now took the precaution of hiding it more carefully, hoping that on his way to the place of sacrifice, he might find an opportunity of bribing the men who would have the charge of him, and thus obtain his liberty.

On the morning of the ninth day he was awakened by the noisy preparations for a grand festival; processions continually passed to and fro before the house. First came eighty black slaves mounted on beautiful milk-white steeds; then there arrived eighty white slaves on black chargers; these again were followed by another troop of horsemen, which Jussuf immediately recognized as those who had first taken him prisoner. In the midst of the last rode the lord of the land, who had condemned him to be sacrificed. Then followed twenty venerable looking old men, dressed in long red and yellow striped robes, each bearing a huge brightly polished axe, and a bundle of dried bamboo canes. To these succeeded next in order ten youths carrying pans of fire, these had no sooner appeared than Jussuf was also summoned to join the procession. His keepers immediately led him forth from his prison and bound his hands, then placed him across a

horse and tied his feet together beneath. On each side of him were stationed the two men to whose care he had been committed on the former occasion, and another troop of horsemen were close behind him. As this long procession moved off, it was followed by an immense concourse of people.

In this order they took their way along the valley, and continued onwards until night approached, when they selected a convenient place to rest in, and erected several tents. Jussuf had a tent set apart to himself; a well-armed man being placed at the entrance to watch him. In the dead of the night when all was still around, Jussuf crept softly to the opening in front of his tent, and said in an under tone, "I suffer from thirst; is there no one at hand to bring me some cool refreshing draught?" The man who was on duty outside, replied: "As soon as my hour is up, I will go and bring you water from the river. Till then, keep silence."

"Ah," replied Jussuf, "it is not water that I want, but my soul thirsts for liberty; I will give you good proof of my thankfulness if you will allow me to escape." The man answered, "I dare not allow you to go, for my life depends on my keeping you secure."

They continued talking for some minutes, and Jussuf offered him six purses full of sequins, with a large diamond worth ten times as much, for he had secured a box of the largest diamonds on his person when he took leave of Hassan. But the guard still refused to release him, acknowledging that he would very willingly earn the reward, but that he feared the consequences. Jussuf proposed that he should depart with him and seek a home in a foreign land. This, however, he would not hear of: "Go

where I would," said he, "I should be wretched and miserable away from my wife and children, and ere long should risk my return home again. Of what value were all the treasures on the earth to me when obliged to live as a wanderer in a strange land, ever longing for the society of those who are dear to me?"

At last Jussuf suggested a plan that seemed much more feasible to him. "Let me gag your mouth," said he, "and bind you hand and foot, so that every one will suppose you have been overcome by me. When they discover you in this condition, you can easily excuse yourself by saying that I had proved too strong for you. The reward I promised, you shall have beforehand in order that you may go and conceal it in the sand, where at a more convenient season you will be able to find and dig it up again."

This plan at once decided the man—Jussuf, therefore, gave him what he had promised. Then after having buried the purses in the sand, and secreted the diamond in a fold of his dress, he allowed himself to be bound hand and foot by Jussuf, and last of all submitted to the gagging of his mouth.

This being accomplished, Jussuf crept away between the tents as stealthily as possible, and finding the horses standing ready saddled, he leaped on the back of one and galloped off at full speed. Thus by good fortune he escaped.

The whole night he rode onwards fast as the swift courser could carry him, but fearing lest the marks of his horses' hoofs should betray the track in which he had fled, he no sooner discovered from the beast's distress that it was becoming exhausted, than he plunged his dagger into its heart; and then fled into a neighbouring wood, among the thickets and brushwood of which

he hoped to be securely concealed from the pursuit of his enemies.

Here he paused awhile and refreshed himself with the water of a brook in the wood, and ate of the wild fruit and berries which grew there in great plenty: he did not, however, venture as yet to take any repose, but continued penetrating further and further into the wood's deepest shade.

On his way, he perceived here and there the traces of wild beasts, and therefore when night came on, he was fearful of lying down on the earth for repose, so he managed to climb up one of the highest trees and bound himself fast among the branches at the top. Although he found this position anything but agreeable, and his apprehensions of being still exposed to danger kept him a long time awake, still bodily fatigue at length overcame his fears and he fell into a sound sleep, which lasted some hours. When he awoke he was greatly refreshed, and having descended the tree, he resumed his journey, keeping in the deep shade of the wood until nightfall again; and thus for many days did he continue travelling, subsisting on wild fruits and berries, and passing the night on the tree tops.

After toiling on for many, many days, he at last saw evident signs of his approaching the boundary of the forest, here and there appeared a large open space between the trees, the ground became very uneven, huge rugged masses of rock often intercepted his way, and from an occasional glance backwards, he discovered that the earth rose considerably in front of him. Continuing on, in a very short time he got quite clear of the wood and found himself on the summit of a hill, whence he

could see several other hills around, all covered with trees, and beyond them rose a range of lofty mountains, some of whose summits were quite white and sparkling in the sunshine, while others poured forth clouds of dense vapour and fiery smoke.

Without much delay he again journeyed onwards, and after traversing another extensive forest in which he had to undergo similar privations to those in the former, he descended into a beautiful valley, and followed the course of a silvery brook which meandered through the meadows until he came to the spot where it flowed into a river. Night was now approaching and as he had not on his way through the valley, noticed any signs of wild beasts, he determined to lie down and repose among the tall grass with which the river's bank was covered.

Anxiously hoping to have reached some inhabited place, he had greatly exerted himself on the previous day, and was consequently much fatigued, no sooner had he stretched his aching limbs on the grass, than he fell into a very sound sleep, from which he did not awake until the following day was far advanced, and even then he would fain have closed his eyes again and slept on, had not a somewhat rough handling at once dispelled his slumbers.

As soon as he was thoroughly awake, he beheld several men stooping over him, who he perceived were busily engaged in binding his hands and feet with very strong cords. He attempted to make some resistance, struggling with them on the ground, but it was too late, for he was already bound; so the men with very little trouble placed him on a kind of palanquin made of bamboo canes, and carried him away.

They hurried with their burden along the banks of the river,

until they came to a part where the stream was much wider, bearing on its surface several galleys and other small vessels; one of them was lying ready at the side, into which they carried him, and then they sailed down with the stream.

After a voyage of a few hours, they passed by several large gardens, and arrived in the middle of a large and populous city, through the centre of which the river flowed. The men cast anchor close up to the bank, and landed Jussuf in the court-yard of a large palace.

A number of people who happened to be near at hand, or passing at the time, came out of curiosity to see him. Now Jussuf's clothes had suffered greatly from the brambles in the woods, and hung in tatters about him, so that his general appearance was very deplorable, and he was the subject of great mirth and derision with the people.

This, however, was soon put an end to by the appearance of the owner of the palace, accompanied by a numerous suite of attendants. From the respect which was shewn by those who attended him, and the hurried manner in which the people retreated back as he approached, Jussuf at once concluded that he must be either the Sultan or sovereign of the country. Having come near, he gazed for some time at the poor prisoner who lay bound before him, then turning to his servants he addressed them in a language that Jussuf could not understand. They immediately went and brought a large cage made of bamboo canes, and having unfettered Jussuf, thrust him into it, and fastened the door.

A large tame elephant was then led forth, and the cage with Jussuf in it was raised on its back: as soon as it was properly

secured, some of the servants led the elephant through all the principal thoroughfares of the city, a herald going before and stopping at the corners of the streets to make some proclamation, at the same time pointing to Jussuf in the cage. At the conclusion of every such address the crowd of street-boys which followed, pelted him with stones and other missiles while the people hissed and offered every kind of insult to him.

Whenever he shewed signs of being hurt, or tried to shrink from the stones as they came between the staves of his cage, the air rang with the shouts and laughter of the spectators. Weary of this misusage, he at last laid down at the bottom of the cage with his face downwards, and covered his head with his hands in order to protect it from blows. As soon, however, as the herald perceived this, he came up to the cage, and thrust at Jussuf's sides so violently with his stick, that he was obliged to stand up again.

At last, poor Jussuf was almost driven to madness. He seized hold of the staves of the cage, and shaking them violently cried out; "Is there then no man among you that can understand my tongue? Or do you hold me to be some curious foreign animal that you thus carry me about to make a show of me?" As no one answered, or seemed even to heed what he said, he again became furious with despair, shaking the staves of the cage and declaiming against his persecutors, but the only result was another peal of laughter from the people.

At last they completed the circuit of the town and arrived at the palace again, here the servants removed the cage from the back of the elephant, and carried it into the court-yard, where they placed it on four posts about the height of a man, that were

set up on purpose for it to rest upon. Then they brought him food which consisted of half-cooked rice, but Jussuf was too much afflicted to feel any inclination to eat, and left it untouched.

Several of the inmates of the palace loitered about the cage for some time watching him, but these at last having gratified their curiosity all retired, leaving him alone to reflect on his hopeless situation.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Jussuf thought of his unhappy condition, and that the circumstance of no one in the place being able to understand his language deprived him of any hope of escaping from this wretched imprisonment, death itself appeared preferable to a protraction of such misery. He felt for his dagger, which he had kept carefully concealed among the folds of his dress, intending by means of it, to put an end at once to his suffering. As he drew it from its sheath it glistened in the sun-shine, and refracted a bright light in his eyes; this all at once reminded him of the red spark on the talisman which he had received from his tutor Modijah. He replaced the dagger, and pulled from his bosom the pouch containing the talisman; on looking into it, however, he found that the stone no longer emitted the red light, for the spark had entirely disappeared, and the stone had all the appearance of an ordinary milk-white pebble.

He held the bag close to his lips, and uttered the word

“Haschanascha!” in a half whisper. The name had scarcely escaped his lips, when one of the slaves who happened to be passing at the time, stepped up to the cage, and regarding Jussuf, said, “Oh you poor fellow, how it grieves me to see you treated thus:”—as soon as Jussuf heard these words, he cried out with joy, “Ah, that is my native tongue! Oh, pray take pity on an unfortunate, and tell me why I am so ill-treated?” “I dare not now,” answered the slave, “wait till midnight, then I will come and talk with you; your sufferings awaken my deepest sympathies, for when I first saw you I recognized you as one of my own countrymen, and I would gladly do anything in my power to lighten your suffering,”—with these words he went his way and entered one of the doors of the palace.

The thought that he had at last found a man who spoke his language, and who moreover seemed to take great interest in him, completely renewed Jussuf’s courage. All thoughts of death were now banished from his mind, and he already began to fancy himself at freedom again, and continuing his journey. He ate the food which still remained in the cage, and soon after laid down and fell fast asleep.

At the hour of midnight he was aroused by the slave who had come according to his promise. “If you will swear with a solemn oath,” said he, “not to expose me to any danger, but to observe the greatest stillness, and to speak only in a whisper to me, then I will let you out of your prison.”

“By the beard of the Prophet,” said Jussuf, “I promise not in any way to risk your safety.” The slave then brought a little ladder, by means of which he ascended to the cage, and unfastened the door, which was not locked, but secured in such an

ingenious manner that no one unacquainted with the secrets of its fastening could have opened it. He then helped Jussuf to descend and accompanied him into the garden, where they sat down. Jussuf was the first to speak, saying, "Pray inform me why is it that I am imprisoned? and wherefore is it that I am shewn about in such a shameful manner, as though I were some curious monster?" In answer to these questions the slave replied, "The King and the inhabitants of this place are serpent worshippers; their God is an enormous serpent, and they have built a large and magnificent temple, wherein an immense number of priests are employed to conduct the services. These priests have obtained such power over the minds of the people by their foolish mummary, that whatever they choose to ordain becomes the law of the land. Now the King has got an only daughter, she is not his own child, but was brought to him by one of his wives who had been previously married, and he adopted her as his own when he married her mother. This child is quite black, like a negress. By her mother's tuition, however, she had learnt to know and honour Allah and his great prophet Mahomed; notwithstanding which, the King is doatingly fond of her, as much so as if she were his own daughter. The priests knowing how opposed her faith is to their wicked machinations, have persuaded the king to remove her from his palace, and he keeps her in a small house built expressly for her on the banks of the river, at some distance from the city. For these priests say, they have a prophecy which states, that when the white summits of the mountains, which are discernible in the north-east from the dome of the temple, shall begin to smoke, a stranger shall be on his way to the city, who shall marry the king's daughter, and that

he will pursue the serpent-worshippers with fire and sword, sparing none of them: now the fact is," continued he, "the mountains have of late begun to smoke, and therefore the king instigated by the advice of the priests has sent forth his servants in every direction, with orders to watch diligently for any foreigner that may be seen approaching the boundaries of the country, to seize him and bring him bound to the city, that he may be made an offering to their God. It was on this account that you were brought, and moreover you are doomed to be offered to the serpent. The priests are already informed of your capture, and are now busily employed in making preparations for the grand sacrifice which is to take place in seven days."—"What?" cried Jussuf, "am I then destined to be sacrificed to a serpent, just to gratify some dreadful superstition?" he cried bitterly, imploring the slave to aid him in making his escape. "How is it possible?" replied the slave, "there is a vigilant watch stationed at every entrance to the palace; and even could you by any chance pass them, you would be sure to fall into the hands of the guard placed about the town—over the walls of the garden your flight is equally impracticable, for they are surrounded by a deep moat, and if you once fall into the mud it would be your grave."

Jussuf still continued his entreaties, promising the slave a great reward, if he would render him any assistance in making his escape, the man was equally willing to help him, but could not suggest any plan that afforded the least shadow of a hope. However, after reflecting some minutes in silence, the slave said, "there is still one chance of success; to-morrow is the day on which the messenger departs, who is sent once every week by the king's

orders to the Princess's palace, to make inquiries after her health, and see if she is in want of any thing. Now I have often had this commission entrusted to my care, and will endeavour to obtain it to-morrow. If I can but once get to her palace, she is sure to accord me a personal interview, for she knows that I am one of the faithful, and am glad to have an opportunity of speaking my native tongue, in which she also can converse fluently, having learnt it from her mother. I will then tell her of your imprisonment, and beg of her either to interfere on your behalf, or devise some means by which you may be able to obtain your freedom ; for in addition to being very kind and good, the Princess is also very wise, and can give good advice in every emergency."

Although Jussuf's hope in this plan was very faint, still it was the only one he had to rest upon, therefore he cherished it. The slave now told him that he could not with safety remain any longer out of the cage, so he immediately returned to it and allowed himself to be fastened as before ; on parting, the man told him, that if he did not see him cross the court-yard at noon, he might conclude that he was sent as the messenger to the Princess.

In the morning the slaves brought Jussuf a fresh supply of food ; and many of the inmates of the palace came to gratify their curiosity in gazing at him, watching every movement that he made in his narrow prison ; thus the day passed without his having noticed his countryman among the many servants that were continually going to and fro. As night drew on, he sat anxiously waiting to hear whether there was any chance of his deliverance ; at the hour of midnight came the slave as before, and

called him softly by his name. "Now," inquired Jussuf anxiously, "what news do you bring me?" "Ah, friend," replied the other, "I scarcely know whether I have any that can give you much hope. She was quite calm while I told her of your unfortunate condition, whereas I had expected the very mention of your being about to be offered to the serpent, would have roused her indignation, for she is a good and faithful Mahomedan." Jussuf inquired if she had not proposed any plan to effect his deliverance. "No, not a word," replied the other, "the only reply I could get from her was: 'Tell your countryman, that man must submit to the decrees of heaven, and be resigned, for the evil intentions of the heathen are often the means employed to bring the truth and wisdom of Providence to light.'"

"What then," exclaimed Jussuf, "am I to understand from this? That I ought in Allah's name, quietly allow myself to be sacrificed to the serpent, because I believe that by so doing I am furthering the decrees of heaven!" with these words he burst into tears, and cried bitterly, for he felt that he had now no hope of escape.

"You must not yet give way to despair," said the slave, "but listen to me, and I will give you some good advice. The Princess commissioned me to tell the king her father, that she was desirous to see him once more in his palace, and that she intended coming to-morrow if he would grant her permission. This is the first time she has expressed such a wish since her banishment. The king has already despatched a messenger to inform her, that the intended visit meets with his approbation, for he thinks that he has now no longer any occasion to dread the fulfilment of the prophecy, inasmuch as he has got you entirely

in his power. She will doubtless walk in the garden in the course of the day, and you must watch for her appearance by yonder door ; when she passes by, call to her, and tell her of your misfortunes, entreating her to interest herself on your behalf. She understands our language, and when she hears you, and sees your unhappy condition, I am sure she will take compassion on you !” At this moment a light shone upon him from one of the palace windows, so he stepped back hastily, whispering, “ I must away, or I may be caught speaking with you, farewell ! Do not neglect to make application to her, for that is now the only hope that remains for you. Call out ‘ Haschanascha,’ for that is her name,” so saying, he returned in haste to the palace.

“ What ?” said Jussuf to himself, “ her name is Haschanascha ? is not that the name that I was to call upon when I sought the guide near the ruins ? Is it not also the word that I am to make use of when I cannot see the magic spark in Modijah’s talisman ? and is it not also the magic word that brought this man to my aid, who can speak my language, and who has shewn so much kindness towards me ?” in answer to all these questions, he at once determined to follow the advice which the slave had given him.

After passing a very restless night, he was aroused early in the morning, by the great stir that seemed to prevail among the servants of the palace, who were continually passing to and fro, as though they were making preparations for some extraordinary event. This bustle was continued until the Princess’s arrival was announced, then they all hastened to the grand entrance in front of the palace. Jussuf now finding himself quite alone, pulled out the pouch containing the talisman, and behold ! to his great joy

the spark shone more brightly than ever he had previously beheld it.

At noon there was a great stir about the palace, for it was rumoured among the servants that the Princess was shortly expected to enter the garden. Jussuf kept his eye fixed on the door which the slave pointed to him as the one at which he might expect her to appear. He was not kept long in suspense, for the door was soon thrown open, and she came forth leaning on her father's arm, attended by a numerous suite.

The moment Jussuf saw her he cried out, "Haschanascha! Haschanascha! take pity on an unfortunate!" The Princess instantly turned her head towards him; the king also regarded him, but his looks bespoke a mingled feeling of astonishment and anger. She presently approached the cage, followed by her father, who spoke a few words to her, then she addressing Jussuf, said, "The king, my father-in-law, desires to know, who it was that taught you the name, Haschanascha." Jussuf scarcely knew what reply to make, for he dared not betray the true-hearted slave, who had shewn him so much kindness, and yet he was unwilling to tell an untruth. So after hesitating a little, he said, "Long before I ever knew it was the name of any human being, this word Haschanascha was taught me by my old tutor Modijah, as a name that I should call upon, whenever I found myself in great uncertainty or danger. I have often tried its virtues, and never once appealed to it in vain; I trust, therefore, that it will bring me aid now."

"You have called me by a name that is very dear to me," answered the Princess, "and by this I know for certain, that you are the one, whose life it is ordained I should save from being

offered in sacrifice to the serpent. There is only one way, however, in which it can be accomplished, and that is by your becoming my husband. It is so decreed by the higher powers, to whose sovereign will we must in all things submit. Bethink yourself: will this be too dear a price to pay for your life and liberty. For without previously binding yourself solemnly to accede to this proposal you can never be free. I will leave you some time to reflect, and shall expect to have your decision when I return from my walk." She uttered all this in a loud and serious tone, and with a look that bespoke the greatest earnestness. She then joined her father, and they went into the garden, followed by the attendants.

As soon as they were gone, Jussuf began to think seriously, what course it were best for him to pursue in his extremely awkward position, and though he did not much like the idea of marrying a black Princess, yet of two evils he thought he would choose the least.

Seeing the Princess returning from the garden he again called her by her name. She approached the cage, still accompanied by her father; as she drew near she asked him in the same serious tone as before, whether he had yet made up his mind. "How could I for a moment hesitate, lovely Princess?" replied Jussuf, "Is it possible, that you will so far condescend as to become the wife of a poor stranger? You are the sun of my very existence! Without you, life would not be worth possessing!"

Jussuf was much surprised at the conclusion of his speech, which he intended should have been very impressive, to hear the Princess burst out in a roar of laughter. As soon as she had recovered her breath sufficiently to speak, she said, "I find you,

like all the rest of the men, a flatterer and deceiver. But there is more truth in your flattery than you are aware of. I am truly the sun of your existence! You also said I think that without me your life was not worth having? there I also agree with you, for it is quite certain that without my interference on your behalf, you would soon be swallowed by the serpent." Then assuming a more kindly tone, she continued, "Still you need have nothing to fear, for if you will solemnly swear in the name of the Prophet, to make me your wife, you shall be freed from your prison this very day." Jussuf took the oath as she required him. Then turning to her father, the Princess began arguing very urgently in the language of that country. But the faithful slave stole close up to the cage, and acting as interpreter, informed Jussuf of every word that passed between them. She said to the king: "It is scarcely just to keep this man imprisoned here, unless you have some proof that he is really the one who should be offered to the serpent; you have secured the first that fell into your power, whereas it is very probable that the real enemy is now at large in the land. Pray allow the priests of the serpent to be summoned hither, that I may speak with them on the subject." The king answered her that two of the priests had come just as he was entering the garden, and that they were fortunately waiting in the palace, desiring an audience on his return. She persuaded him to send for them, and accordingly the priests soon appeared dressed in long white robes. "Is this the man," said the Princess, addressing them, "that your God has warned you against?" They both answered with one voice, "It is! it is!" bowing with reverence before her. "What sign has your God given you, by which you are able to recognize him with such certainty?" inquired she.

“We have no outward sign,” replied they, “yet we know that this is the man.”

“If you have no mark or sign by which to distinguish him from other men, how is it you are so positive as to his identity?”

“Our God the sacred Serpent hath revealed it to us,” said they.

“Talk not to me of your sacred serpent!” replied the Princess, regarding them with scorn; then turning to the King she continued, “My King and Father! how long will you suffer yourself to be deceived by the stubborn hypocrisy of these stupid men? They give forth to you and the people, that they are possessed of godly wisdom, while they are really so ignorant that they cannot argue with a girl of sixteen. I pray you, command them to bring the serpent here before us, and I will then give you proof that I speak the truth, and that they, on the contrary, are all liars and hypocrites!” At these words the priests began striking themselves violently on the face and breast, then threw themselves on the earth, kicking and rolling about as though they were in a fit of convulsions. But the King, who had turned deadly pale, said to her, “My child, consider what you are doing. Dare not to insult the gods.” And the attendants, as well as all the servants who had now gathered around, stood gazing in silent astonishment, thinking they could not have heard aright. The Princess, however, continued to coax the King, addressing him by all the tender names she could think of, and entreating him to command all the priests to come forth from the temple, and bring the sacred Serpent.

When the king had given the order, that all the priests should forthwith appear, the two who were standing by, were about to

depart hastily, but at the request of the Princess, he commanded them to remain.

All present were now anxiously waiting to see what would be the result of the king's command. They were not kept long in suspense, for the priests soon appeared in a long procession, eight of them, carrying on four gilded poles a long costly chest, ornamented with gold, ivory, and precious stones, which they placed in the middle of the court-yard. Then they all bowed themselves before the king, and the chief priest stepped forward and said, "The king hath pleased to command us to perform a very extraordinary service, and we have obeyed, but still we fear that some great misfortunes will be the result. Why are we all called from the sanctuary of the temple, and commanded to bring even the sacred serpent with us?" Then the Princess stepped in front and replied, "Have patience and all shall be explained. It is a question, whether the sacred serpent that you profess to worship does really exist; therefore, open now the box and let all the people see it, that they may no longer remain in doubt." Then the chief priest cried out, "If there be any one who dares to doubt the existence of our god, let the unbeliever come forth and be convinced." Some of the priests raised the lid of the box, and there lay an enormous serpent in the peculiar state of torpor, in which serpents generally remain for some time after receiving food.

The Princess approached the box, crying out, "Behold! ye that doubt. Is it not verily a serpent?" then she turned to the chief priest and inquired, "Has not your God revealed to you, some secret sign by which you may with certainty distinguish the man who is destined for the sacrifice?" The chief priest

answered not a word, but stood in silence with downcast look. "I will spare you further embarrassment," said she, "for I know that many things take place in the sanctuary, that it is not fit and proper to reveal to the multitude : I respect your silence in this instance. But allow me to put another question ! Would this sacred serpent know his enemy if such an one were present ? And would he not take revenge if this enemy were to attempt to kill him ?" "Assuredly ! assuredly !" replied the priests, "he would cause fire to descend from heaven upon the impious wretch and consume him !" "Well then," continued she, "I am that enemy, and your god dies by my hand ;" and quick as lightning she drew forth a sharp dagger and thrust it into the serpent's head with such force that it passed through it, and the point penetrated the bottom of the box beneath, pinning the serpent fast to the same ; as soon as the priests saw what was done they all screamed out in terror, and the king rushed to the Princess, caught her in his arms, and drew her forcibly back, saying, "My child ! my child ! what have you done ?"

"What you, my father, ought to have done long ago," answered the Princess. "Will you believe, and ye people, will ye believe," cried she to those around, "that I have acted rightly, if I can now tell you what this god hath got in his belly ?" After reflecting a little, the king replied, "If you can do that we will admit that you acted justly." And the people cried out, "If she can do that, she did right in killing the serpent, for it was no god !" Then the priests said to the king, "Let her do even as she desires, but if she shall not speak the truth, will you then consent to her instant death." The king hesitated to reply, but

the Princess cried out, "Let it be so! promise them!" and the King nodded assent.

Then the Princess addressing those around, began in a firm voice: "There is a man among you, whose wife now sits at home mourning the loss of her only child, a boy only eighteen months old, who could just run alone. This child strayed from its father's home yesterday, and has not yet returned. It entered yonder temple devoted to the serpent, and these priests know what then became of it. Let the father of the child now come forward and seek for the lost one in the belly of the serpent."

During the time she was speaking the greatest silence prevailed around. But when in answer to her call, a man actually did come forward, whose countenance bore signs of great affliction, and when he moreover replied, "It is too true, I am unhappily the man! My dear boy Hamed is not yet returned, and my wife now sits at home mourning her loss; I have come out because I could no longer endure to see her so afflicted." Then the people all cried out with one voice against the priests, and were so vehement in expressing their hatred and disgust, that it was long ere silence could be restored. Then said the young Princess to the man, "Take your sword and carefully open the belly of the serpent, there you will find your child, I cannot say whether it be still alive, but it is only an hour since the serpent swallowed it." The man approached and drawing his short yateghan, with trembling hand slowly cut open the belly of the serpent. And behold! there was the child; the man instantly pulled it out, uttering a cry of joy as he perceived that there were still some signs of life, and folding it in his arms carried it away

in haste. The next moment the priests were all prostrate before the king begging for mercy, But the people, who had now assembled in great numbers, cried out, "Away with them! away with them!" and when the king commanded that they should be taken to prison, it was with difficulty that the people could be kept from laying violent hands on them.

The Princess then turned again to the king, saying, "Tell me, O King! is there any reason now, why this innocent man should not be set at liberty? He came as a stranger into the land, and as such was entitled to your hospitality. But you have treated him as one of the worst of criminals—you have treated him with scorn—you have dragged him through the city, styling him in mockery, your son-in-law. Since you did so in mockery, now let him be called so in earnest. For the word of a king ought not to be blown away by the winds. This man and no other shall be my husband."

At the king's command the prisoner was immediately set at liberty. The first thing he did, was to prostrate himself at the feet of the Princess, and the king, in token of his gratitude, but the king raised him up, and embraced him, calling him his son, and then joining his hands to the Princess's, he said to his daughter, "Behold your husband." He then commanded his heralds to go forth through the city, proclaiming that the marriage of the Princess Haschanascha would be celebrated on the morrow, and that all the people were invited to assemble in the grounds of the palace, and partake of the festivities of the royal table.

The King then conducted Jussuf through a range of apartments, which formed one of the wings of the palace, and told

him, that they should be entirely set apart for him and his bride to reside in. But the Princess opposed such arrangements, saying, "I will live in the same apartments that I formerly occupied in the palace. For I shall consider myself as only betrothed to him, until an Iman of our religion, known to both of us, hath pronounced the marriage blessing over us." The king offered no opposition to this, but replied, "You may act in this, and in every thing else, according to your own discretion. For I learnt but yesterday, that your knowledge and wisdom far exceed that of mankind in general."

CHAPTER VII.

THE betrothal was celebrated with the greatest splendour. The king showed his son-in-law every attention and honour, taking him to visit all his palaces and country seats, around the city, and wherever they went their visit was honoured with the same grand festivities; in fact, the king spared neither trouble nor expense to entertain Jussuf, and make his residence in the palace pleasant and agreeable.

The Princess accompanied them in all these excursions, and by her kindness and amiable manners, contributed no small share to the entertainment. She seemed to devote the whole of her time to Jussuf's happiness, providing for his most trifling desires, almost before he conceived them, insomuch that Jussuf often said to himself, "Surely she must be able to divine my thoughts

before I know them myself,"—and he began to think that she would really be a very agreeable companion for him. The only thing he could not quite reconcile his fancy to, was the blackness of her skin.

One day they went on one of these excursions to a palace which was famous for the hunting which the country around afforded, and on that day preparations were made for an unusually grand hunt. The Princess Haschanascha was to take part in it, and was mounted on a large elephant, equipped in the most gorgeous style. Jussuf rode by her side, mounted on a horse of the finest breed, one that the king had selected from the royal stables and presented to him. Jussuf busied himself in watching for the sport, and whenever he could discover any bird or beast of chase, he immediately pointed it out to the Princess, who aimed so truly, that the moment after he had directed her attention to any such creature, it was pierced through by one of her arrows.

As soon as the chase was over, Jussuf expressed a wish to pass a few days in this place, preferring a little quietude to the continual excitement of the court. The king readily acceded to his wish, and leaving several of their servants to attend on him, returned with his daughter to the city. Haschanascha seemed to be much grieved at taking leave, and Jussuf perceived tears in her eyes. "I feel convinced," said she, "that your stay here will be the cause of a great deal of misery to me. You will quite forget me, and even the talisman which you received from Modijah, will pass from you into other hands; but remember, my life depends on it. If the death of the black Haschanascha would ensure your permanent happiness, then would I willingly

endure it. But no, you will have a short dream of perfect bliss, and then awake to lengthened misery." Jussuf entreated her not to entertain such dismal forebodings, and took tender leave of her. Long did he stand gazing after her as she rode away, and was often inclined to follow her, but some unaccountable power seemed to hold him back.

Finding himself at last quite alone, he strolled into the garden, his thoughts still dwelling on the last words of the Princess. "I wonder what could make Haschanascha so sad, when she left?" said he, soliloquizing. "She is so wise and discerning, that it is possible, her great penetration may see some danger that I am exposed to, although I myself am quite unaware of it. Yet why should she be afraid of my losing Modijah's talisman, and allowing it to go into other hands, when I always carry it about me?" He then pulled out the pouch containing the talisman, and regarding it, continued, "No, I will never part with thee, unless thou art taken from me by force." Then, fearing it might not be safe to carry the talisman in his bosom, where it would be easily found if any one should attempt to rob him, he concealed it carefully in the folds of his turban, fancying it would be safer there.

Jussuf wandered about until night came on, when he returned to the palace, and soon retired to bed. Here he past a very uncomfortable night, for his sleep was troubled with unpleasant dreams. And when he arose in the morning, and went into the garden, the subject of these dreams still occupied his thoughts; in fact, it was impossible that it should be otherwise, for all night long had he dreamt of large red poppies, and in the garden he saw several beds of exactly the same kind of flowers.

While he was standing meditating near some of the finest of these flowers, he all at once recollected the beautiful butterfly, which he had first observed on a similar flower in his own garden, and his mind retraced all the circumstances that had followed that event. He thought again of the beautiful fairy-girl, in search of whom he had undertaken the journey; this reminded him of the wooden box that he had received of the dervish in the subterraneous cavern, under the ruins near Schiraz.

Pulling out the little casket and regarding it, he said, "Without thee I was never to reach the object of my wishes? And what service hast thou hitherto rendered me? Thou wast guaranteed to lead me, without any other guide, to the being I sought, and I was told to rest assured of being in the right way, so long as I did not open thee with this golden key? Instead of which thou hast led me to imprisonment, and all kinds of ignominy and suffering, until, at last, thou hast brought me to be betrothed to a lady, who has as little resemblance to the one I was in quest of, as night has to broad day. And the last injunction that I received respecting thee was, that I ought only to open thee, when I had given up all hope of reaching the object of my search. I have certainly now arrived at that state of mind! Therefore, let me see what thou containest."

So saying he applied the golden key and opened the box. But it instantly fell from his hand, for scarcely had he turned the key when out flew the identical butterfly, which after fluttering some little time in the gay sunshine, settled on one of the finest of the poppies. Jussuf no sooner perceived this than he pulled off his turban, and, as on the former occasion, covered both butterfly and

flower. The turban began to rise just as he had seen it before, and the next minute, the same smiling, playful creature that he had seen in his own garden stood before him. "Is it possible, that thou art the same? do I really at length, again behold thee?" cried he, his eyes beaming with delight. "Truly I am the same!" replied she; "thou must have entirely forgotten me of late, as thou hast made so little inquiry after me? But what hast thou been doing with thy turban? Let me see?" So saying, she lifted the turban from off her head, and searching in the folds she found the leather pouch, and took it out. "Oh, oh," cried she, handing him the turban, "thou carriest these kinds of things about thee, dost thou? Thou hast no more need of that, I will keep it,"—with these words she secured the talisman in her dress and ran away.

After rather a long chase, he succeeded at last in catching her, and begged and prayed of her to restore him his pouch, which he informed her contained a talisman, that had delivered him from all dangers he had encountered on his way. "Yes," said she, "I know it, and it alone is the cause that thou hast been so long in finding me." She gave him to understand that she did not intend to give it to him again, and then began all the sports, and play, with which she had formerly so much allured him, in his own garden near Balsora. When it was getting near dinner-time, Jussuf invited her to come into the palace, and dine with him. She, regarding him with a satirical smile on her countenance, exclaimed, "I, go under a roof, and seat myself at a table, to eat the coarse flesh of beasts and wheaten flour? What art thou thinking of? Hast thou already forgotten the fig we ate together? That has been sufficient to nourish me ever since.

But truly, you human beings require something more,"—with these words she bounded off to a bramble that grew at a short distance, plucked a little white flower from it, and giving the same to Jussuf, said, "There, for once in your life, drink the honey from the flower." But as he clasped the flower, it changed into a silver drinking cup, filled with a drink that exhaled a very sweet odour. He drank of it and found himself greatly refreshed thereby, and as completely satisfied as if he had eaten a good dinner. As soon as Jussuf had finished the drink they again began playing together, and by the endless variety of sport that she continually invented, she allured him to remain the whole day; in fact, he took no heed of the hours, until, just as the sun was sinking below the horizon, she bounded over a bed of flowers, calling out "Good night." Jussuf was about to follow, when lo! she had vanished, and he could only see the little butterfly, flying rapidly away.

When he returned to the palace the servants expressed their great joy at seeing him, telling him that they had anxiously awaited his return at dinner-time, and had since sought for him in the garden, for a messenger had come from the city bringing the sad news, that the Princess had suddenly been taken seriously ill that morning. He sent for the messenger immediately, and inquired of him all the particulars. He learnt from him that the Princess had been in good health when she retired to rest on the previous night, and that she had arisen at her usual hour in the morning apparently quite well. But about half an hour after sunrise she left her room and went to greet the king, and just as she was about to embrace him, she fainted and fell senseless on the floor. Her attendants immediately carried her back to her chamber,

where she soon recovered her senses, but was in a very weak state, and the first words she uttered to her disconsolate father, were, "Father, my time is come, and I must die."

Jussuf was sorely grieved when he heard this, for he thought of her warning with respect to the talisman, and recollected, that the moment in which she had been taken ill, was precisely the time, when the fairy-girl had taken the talisman out of the folds in his turban. After reflecting some time, he came to the determination of setting out early in the morning, and if possible, to get the talisman back from her, and commanded the messenger to return at sunrise to the king, to announce his intended return in the evening.

Jussuf passed the lonely hours of night in wakefulness, for he felt dissatisfied with himself, not only for having parted with the talisman, but also, for having passed the whole of the previous day, in foolish play with her who had taken it from him. When he reflected on all that she had done and said, he could find nothing in her character worthy of his estimation, but on the contrary, he thought her the most foolish wayward creature in existence.

Soon as the grey morning dawned, he arose from his bed, and entered the garden just as the sun was rising. He was not long alone, for the warm rays had scarcely dried the dewy leaves of the flowers, when he again saw the same beautiful butterfly fluttering over them. He watched it closely, and soon saw it alight on one of them, as on the former occasions, in like manner also, he threw his turban over it, and the same transformation took place, the same beautiful fairy-girl stood smiling before him. He instantly requested her to restore him the leathern pouch

containing the talisman. She made light of his request, and smiling replied, "To-day thou shalt not have it! but to-morrow perhaps thou mayest, if thou behavest well,"—and then she again enticed him to play, and in her society, he soon forgot all the good intentions, that he had when he entered the garden. The servants came in search of him, as on the previous day, but she had led him to a part of the garden, where no one ever thought of going. It was not till night came on, when she had disappeared as on the former evening, that he thought of returning to the palace. As he approached the gates, the servants came running, and informed him, that another messenger from the king had been long waiting to see him.

As he entered, the messenger came to him, and informed him that the Princess seemed to be a little better in the morning, but about noon, when she found that he had not returned as she expected, she became much worse. She had not complained of his neglect in remaining absent, but the king was somewhat displeased thereat, and begged him to return without delay on the following morning. He promised to do so, and gave the man a message for the king to that effect, with instructions to start at break of day on the following morning. But notwithstanding all Jussuf's seriousness, and even anger, when he first met his fair companion on the next morning, he was soon induced to join in her play, and he trifled away this day, as he had done the two previous. When he returned in the evening, however, another messenger was waiting for him, who brought still worse intelligence concerning Haschanascha's health. Jussuf reproached himself bitterly for his previous neglect, but determined to delay no longer. As it was a fine night and the moon shone, he gave

immediate orders for his horse to be brought, and accompanied the messenger back to the city.

As he approached, he saw the light still burning in the Princess's room. Having alighted he hastened into the palace, and inquired, whether there were yet any signs of her recovery; but those whom he questioned, only replied by shrugging their shoulders despondently, and conducted him to her apartment. He found her reclining on a couch, and she seemed so ill and weak, that it was with difficulty she could draw her breath, but as soon as she saw him enter, she beckoned him to approach, at the same time waving her hand to the attendants, who directly understood that she wished them to retire. When they were all gone, Jussuf threw himself on his knees before her, and cried bitterly, reproaching himself for having been the cause of all her sufferings, in that he had neglected her warning. "I know all!" replied she, "but that which I most feared has not yet occurred. Hitherto, she only keeps possession of the talisman, contrary to your will. Take care that she never persuade you, to consent to her having it. Now I am very weak and ill, and shall be a great deal worse, but so long as you do not consent to her keeping the talisman, my life is safe. Hasten back, without staying to present yourself before the king, for he is angry with you, and accuses you, as being the cause of my illness."

He did as she had desired him, and arrived at the palace in the country, just as the day was dawning. His mind was too much agitated for him to sleep, so he walked in the garden. At about the usual time of its appearance, he observed the butterfly come flying into the garden, and settle again on a poppy. This time he determined to try and catch it with his hand, but as he grasped

the flower, instead of securing the butterfly, he found he had caught a large wasp, which he very soon released, for it stung him so severely, that his hand began to swell. As for the butterfly, it had disappeared, and did not return to the garden that day.

After waiting about the garden all the morning, he returned to the palace at the dinner hour, and having taken some refreshment, he lay down and slept for some hours, when he awoke again, a messenger had just arrived, who brought the news, that the Princess had been a little better all that day.

Jussuf entertained some fears, that the butterfly would never come again, and that he might never be able to recover the talisman, but on the following morning, when he entered the garden, shortly after sunrise, it had already settled on one of the flowers; still remembering what he had suffered on the previous day, he determined to resort to the old plan of the turban, and the fairy-girl rose before him as formerly. The first thing he did was to make inquiries, why she had not come on the previous day: "Oh," replied she, "there was some uncouth peasant in the garden, and he tried to catch me with his hand just as he would a common fly. If his hand had touched me, it would have crushed all the down on my wings, and consequently have disfigured the beautiful dress I now wear. And that I could never endure, for I prize fine clothing above all things." Jussuf clearly understood, by the quizzing look she gave him as she spoke, that by the uncouth peasant she meant none other than himself. He had no time, however, to make excuses, for she had no sooner done speaking, than she commenced some new fascinating sport, and he, as usual, joined in the same; thus in play and frolicking passed the day, like those before, and Jussuf could

not make even one inquiry after the talisman; and the two or three days following were spent in the same trifling; Jussuf arose every morning with fresh resolutions to obtain the talisman, but he had no sooner entered the garden than they were entirely forgotten. A messenger came from the city every evening, and every time brought a worse report of the health of the Princess.

Her illness increased daily, but the physicians who attended her, could neither understand the nature of the malady, nor find any cure for it. Now the physicians were great friends of the priests, who were still in prison, and when they found that the complaint defied all their remedies, they told the king that they believed it to be a visitation from heaven, to punish her for having wickedly slain the sacred serpent. The king no sooner heard this, than he commanded that the chief priest should be brought before him, who, when he had come, so managed to terrify the weak-minded monarch, that he soon regained all his former influence over him, and the result of the interview was, that the king issued orders for the immediate release of all the priests; and the priests on their part gave out that they would find another serpent equally sacred, and Jussuf was condemned to be the first offering that should be made to it, inasmuch as the Princess's death was already certain, for, excepting that by close observation, she could still be seen to breathe faintly, there were no signs of life in her. Jussuf, who still continued to trifle away his time in the fascinating society of the gay fairy-girl, had no idea of what was going on in the city. One day, when sitting beside his light-hearted companion, he proposed to her, that she should become his wife and return home with him. But she laughed at him and

replied: "Hast thou not already betrothed thyself to Haschnascha? Thinkest thou that I am ignorant of that circumstance? Perhaps thou deemest it unnecessary to inform me of that, because thou art allowed to have more than one wife. I suppose thou hast the intention of keeping us shut up in thine house like birds in a cage, and only to favour us with thy society when thou returnest home in the evening from thy business, weary and fatigued. Then when thou art tired of everything else, thou wilt consider our society good enough to entertain thee. Fie on thee! to imagine for one moment that I could endure the restraint of such a life! To think that I should allow myself to be bound for life, by some ceremony performed by a white-bearded Iman! Heaven defend me from such a fate!" Then she arose and began playfully dancing round Jussuf, while she sang the following verses:

" Gaily sailing in the air
 I lead a life devoid of care,
 Sportive o'er the flowers bounding,
 Naught but bliss my path surrounding,
 While the heavens are blue and clear,
 And spring in glory doth appear.

Careless roving all the day
 I pass the happy hours away,
 Tarrying when and where I list,
 Pursuing that which seemeth best,
 Rejoicing in the sunshine bright;
 But ever shunning dismal night.

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The flowers all my wants supply,
Their varied hues delight mine eye,
While resting on their leaves, I dip
And luscious honey from them sip.
Such joys possess'd, more to require,
Were but a foolish vain desire."

When she had ended this song she stood still before Jussuf, and stooping down, said, "Well, what say you to that, Saad Jussuf? Why you are making a wry face, as though you had been drinking vinegar. What evil thoughts are you harbouring behind that frown on your forehead?" "I am thinking of the talisman!" replied Jussuf; "give it to me back now, for Haschanascha is at the point of death." "And what of that?" said she, indifferently, "I don't know what it can signify whether there be one more or less of such black monsters in the world. You will give me the talisman, won't you? come, be agreeable for once, and say you will make me a present of it." She seated herself beside him, and patted him on the shoulder with her left hand, while she held the leathern pouch before him in her right, and regarding him with a fascinating smile, continued, "It belongs to me? you have given it to me, is it not so?" Jussuf had just got the word "yes," on his lips, when his eyes came directly in contact with hers, and it appeared to him as though her eyes were not like those of a human being, but an immense number of small eyes, like those of a butterfly, fastened together—which caused a feeling of horror to come over him. At this moment he snatched the talisman out of her hand, and threw it over his head, at the same time calling out, "Haschanascha."



The word had scarcely escaped his lips, when Haschanascha's elephant was seen to approach, just the same as he had seen it on the day when they went hunting. A slave, who appeared to be the keeper, walked in front, carrying a short staff in his hand; his head was bedecked with large beautiful feathers, of various colours, which hung gracefully over his shoulders. On the back of the elephant was a black female, kneeling on one knee, who held a bow drawn to the full extent, and before Jussuf was aware of it, the arrow had flown and pierced his companion, who fell dead in his arms. Jussuf was benumbed with terror, and when he recovered his senses, the elephant and its keeper had disappeared; then turning his head to gaze on his lifeless companion, he found that she also had vanished from his arms; but on stooping to look where her blood had fallen, he discovered the beautiful butterfly lying dead on the ground, pierced through by a pin shaped like a small arrow, just as such insects are pinned in a case, by those who keep collections of them. He picked it up, and as he was raising his head, his eye happened by chance to light on the little box with the golden key, which lay at a little distance, for it was in this very place that he had first opened it, and let it fall from his hand.

Doubtful whether he was really in his senses, or whether the whole affair was only a dream, he fastened the butterfly in the box, and was about to proceed to the palace, when to his great surprise, he saw the good slave who had shewn him so much kindness, running towards him quite out of breath. As the man approached, he cried out, "Fly with all speed through the garden. The servants of the priests are in the palace, they have come to take you prisoner, for you are again condemned to be

sacrificed." He inquired after the Princess: "By this time she is no more," replied the slave, and partly by entreaty, and partly by force, dragged him on to flight.

CHAPTER VIII.

JUSSUF hastened through the garden into the wood which surrounded it, and then began running like a frightened roe; driven onward more by the frantic state of mind that the events of the last hour had produced, than from fear of his pursuers. The wood concealed his flight. After running some miles he came to the banks of the river a little below the city, and there happened to be a small vessel passing at the time, sailing down the stream. He hailed the man who had charge of it, and after some little difficulty, (for he could only communicate with him by signs), induced him to come alongside and take him into the vessel; as soon as he had got safely on board, the man steered again into the middle of the stream, and the vessel continued its course as before. As night drew on Jussuf fully expected that he would have been obliged to land, but the man told him to his great joy, that as the moon shone clearly, he should continue to journey on his way. During the night they allowed the vessel to float with the stream, taking care to steer clear of the rocks, and other dangers to which they were exposed. About midnight, Jussuf managed to make the man understand that he could guide the rudder, and offered to undertake the steerage for a time. The man willingly consented, and laid down on deck to sleep awhile.

Jussuf passed the remainder of the night, seated in silence at the stern of the vessel, in reviewing all the remarkable circumstances that had recently occurred to him.

In the morning they drew near to a town, which the sailor informed him was the place of his destination. Jussuf, therefore, pulled out his last remaining purse and offered the man a piece of gold in payment, but the man positively refused to take it, telling him, that by taking the helm during the night he had well earned his passage. Jussuf thanked him, and taking leave of him walked on to the town. As he was going along, he recollected for the first time, that he had left the only remaining box of diamonds in the palace, so as soon as he arrived at the town he disposed of all the valuable clothing, that he had purchased during his stay among the serpent-worshippers, and in their stead bought the dress of a poor dervise, and had his eyebrows shaven. In this attire he again renewed his journey, proceeding along the banks of the river on foot.

Glad enough was Jussuf when, after wandering on for eight weeks, he found he was approaching a large town, situated at the mouth of the river, which had now become much wider, and flowing past this said town, poured its waters into the ocean. In this place he met with many who could speak his language, and learned from one of them, the agreeable intelligence, that a ship was lying ready in the harbour, to sail for Balsora on the following day. He determined to embark in it, and return home. The captain readily agreed to take him, and when Jussuf inquired what he would charge him for the passage, he replied in astonishment, "What? talk you of passage-money? I wonder what the owner of this vessel would say to me, if he knew that I

received money of such a poor devil as you are. No, no! the wealthy merchant Jussuf of Balsora, who has twenty such ships sailing on the seas, would never receive passage-money from a poor dervishe."

"What say you?" inquired Jussuf, "is then Jussuf the merchant still living?" The captain laughed heartily, and replied, "Living, yes, I should hope he is. It is true that he is now gone on a long journey, but we are continually receiving proof that he is well enough to transact a great deal of business. Look here, this may be taken as a specimen. This box of diamonds is a treasure of more value, than any Sultan can boast of possessing in his treasury. It was brought to me this morning by one of his slaves, with orders to take it to Balsora." To Jussuf's utter astonishment, the man shewed him the very box of diamonds that he had left in the palace, when he had been obliged to fly. He dared not, however, make himself known, fearing that, on account of his poverty-stricken appearance, he might be taken for an impostor, who was desirous of becoming possessed of the treasure. Still he could not make out, how the captain could have obtained it. So addressing him again, he said, "Pardon my curiosity, Sir, but pray do you know anything of the slave who brought this box from Jussuf?" At this the captain was very angry, and replied, "It is true that I promised you your passage for nothing, supposing you to be a poor dervishe, and as such I am still willing to take you. I am therefore greatly surprised at the very unceremonious manner in which you speak of my master, the great merchant Jussuf, calling him familiarly 'Jussuf,' as though you were his equal. Another time when you mention him, please to be more respectful, and give him the honour due to him, not

forgetting the *Sahib* before his name. With regard to your question as to my knowing the servant, I certainly don't know anything about the brown fellow, nor where he comes from; it is sufficient for me to know that he brought this treasure from my master."

On the following morning, as the wind blew fresh from the east, the ship weighed anchor and left the port, carrying all her sail. They had a very agreeable voyage, for the weather was fine all the way, and the wind continuing favourable, they soon arrived in the harbour of Balsora. The first thing that attracted Jussuf's attention, was the unusual number of new ships that were lying at anchor, laden with wares of all kinds. "Look there," said the captain, triumphantly, when he was taking his leave to go ashore, "all these new ships belong to the same *Sahib* Jussuf. Do not forget, when you are rambling through the city, to notice his splendid palace; and above all things, visit his extensive warehouses in the bazaar." Jussuf promised to follow his advice, and directed his steps at once to the bazaar. On arriving, he was much surprised to find, instead of the sale rooms that he had formerly occupied, others of much greater extent erected, and stored with all kinds of valuables, such as jewels and precious stones, the like of which he had never beheld, excepting in the subterraneous cavern under the ruins near Schiraz.

After some difficulty, he managed to work his way through the immense crowd of spectators, and customers, that were standing around, when he found there were no less than six young men busily employed in serving; and so numerous were the purchasers, that it was some time before one of these men could spare a minute to speak to him. At last, when he had got quite close to

the counter, and succeeded in attracting the attention of one of them, he inquired, "Who is the proprietor of this large establishment?" The man replied, "You must surely be a great stranger in Balsora, if you do not know that there is but one merchant who can boast of such an establishment. Have you then never heard of our master, the Sahib Jussuf, who is the king of merchants?"

"Truly, I have heard his name mentioned," replied Jussuf, "but I understood that he had closed his warehouses, and gone on a long journey."

"You are quite right," replied the young man, "but after being absent a few weeks, he sent his brother Hassan Assad, who now conducts the business on his account; and by the continued arrival of treasures, more costly and rare than any that have been exposed for sale in this city, which our master finds in the various places he visits on his journey, and sends home daily, the business is very much extended."

"What say you? his brother Hassan Assad! Why, I have been informed that he has no brother! Which am I to believe?" inquired Jussuf. "Hassan Assad is not, properly speaking, his brother, but the brother of his wife," was the answer. "His wife!" cried Jussuf, in great astonishment. "I really cannot understand what you mean by all these questions!" replied the young man. "Pray what is there to wonder at in what I have told you, that you should stand there staring with your mouth wide open! Why should not the Sahib Jussuf have a wife, when he could have a dozen if he liked? The fact is, if you take so much interest in his affairs, and want to know all the particulars of his history, you had better go to his palace: there you will

find plenty of people who can spare the time to answer all your questions: I am too much occupied to attend to you any longer, seeing there are already several customers waiting to be served." So saying he turned to those who were waiting, and apologizing for his inattention, inquired what they wished for. As for Jussuf, he thought it best to take the young man's advice, and accordingly went to visit his palace.

That also had been so much enlarged and improved, that he could scarcely recognize the building in which he had lived so many years. The two smaller palaces, that formerly stood on each side, were no longer there, but in their stead two large wings had been added to his own. The grand entrance in the centre was wide, and a great many servants were continually passing in and out. After having attentively surveyed the exterior of the building, he approached and inquired of one of the porters, to whom the palace belonged. The man gave him the same answer as he had received in the bazaar. "But," inquired Jussuf, "are you sure that your master will ever return? He has already been so long away; and as you have not received any intelligence of him, no one can tell where he is to be found, or what may have become of him."

"What! no intelligence of him?" cried both the porters, simultaneously, "why his wife has been here some time, and doubtless he himself will have arrived by this hour. His brother Hassan Assad, who has been continually receiving messages from him, has had notice of his intended return to-day, and has consequently made grand preparations to receive him, and among the other guests who are come to greet him on his arrival, is his old tutor, who has not been seen for years, who has managed to quit

the seclusion he has for so long lived in, and comes to join him in the hearty welcome." "What, then, is Modijah here?" inquired he. "Why you seem to know him better than I do," replied one of the men. "Yes, you are quite right, Modijah is his name, I could not at the moment recall it."

"Oh, then, pray allow me to go in, that I may speak with him," said Jussuf, stepping in. "Not on any account to-day!" replied the man, placing himself before him; "I dare not allow any stranger to enter, for the family are now all assembled in the grand saloon, to have the marriage ceremony performed according to the rites of our religion, which was not possible in the country where the pair were first united. The Iman has already gone in."

"What!" cried Jussuf, impatiently, "do you then mean to intimate that your master has already entered? Shew me the impostor! Let me in that I may punish the villain." But as he was about to force his way in, both the porters pushed him back. "Do you know your master when you see him?" cried Jussuf, struggling to get past them. "Pray what sort of man is the wretch who has presumed to represent himself as such?" The men replied that they had not long been in Assad's service, and although they had not yet had the honour of seeing the Sahib Jussuf, they had heard that he had arrived that very day. "Yes!" retorted Jussuf, "he is arrived true enough, but he is not yet in his palace; although it won't be long before he is there." With these words he seized the porter who had last spoken, and threw him violently on the ground, and as the other still attempted to oppose him, he met with similar treatment. Jussuf instantly rushed into the palace, and soon reached the grand saloon, notwithstanding the great opposition that he met

with in the hall, and the various apartments he had to traverse, from the numerous servants and inmates of the establishment.

Then bursting open the doors, he ran in and stationing himself in the centre of the magnificent apartment, he stamped and cried aloud, "Who is he that dares to represent himself as Jussuf here? And who is she that presumes to style herself Jussuf's wife? I am Jussuf, whom ye suppose to be lost! Where is the impostor? Let him come forward and receive at my hands the reward which his deception so richly deserves." As soon as he paused, a richly dressed man stepped forward, whom he did not recognize as ever having seen before, and he on his part did not seem to know Jussuf, but addressing him he said, "What deception is it that you are declaiming against so loudly? There is no man here who has represented himself as Jussuf, excepting yourself. If you then are truly he, whom we are all anxiously expecting to appear, give me proof of your identity. What word will you whisper to this talisman." So saying, he held to him Modijah's talisman. Jussuf was quite astounded, and taking it in his hand, he found the spark was quite extinct; so he gently breathed the word "Haschanascha" over it, in a soft whisper, when the spark instantly appeared shining brightly in the stone, at the same moment a graceful female approached him, and throwing back the thick veil that covered her face, she exclaimed, "Dost thou recognize Haschanascha, thy betrothed?" Quite overcome with joy, Jussuf gazed at her for some time in silent astonishment; he could trace the beauteous outline of her features, and the mild expression of her eyes, but instead of the black skin that was formerly the only objection he had to her, she had now a most beautifully clear complexion, with a delicate rose tint on her cheeks.

“Haschanascha,” cried he at length, awaking from his astonishment, “is it really thou? I have lately witnessed so many wonderful events, both waking and sleeping, that I can no longer trust my senses, and know not whether I ought to believe the joy that now attends me as a reality, or merely consider it as a pleasant dream from which I shall awake to greater misery. How is it possible that thou art still alive? I had thought thee long since dead through my wickedness!”

“Make no inquiries about the past!” replied the voice of Modijah. “The King of Spirits hath chosen you as his favourite; two fairies of very different natures were permitted to use their arts to win your affections, and although judging from outward appearance, your passions brought you to the very brink of ruin, your nobler virtues came at the hour of need to your aid, and brought you triumphant from the contest. You have happily chosen the nobler of the two. She will crown your future life with happiness and joy, while the likeness of the other vain creature, which you still retain in the casket, may serve to remind you of your past weakness, and to warn you for the future. Behold Haschanascha, the sister of your friend Hassan Assad, who has managed your business for you ever since you parted with him at Schiraz. I am your uncle; and not wishing your wife to enter your splendid palace as a beggar, she shall have all the treasure that you saw under the ruined city, as a marriage gift.”

After these words he embraced Jussuf, who was near fainting away, quite overcome with astonishment. Then the young man also approached, who had handed him the talisman when he came in; Jussuf now recognized him to be his friend Hassan,

and embracing him with heartfelt joy, called him his dear brother.

The Iman then came forward to pronounce the blessing on Jussuf and Haschanascha, and went through all the ceremonies of the marriage service according to the rites of their religion. Then followed grand festivals which lasted for many days, such as had never been known in the city of Balsora, for even in later years people talk of the splendour with which the marriage of the rich merchant Jussuf was celebrated. He lived with his wife Haschanascha in great happiness to a good old age, and his descendants still bless his memory.

THE END.

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THE
TWO TALISMANS.

CHAPTER I.

MANY hundred years ago, there reigned in Candahar a Sultan named Abdul-Babur. In the beginning of his reign he was obliged to carry on continual wars with the princes of the neighbouring states, some of whom were perpetually harassing the peasantry by plundering incursions, in which they despoiled the farms and lands. The more powerful of these troublesome neighbours entertained the idea of increasing the extent of their own dominions, by conquering Candahar, and annexing it as a tributary province. But it was not long before they discovered that these ambitious designs were quite impracticable, for in every skirmish that took place Abdul-Babur invariably proved victorious. Even when (as was often the case) he led but a mere handful of soldiers to oppose a powerful army of well-trained and experienced warriors, the invaders were always compelled to retreat with great loss, and return disgraced to their own states. To defeat Abdul-Babur seemed impossible, for when with the fierce daring

of a man reckless of his life, and apparently seeking destruction, he rushed into the thickest ranks of the enemy, he always contrived to extricate himself, and single-handed to put numbers to flight, as though he were shielded and strengthened by supernatural agency. His foes believed that such was really the case, and supposed that the possession of some magic charm protected him from every danger that could beset him. His own followers also had such firm belief in this supposed influence, that the greater part of them considered him so invincible and certain of victory, that they blindly followed him, and fearlessly obeyed his commands, however venturesome or fraught with danger might be the undertaking to which he led them.

But although Abdul-Babur was so courageous whilst in battle, still he did not, like many conquerors, love war for the sake of glory. Whenever any princes or people were desirous of peace, he gladly met their proposals, and thus changed old hatred into firm and friendly alliance.

By the time he had reached the years of manhood, he had restored tranquillity to his kingdom, and Candahar was no longer endangered by the aggressions of its neighbours. His first years of peace were employed in making provisions against any breach of faith on the part of his allies. He built strong walls, and formed trenches around the city, and quartered his soldiers in strong fortifications, so that they might be always prepared to defend it. Then he turned his attention to the framing of wise laws for its internal government, and paid such particular regard to the cultivation and improvement of the lands, that they soon yielded very gratifying proofs of his success in farming.

Learning also that the trading caravans which travelled to and

from Persia and India, preferred the route by Candahar, he had caravanserais built for their accommodation, not only in the neighbourhood, but even in the city. These caravanserais were very commodious, and capable of containing the goods brought by several caravans stopping at the same time, and were also provided with every thing necessary for the comfort of the traveller.

When it became known that so much attention was paid to the comfort of strangers passing through Candahar, all the caravans travelled this route, for they were not only well accommodated while staying in the city, but were provided with a numerous escort of the Sultan's guards for some miles before they got there, and also after leaving it, so that they could perform a good part of the journey without fear of being attacked by the hordes of robbers that infested those parts. The merchants during their stay in the city exposed their wares for sale in the market-place, and exchanged other goods for them; this commerce soon became very extensive, and a source of great riches to the inhabitants.

The state soon began to assume a position for wealth and grandeur which it had not previously known, and all its greatness was owing to the care and wisdom of Abdul-Babur, who watched over its interests, and cultivated its resources, more like a father than a monarch, and as a father was he beloved and honoured by his people.

There was but one party which was dissatisfied with his proceedings, and that was the army. The soldiers all called to mind the glorious enterprises of the early part of his reign, when he had led them on to fame and victory; nor could they help sighing for the well-lined purses taken from the conquered with

which they used to return home ; and then they abominated the humdrum sameness of their present lives ; the service on and about the walls of the city, and the escorting of the caravans, in the performance of which duty they had occasionally to fight the roving hordes of robbers who infested the mountain passes, and from such enemies there was no spoil to be obtained ; however, they kept their discontent to themselves, not choosing to run the risk of open rebellion.

Whenever Abdul-Babur was desirous of some recreation after the business of the state was ended, his favourite divertisement was the chase, to which he frequently resorted, accompanied by some of his principal officers. The success that followed him in all his undertakings, was likewise his constant attendant in sport, for he always killed the rarest and finest game, and oftentimes delivered his followers from the claws and teeth of the fiercest beasts, who otherwise would have torn them in pieces.

One day, whilst returning from one of these hunting excursions, he happened to pass the door of a caravanserai, and hear a child crying very bitterly. He instantly sent one of his servants to learn the cause of the child's grief. The man brought word that there was a little boy, who had come with the caravan that day with a lady, that the poor lady had been taken ill on the way and had died, and that the little boy was now lamenting the loss of his mother. At this intelligence Abdul-Babur dismounted from his horse, and went to inquire into all the particulars of the case. But none of the travellers were able to give any intelligence, excepting, that the unfortunate woman had, with her little son, joined the caravan near Bagdad, and none of them had

heard her mention the object of her journey, or her intended destination. He questioned the boy about his name, and his mother's home, but the child was so young and so overcome with his affliction, that the Sultan could learn nothing from him. He then sent for the luggage-box which belonged to the poor lady, and ordered it to be opened and searched; but this only contained wearing apparel, and other things necessary for travelling; but nothing tending to throw any light on the condition or connexion of the deceased, though from the style of the clothes, and other things in the box, it appeared she was not in very good circumstances.

The artless grief of the little boy excited the Sultan's sympathy, and he commanded his servants to conduct the poor little fellow to the palace, and to lead the camel, bearing the box, and whatever else might belong to him; having resolved to educate and provide for the poor orphan. When the travellers became aware of his kind intentions, they were loud in extolling his great goodness and condescension. But he replied to them, "Wherefore do you praise me? Providence has hitherto denied my earnest wish, that I might be the parent of a son, and now here is this poor orphan sent, that I may act as a father towards him; it is, therefore, I, that have reason to be thankful." After giving orders for the interment of the mother in the cemetery set apart for the burial of foreigners, he remounted his horse and rode back to the palace.

On his arrival, the Sultan had the child again brought before him: the little fellow was now so far recovered that he could answer the questions that were put to him; but he was very young, and his replies did not furnish any information concerning his

parents, neither could he tell anything about his home. He had no recollection of his father; his mother used to tell him he had gone on a long journey, and had never returned. And about his mother, the only intelligence that could be obtained, was, that she was named Leila, and that she used to call him Nasereddin. The boy, while making these answers, had fixed his large intelligent eyes with such a look of endearing confidence, and helplessness on his face, that already the Sultan began to feel great love for him. When the camel arrived, the box was brought in, and Abdul-Babur determined once more to have its contents carefully examined in his own presence, that he might see if he could possibly find anything that might lead to a knowledge of the friends of the little stranger. The slaves had given up all hopes of discovering any thing, when quite at the bottom they found a packet folded up; and this contained a beautiful little gold box, at the sight of which, Abdul-Babur could not suppress a cry of astonishment, "How is this!" cried he, "how can this woman have obtained possession of this box, which brings to me the remembrance of days long past? Give it me," continued he "that I may be certain if it be the same." He examined it closely on all sides, and hesitated whether to open it or not; at length he said, "The box is doubtless the same, but what it may contain is of still greater importance. Know," continued he, turning to the officers of his household, who stood around in great amazement, anxiously waiting to know what all this meant, "Know that I once had a brother, he was scarcely one hour younger than myself, who in his earliest years evinced an unconquerable desire for adventures in foreign lands. Although he loved me dearly, and I used every argument, accompanied with my most earnest

entreaties, to dissuade him from his purpose, they were all of no avail. When about to take his departure, he desired to have something from me as a souvenir. Our mother had bequeathed us each a gold box, like this you now see, containing a ring, the possession of which (when on her death-bed) she assured us, would secure to us prosperity in every undertaking through life. Both rings were set with precious stones, only in my brother's was mounted a large and splendid ruby, whereas mine contained an equally large and most pure rose-coloured diamond. I proposed that we should exchange our rings, and although he was unwilling at first, on account of mine being of far greater value than his own, he gave way to my entreaties, when I showed him how, by this means, we should each possess a double souvenir of a beloved mother and an absent brother. He took my box and gave me his, and so we parted. We were then within a few days of seventeen years of age, which was the time appointed by our dying mother for us to commence wearing the rings. Since that day I have worn the ring on this finger." Having shewed them the ring on his hand, he then continued, "Now the question is, whether this little box contains the other ring with the rose-coloured diamond, that I gave with it." He opened the box, and truly, there lay within it a ring, which by closely inspecting, he ascertained to be the same, that he had exchanged with his brother, but instead of the rose-coloured diamond, a white one, of a similar size and form, was set in its place. He shook his head thoughtfully, and retired to his private apartment in silence.

CHAPTER II.

FROM that time Abdul-Babur devoted all possible attention to the bringing up and education of the boy. As he appeared to be only about five years of age, he was committed to the care of the nurse who had charge of the Sultan's only daughter Zaleika, a child of four years old, and after a short time they had the same instructor and learned the same lessons ; but as Nasereddin advanced in years, the sultan provided him with one of the most noted philosophers in the land, to direct and superintend his studies, who selected for him the most able masters to instruct him in every branch of knowledge, as well as in the manly exercises of the body, such as throwing the lance, shooting with the bow, the sword exercise, and horsemanship. Nasereddin not only very soon learnt the language of the Koran by heart, but was also able to interpret it. He greatly excelled those around him that were older than himself, (his instructors not excepted) by his extraordinary attainments in learning, his dexterity in the use of arms, and the graceful skill with which he performed gymnastic exercises and sports. As he grew up, and his body, by means of these exercises, became fully developed, he was universally allowed to be the finest young man in all the land.

Abdul-Babur watched with great pleasure the development of so much talent in his foster son. One day whilst discoursing of his attainments to his Grand Vizier, and expressing his great approbation of him, he forgot, in the fullness of his heart, his

usual discretion; "Yes, I am indeed very fortunate," said he; "and this, like every thing I have hitherto undertaken, has succeeded by means of the virtue in my ring." "By the virtue of your ring?" inquired the Grand Vizier, astonished, "pray what do you mean by that?" And Abdul-Babur then informed him, that he believed the ruby in his ring to be a talisman, that possessed the mystic power of protecting the wearer from every harm, and insured him success in every undertaking. "I therefore have never removed it from my finger," said he, "until quite lately, for I have been annoyed with the fear that it might be stolen from me. I have fancied these last few weeks that it does not fit my finger so tightly as it formerly did, and fearing lest it should slip off during my sleep, I take the precaution to remove it from my finger, put it in the box, and place it carefully under my pillow every night; so that no one can remove it without disturbing my head and waking me, and whoever may choose to arouse me in this way, shall assuredly feel the point of my dagger, which is always ready at hand, on the further side of my couch. My poor brother," continued he after a short pause, "it appears did not guard his ring so well. The ring found among the clothes of the deceased woman, who was perchance Nasereddin's mother, is doubtless the one I exchanged with him for the one I now wear. But the stone, which was a talisman, possessing equal and most likely greater virtue than mine, is gone, and in its place another diamond is set. The ring by this means has lost its power, and is no more than an ordinary jewel; even now it is of considerable value, and as it belongs entirely to Nasereddin, I will give it to him to-day, that he may wear it henceforth in remembrance of his mother. Thus saying, he sent

for Nasereddin, to whom, when he came, he presented the ring, narrating at the same time what he knew of its history. "It is not impossible," said he, in conclusion, "that your mother, was the wife of my brother, and if the ring contained the right stone, I should have without hesitation embraced you as his son. Should you ever succeed in finding this valuable stone, I shall consider it as an answer sent from heaven to clear up my doubt, and shall consider you as my nearest relation, and therefore make you heir to the throne of my kingdom." These last words of Abdul-Babur awakened in the mind of Nasereddin a strong desire to go forth into the world in search of the lost talisman. He earnestly entreated the sultan to allow him to set out immediately, and although very reluctant to part with him, he at length gave him permission. Abdul-Babur commanded that one of the finest horses should be brought from the royal stables for his use, and furnished him with well proved arms, and besides the necessary provision for the first few days of his journey, gave him a considerable sum in gold, and a casket of precious stones, that he might dispose of in case of necessity; last of all, he gave him his blessing, then taking leave of him as the most tender father would of a much beloved son, he allowed him to depart.

The Grand Vizier, however, left the Sultan's apartment with far different thoughts from those he had entertained when he entered. Hitherto he had looked up to Abdul-Babur as a great man, in every sense of the word, endowed with extraordinary courage as a warrior, and possessing all the qualities of a great mind. This feeling had made him always entertain the highest respect and veneration for him. But now, he looked upon him in a far different light, and saw all his great achievements in war, and his invariable

success in every measure undertaken during peace, as the result of a supernatural power, existing in the talisman, that would also endow with similar virtues, whoever might be its fortunate possessor. He now considered the Sultan as being quite an ordinary man, possessing the same faculties as any other, and he thought to himself, that with such help, a man of the most moderate capacity, the greatest coward on earth, might be able to become the ruler and governor of others. Such were the thoughts that now entirely occupied his mind, and feeling persuaded that the possession of the ring would give him similar power, as was then possessed by Abdul-Babur, the desire to obtain it grew stronger daily.

The Sultan himself had informed him where he concealed the ring every night, and it only required a firm determination on his part to enable him to become the possessor of it. To do so, soon became his fixed resolution. Knowing, however, that Abdul-Babur was much beloved by all his attendants, he dared not, even if he were in possession of the ring, openly rebel and deprive him of his throne. Accordingly, he began to contrive some artifice by which he might obtain it; he remembered an old man who lived in one of the caverns of the mountains, not far from Candahar, who was a famed magician. To this man he went, and entreated him to assist him in his wicked enterprise. The old wizard entered into his plans with unfeigned glee, and promised to lend him his aid; "For you must know," said he, "that I have often lamented in secret, that Abul-Babur possesses this powerful talisman, neglecting as he does to make proper use of it. How might he have extended his dominions, and spread his fame throughout the world, by means of the virtue which this talisman

contains! But no, instead of so doing, he has contented himself with a few petty conquests, built mosques and caravanserais for the accommodation of strangers, and been guilty of various other useless and contemptible acts. Whereas you," continued the magician, "may make a much better use of the ring, if you will take my advice. You are quite right in not resorting to open quarrel with the Sultan; on the contrary, it will be wiser for you to appear in the deepest affliction for his loss, when he shall disappear. Only contrive to get the ring once on your finger, and for the rest leave me to act; take this little phial and mix nine drops of the fluid contained therein with his drink; he will not die from the effects of it, for I dare not kill him, but he will fall into a death-like sleep, during which I will send my slaves, who shall bear him to a place where no man shall find him, and none but the wearer of the ring can awake him." The magician further instructed him, as soon as he should have got the ring on his finger, to repeat the following verse in an under tone:

"Appear! appear!
Hence quickly with him go
To darkness drear,
His destined place you know."

Having thus arranged every thing, the Grand Vizier made all speed back to the city; he had travelled on foot in order to avoid observation. When entering the gates of the town he found some of the soldiers conversing together, so he spoke to them in a friendly way, reminding them of the olden times, when they went forth to fight and returned with glory, bearing the spoil of their enemies: at the same time hinting that it was very unwise in Abdul-Babur to have terminated the war so soon. "Men like

yourselves," said he, "would have always been able to find opportunity for displaying your valour, and have enriched yourselves, and the country also. I am sorry that in this particular my advice has no influence with him, for if it were in my power to direct these matters, the terror of your arms should be known as far as India!" After some other such observations, he left them. By this device he gained the hearts of all the soldiery, for they soon related to their comrades what he had said; and while he acquired great popularity, he also succeeded in sowing the seeds of disaffection in the heart of Abdul-Babur's peaceful dominions.

When the Vizier was in attendance on the following day, the Sultan expressed a desire for a glass of cold water. A beautiful little fountain played in the open court-yard where they were sitting, and the clear water in falling was received in a large crystal vase.

The Grand Vizier made all haste to the fountain, taking with him the Sultan's goblet, and quite unobserved let fall into it nine drops from the before-named phial, then filling it up with water he presented it to his master. "You are too kind," said the latter, "I did not wish you to bring it yourself, but to have summoned one of the servants." The Grand Vizier, bowing respectfully, replied, "May it ever be my good fortune thus to be able to gratify the wishes of my sovereign with so little trouble!" Shortly after this he left the Sultan's apartment. But in the middle of the night, when all were fast asleep, he came back to the palace in great haste, and as he told the guards on duty that he had a very important message for the Sultan, they allowed him to enter immediately. Before the door of the

chamber in which Abdul-Babur slept, were posted two of the body-guards, who pointing their lances towards the Grand Vizier, would not allow him to enter; "We dare not allow any man to go in, for the Sultan sleeps," said they. "Asleep already!" exclaimed he; "I am sorry for it, but notwithstanding, I must awake him, for there is a report abroad, that a horde of robbers have invaded the country, and that they are even now making towards the city. Let me enter immediately!"

On hearing these tidings the men withdrew their lances, and he walked softly into the apartment, where the Sultan lay sound asleep. The first thing he did on entering was to secure the dagger which he found hanging on the wall beside the bed, then gently putting his hand underneath the Sultan's pillow he pulled out the little box. Although so sound asleep the Sultan seemed aware of his intent, and reached his hand towards the place where the dagger hung; but in the meantime the Grand Vizier had taken the ring out of the box and put it on one of his fingers, and at the same instant that he did so, the sleeper sunk into the most deathly state of insensibility. The robber now repeated the words that the magician had taught him:—

"Appear! appear!
Hence quickly with him go
To darkness drear,
His destined place you know!"

Instantly there appeared two tall black slaves, who lifted the sleeper by the head and feet, and bore him out of a window in the apartment, which closed of itself directly they had passed. All this was the work of a few moments. As the window closed the Grand Vizier rushed out of the room with anxious coun-

tenance, and called out in reproach to the guards, saying, "Is this the way you do your duty as protectors of the Sultan's life?" They, much astounded, inquired what had happened. "What has happened," said he, "I cannot tell; all I know is, the Sultan is nowhere to be found in his chambers; and faithless and undutiful men that you are, you know nothing of it, and even told me that he was there asleep! You yourselves must have been sleeping, and have not observed him leave his apartment!" The men protested that they had not slept, and that they had seen the Sultan enter his room more than an hour previously, they were moreover quite positive in asserting that he had not since left it by the doorway. Aroused by this altercation, the rest of the servants had now assembled from all parts of the palace, and the greatest confusion ensued; they questioned one another and searched in every part of the palace, but nowhere could they find the least vestige of the departed.

The Grand Vizier was loudest in lamenting the disastrous event, and ordered every possible search to be made; feigning for many days after to entertain the hope, that they might at any rate be able to find the corpse of the Sultan.

The whole country now mourned in the greatest grief for the loss of a ruler, who had ever watched over the interests of his people with parental attention, and was in return beloved by all classes. And more than any did the hypocritical Vizier pretend to mourn, while in his heart he rejoiced to see his plans succeed so well.

After a while, finding no traces of their missing monarch, the great men of the state assembled together to consult what was necessary to be done in this emergency. Some advised that

they should place Zaleika, the daughter of Abdul-Babur, on the throne; this, however, was opposed by the majority of them, who maintained that as she was but a weak young girl, the great probability was, that the powerful enemies, whom her father had in the early part of his reign entirely overcome by the success of his arms, would again league together, and make war upon the land as soon as they learnt that their dread opponent existed no more. Eventually they determined to elect the Grand Vizier as ruler of Candahar, until such time as either Abdul-Babur should return, or till Zaleika should be married to one deemed worthy of sitting on the throne of her father.

The Vizier now went to Zaleika, pretending to sympathize in her grief, and promised that he would watch over her interests with unremitting care, protect her from every danger of her forlorn position, and use his endeavours to find a prince worthy of her hand and to sit on her father's throne. But under pretence of excessive care for her safety, he kept her closely confined to her chamber, allowing none to have free access to her, except the magician's myrmidons, who acted as attendants on her. No sooner was Abdul-Babur's disappearance known to the neighbouring princes and people, than they revived their old desire of plundering and conquering the country; thus fulfilling the fears of those who had opposed the election of Zaleika. The new Sultan, who now styled himself Bahadur, went forth against them and defeated them; yet was the victory neither so glorious nor so complete as those of his predecessor had been, for he could only obtain it by much more bloodshed. One battle was no sooner ended than other enemies arose and invaded the land on another side, and every successive victory was obtained with

greater difficulty than the former. In order to satisfy the discontent which prevailed in the army, and to increase its ranks, he required large sums from the state treasury, to replenish which he was obliged to burthen the people with heavy taxes. The war soon put a stop to the commerce of the country, for the caravans preferred another route, in which they were not liable to be attacked on their way, and plundered by robbers, which was no longer the case in the vicinity of Candahar. The frequent incursions of the enemy to rob and plunder the country people, and the total inability of those who were so often called out to fight to cultivate the land, soon turned the surrounding regions into a desolate waste; for the people knew it was useless to till the ground or sow the seed. So that the country, by carrying on these continual wars, soon sunk from its former state of prosperity and happiness, to one of the greatest disorder and misery.

CHAPTER III.

NASEREDDIN meanwhile was quite ignorant how matters were going on at home. He had started with all the energy and courage of a young man, and had taken his course towards the northern mountains. For the first few days, during his passage through the vale which skirted the mountains, he was able to find here and there a hut wherein he could repose

for the night, but on commencing the ascent he soon came to a very dense wood, the trees in many parts growing so thickly together as to render his progress difficult, and in this immense wilderness, he was obliged to repose at night on the hard earth exposed to the open air. Luckily he found out a place covered with moss, and fastening his horse to the nearest tree, he lay down and slept soundly. But he had a very curious dream; there suddenly appeared to him a diminutive dwarf, scarcely reaching to his knees; he was dressed in a white robe with a broad shining belt, and his long white beard reached down below it. In his hand he held a delicate wand, with which he touched Nasereddin on the middle of the forehead, saying, "Thou goest not in the right way, bear more to the left in the midst between the west and the north." When Nasereddin awoke in the morning he had the recollection of this vision fresh in his memory, yet thinking it only an ordinary kind of dream he did not trouble himself further about it, but continued in the same direction as hitherto, that is towards the north. Gradually the way became much more difficult, the wood was so thick in many places that he was obliged to dismount, and hew his way through the branches with his sabre; he journeyed on thus all day, making progress only by means of great exertion, and came at length tired and weary, to a place where he could rest for the night. He had scarcely fallen asleep when the same little man appeared to him as on the previous night, and said with very earnest mien, "Did I not warn thee that thou art not in the right way? thou must go more to the left, in the midst between the west and the north." When he awoke the dream was as fresh as on the previous

morning, but he thought to himself. "One must not allow his resolution to be altered by a dream; if I were to alter my course to-day and go in the way directed, there doubtless would be objects equally difficult presenting themselves to obstruct my progress, and thus my undertaking would become the play of dreams." Therefore he continued in the same course he had hitherto pursued, which now became very mountainous. He fancied this was a good sign, "for," thought he, "when I shall have passed these mountains I shall doubtless arrive at some inhabited valleys, and be able to pursue my journey without further opposition." Toward the end of the day the wood became much thinner, but this only served to throw light on still greater difficulties; for as he proceeded the mountains became more and more rugged, with large masses of rock, here and there, that seemed like walls built by nature to impede his progress in that direction, obliging him often to go a long way round, in order to discover a path by which he could lead his horse, and when he had so done, he frequently found himself on the brink of a deep gulf, which he was obliged to avoid in the same manner.

Nasreddin began to despond, for he felt convinced in his own mind that the object of his search was only to be found in some remote region. Then again he blamed himself for complaining so soon, having made up his mind on starting to encounter much greater difficulties. As night approached he again sought out a convenient place to repose in, and had scarcely fallen asleep when he had a repetition of the dream. But this time the little dwarf with the white beard appeared to be very angry, and applied his wand with much greater violence, saying, "Wilt thou never obey my words? how often must I warn thee? Bethink thyself!

thou goest not in the right way, but must bear more to the left, in the midst between the west and the north."

On awaking he began to waver in his resolution. The circumstance of his having dreamt the same dream thrice, made him regard it no longer with indifference. He therefore resolved to follow the advice of the dwarf, and climbed up one of the neighbouring hills, in order to survey the route he had been directed to take; but, all he could discover was a lofty and very steep mountain, stretching right across the way he should have to pass. "Ah!" said he to himself, "what a fool I should be to turn my course in that direction, in which I should soon be obliged to quit my horse, whereas I shall quickly overcome all the difficulties of the way in which I am now proceeding, for I cannot see any more mountains to pass, and the descent from these I am now on is so gentle, that I shall henceforth be able to travel with the greatest comfort." With a light heart he ran down the hill from which he had been gazing, mounted his horse, and rode off in the same direction as before, directly towards the north. He soon came to an immense wood, where the large trees grew very thickly together, their trunks being interwoven by close prickly bushes. The horse and his rider, however, twisted in and out between the trees after the fashion of a serpent, seeming to care nothing for the brushwood which continually entangled their legs.

Thus they continued to proceed for some time, and Nasereddin began to congratulate himself that he had not heeded the counsel of his dream, when suddenly his horse stopped short, and would go no farther, he commenced spurring him, at which the horse reared up and nearly fell back on Nasereddin, and then began

to snort, and tremble all over. "There must be something in the way that frightens him," said he, "let me see what it is;" and dismounting, he hung the bridle on his arm; he then commenced hewing down the bushes with his sabre, when as he was about to make a stride forward, the horse drew back his head and pulled him back. "Stupid beast," cried he angrily, "will you also try to hold me back?" then throwing the rein violently over the horse's head he said, "You selfish brute, remain where you are, as long as you like, since you will not go with me through the wilderness." So saying, he left the horse, and again commenced hewing his way through the brambles; but he had now laid bare the brink of an abyss, over which the bushes grew, entirely concealing it; being quite unaware of his danger he rushed forward and crashing through the brushwood fell headlong. So terrific was the depth, that the fall deprived him of his senses.

When, after lying there some time, he came to himself, the night was considerably advanced. At first he could not make out where he was, or how he came there, but after feeling about some little time, he found his sabre lying near him; and by degrees he remembered his fall.

In getting up, he felt himself much distressed by the bruises he had received in falling, but was somewhat comforted on finding that none of his limbs were broken. He then began to think how he could manage to get out of this unpleasant place, but found it quite useless to attempt doing so until the dawn of day, so feeling about for a place whereon he might lie more comfortably, he determined to await the morning. Daybreak has

generally a refreshing and encouraging effect on the mind; affliction that weighs heavily on the spirit during the still, dark hours of night, is often much alleviated by the gladsome break of day; the gorgeous sight of the sun's first bright rays illuminating high heaven with crimson and gold, tends to drive away despondency, and to renew the downcast soul with hope, man's great support through life. But it was not so in Nasereddin's case; he had hoped that daylight would have discovered to him some means of climbing out of the abyss, and that he might then have been able to find his horse, and by making a little circuit, again to have proceeded on his journey; but the early light only disclosed to him how utterly hopeless his case was. On no side could he discern anything by which he could lay hold to enable him to climb up the ravine into which he had fallen, and the sides were so steep and slippery, that it was impossible for him to make any progress upward. It seemed to be a perfect miracle, that he should have fallen from such a height without being dashed to pieces, for the ravine was exceedingly narrow, and large overhanging masses of rock projected every here and there. He got up and walked along the bottom of his rocky prison, to see if he could possibly find any part where the sides were less rugged; but the further he went the worse it appeared, he had often to creep through small apertures scarcely large enough to allow his body to pass; but hope impelled him still onward, trusting at every winding he came to in this narrow passage that the next would probably lead him to the end of it; however, he no sooner arrived at one turning than he discovered that it led to another, the difficulties of getting forward becoming greater the farther he advanced. At last he was quite worn out

with fatigue, besides it was now many hours since he had eaten anything, and he began to suffer from hunger, but all his little store of provision was in the package that he had left on the horse's back. After resting some time he again started forward, encountering the same difficulties as before, and the same disappointment to all his hopes. He found here and there, where the foliage was not quite so thick, a small fissure through which he could just get a glimpse of the blue sky, which shewed him that the day was again waning; and being at last quite exhausted from fatigue and hunger, he sought out the most convenient place he could find to lay down, and soon fell into a sound sleep. Then appeared to him in a dream, the same grey-bearded dwarf whom he had thrice seen before; regarding him with pity, he said, "Poor Nasereddin, why didst thou not follow my advice? thrice have I warned thee." "Ah," answered he, in his dream, "I heartily repent having so obstinately adhered to my own course, for what reason had I for supposing that the object of my search was to be found in that particular direction?" The dwarf nodded in token of assent, and said, placing the end of his wand on his forehead, "Thou grievest me much; during thy passage in this ravine, thou hast borne continually to the right, whereas thou shouldst have turned to the left; return quickly, for thou wilt never be able to find a way out so long as thou continuest in this direction:" before Nasereddin had time to reply, the dwarf had disappeared. The last words were still ringing in his ears when he awoke; he laid some minutes reflecting whether he ought to take the proffered advice. "I have now," thought he, "been proceeding in this direction an entire day, and am perhaps getting near the end of the cavern; from the appearance of the way I should think an

opening cannot be far off; and now should I make a day's journey back again, and then perhaps have another to perform in a contrary direction, I must certainly die of hunger before I can get out of this horrid place. But assuredly these dreams are not of the ordinary kind. The result hitherto has shewn me that I ought to follow the dwarf's advice." After hesitating some time, he came to the resolution of returning; he had only proceeded a few paces, when lo! some kind of fruit fell from above on the ground before him; he could not make out of what kind the fruit was, for falling from a great height it was dashed in a thousand pieces, and the juice ran on the stones. "Ah," sighed he, "how would that fruit have refreshed me, if it had not been broken in this way;" then looking up to see the tree from whence it fell, he was surprised to see another descending; he immediately held up the point of his sabre to catch it, an exercise that he had often practised before, but never with so much interest as on the present occasion; he succeeded, but the fruit fell with such force, that on coming in contact with his sword it was divided in two, but he had broken the fall, and the pieces lay on the ground in an uninjured state. He quickly stooped down, and picking it up, began eating, without stopping to see what it was; he had scarcely finished it, when looking up to the beneficent tree, he saw another coming down in the same way, which he secured as he did the other. Was it an accident that this tree showered down its fruit, or a gift of Heaven? He made up his mind that it must be the latter, and again resumed his pilgrimage through the ravine; he had not proceeded far, when he fancied the way was much easier than when he came the previous day; some particular obstacles that

he recollected, he was continually expecting to re-encounter, but he advanced further and further, still without coming to them. "How is it," said he, to himself, "that I do not come to those obstructions in my course, which cost me so much pain yesterday? Where are the masses of rock lying across the way over which I had to climb, or to creep under?" So imagining that he had only made very little progress he doubled his speed, in order to reach as soon as possible these places; but he still went forward, and the further he went the wider and more even grew the path in which he proceeded; and he now felt convinced, that the whole of the journey he had performed the foregoing day was a long way behind; for the ravine was much wider, and when he looked up, the top was no longer covered by bushes, but he could see the clear sky, and now and then as the path serpented, he could catch a glimpse of the sun's welcome rays; the sides were no longer so steep, and after he had advanced a little further, sloped very considerably, with here and there a patch of grass or some flowers growing, upon the sides of the hills. There was plenty of ripe wild fruit which satisfied both his hunger and thirst; and the soft moss with which the earth was carpeted, invited him to repose.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY the next morning he was aroused by feeling a warm breath coming on his face: on opening his eyes, there stood his horse by his side, who, having found him, was gazing at him to be certain that it was his lost master. He immediately sprung into the saddle, and cantered along the valley between the two hills. The woods were soon left a long way behind, and he came to a broad and beautiful meadow; at the further extremity of which he beheld some object that shone so brightly, that it seemed to vie with the sun in giving light to the earth: the dazzling reflection was too much for his eyes, so that he was obliged frequently to look down on the green earth until he became more accustomed to it. The horse also seemed to be quite dazzled, for he began to stumble and would not go forward. "The ground is quite even here," said he, "there is nothing now to make you stumble! Are you determined so soon again to come to a stand still?" he then applied his spurs, and away he rode over the meadow at a brisk trot, right up to this glittering house; as he drew nearer the light was not so overpowering, and he discovered it to be an immense palace, built of polished steel; the gates were open, and he rode into the spacious courtyard; here he discovered nine doors leading into the palace; he dismounted and proceeded through the middle door. The interior also was of bright steel, and the decorations were all

of a light blue colour, and were beautifully reflected in the highly polished walls and floor. He passed through many similar apartments without meeting with any living being, and saw no where the least signs of the dwellers in this palace. At last he came to a circular hall, the floor of which was covered with a beautiful carpet, and there was a kind of settee, covered with the most costly silks, extending all round close against the wall, whilst from the centre of the dome above, there hung a large garland of leaves, interwoven with the most beautiful fragrant flowers. He found this place so very cool and refreshing, that he sat down to rest a little; he had scarcely done so, when there appeared two slaves, bowing their heads to the ground before him, who gave him by signs to understand, that they had come to attend on him, and only awaited his commands. As he began to find his appetite getting very troublesome, he said, "Since you are so willing to serve me, prove it, by bringing me some substantial provisions to satisfy my hunger, for I have lived long on fruit only, and should now like to taste something a little more nourishing." Scarcely had he finished speaking, when the two slaves disappeared, and then returned immediately with a well furnished table, which they placed before him; he found every luxury, fish, meat, and fowl, and the most delicious fruits; so great was the variety, and so inviting did all look, that he was puzzled on which dish to commence. When he had begun eating, there appeared a number of slaves both male and female, bearing tamborines and other musical instruments, who delighted him with a pantomimic dance. He soon began to feel very comfortable, for the meats were delicious, and he ate of them with unsparing

appetite; altogether the entertainment was of the most agreeable character. Then there came some other slaves bearing tall candlesticks made of polished steel, which they placed round the apartment, in each of which they put a taper, that in burning filled the place with an odoriferous perfume. Then came some others, bearing a capacious golden vessel, containing lukewarm water, who begged of him to allow them to remove his shoes, which he did, and they bathed his feet. After drying them they brought some crystal bottles containing the most fragrant oils, with which they anointed them; then they changed his shoes for others much more costly, and conducted him to a chamber where stood a bed, adorned with silken drapery, hung in the most tasteful manner; they undressed him, and he gladly laid himself down to repose; scarcely had he done so, when he heard the most soothing melody proceeding from an adjoining apartment. Not that he needed such assistance to make him sleep, the luxury of the downy bed on which he lay, after the fatigue and privation he had undergone for some days previous was quite sufficient, and he soon fell into a very sound sleep; thus he continued for some time, until his repose was somewhat disturbed by a dream, in which he fancied himself again lying in the open air, under a tree, and the grey-bearded little man appeared to him, and while as before, he touched his forehead with his wand, he said, "Why hast thou so soon neglected my warning? Go thy way from hence! is this in the midst between the west and the north? Perils beset thee while staying here, therefore, do not hesitate to depart in the morning from this palace;"—he then dreamed further about dark caverns and other disagreeable things, but

he had forgotten all in the morning, except the appearing of the grey-bearded admonisher, which was as fresh on his mind as though he had seen it while awake.

But before he had fully determined what course he should pursue, there appeared some of the slaves, who conducted him by a side door into a pleasant bath room, and placed him in a bath perfumed with most delicious scents ; after he had been there some time, they laid him on a couch, and covering him with warm cloths rubbed him dry and anointed him.

As soon as they had completed this, they brought him new clothing, made of the very finest material, and having arrayed him in it, reconducted him to the round saloon, where he found a sumptuous breakfast prepared. As soon as he had finished eating, he was surprised by the entry of several youths bearing bows and arrows, who seemed inclined to make friends with him, and invited him to join them in a little archery practice ; as a mark to aim at, they put an orange on one of the candlesticks, which they placed at one end of the room, and retiring to the opposite side, shot at it, but they all failed to hit it, so last of all Nasereddin tried his skill, and his arrow pierced the middle of the orange which fell with it to the ground ; they were all astonished at the precision of his aim, and expressed great approbation of his skill. Now they conducted him to the lawn before the palace, bringing with them javelins, and challenged him to this exercise also. They placed an egg on a slender steel column and all tried one after the other to hit it, but without success, until it came to Nasereddin's turn, who knocked it down at the first trial. They now brought small iron shields, about the size of plates, and began throwing the javelins at each other, and ward-

ing them off with these shields; Nasereddin, not having been accustomed to this exercise, threw down the shield, and drawing his sabre, gave them permission to throw at him as fast as they pleased, and they, wishing to try his skill, did not spare him, but threw their javelins at him pell-mell, he easily warded them all off with his sabre, cutting many of them in two. In exercises such as these they spent several hours, and then returned to the palace, where the table was spread with all kinds of luxuries; the repast was attended with the same music and dancing as on the previous day, and the perfumed tapers were lighted up afterwards. The youths, his companions, also joined in the dance, and invited him to do so likewise, and although he was ignorant of their language, as they were of his, they managed to communicate by signs, and their various attempts to make each other understand, created a vast deal of fun and laughter among them. So pleasantly did he pass the time, that the night seemed to have come on much sooner than usual, when he was again conducted to the same sleeping apartment, and waited on by the same attendants as before. He was no sooner asleep than he began to dream, and there stood the same little man again, but this time frowning more than ever, he placed the wand against his forehead, and said, "Foolish young man, bethink thyself of my warning and fly! quit the palace at the dawn of light." But on the following morning, he had scarcely opened his eyes, when the slaves came in and conducted him to the bath, and then into the grand saloon as on the previous day; when there, he was soon almost involuntarily enticed to take part in the amusements of the youths, and they always knew so well how to find something new to engage his attention, that this day like the foregoing,

passed off before he had time to reflect on the warning of his nightly visitor. But he was not allowed to remain in this forgetful state through the following night, for the dwarf came in great anger, and thrusting the point of his wand against his forehead somewhat violently, said, "Unfortunate that thou art, thou willest thine own destruction, and deservest that I should withdraw mine aid from thee! for the last time I warn thee. Leave this palace before the sun rises." Although this dream made a greater impression on him than any of the previous, and he was fully determined to leave the palace immediately, before he got into the society of his new companions, still he was obliged to remain, for the slaves who had attended on him, had taken away his clothes, as was their usual custom, always bringing him new ones as soon as he awoke every morning. This time he called them, and they appeared immediately after his first summons, much surprised to find him so soon awake, they brought him a beautiful new suit of clothes, and conducted him as usual to the bath, and then into the saloon. Notwithstanding that he was a great deal earlier than usual, he found all the young men assembled; they were amusing themselves in the same way with their bows, and invited him to join the sport; he tried to make them understand that he was obliged to leave them, but they not appearing to comprehend him, urged him to shoot off an arrow, which, with a bow, they placed in his hand. "Now," thought he, "I will just shoot this once, and then go, find my horse, and leave this place; he bent the bow, and as he could see no mark to aim at, turned it up to the roof, where he discovered a bright red transparent speck, in the centre of the dome covering this apartment; he intimated to those around him his intention to hit

this red spot, and took a steady aim at it, not noticing the fright that had suddenly seized his companions, and that they stood as though they were paralysed and ghastly pale; keeping his eye steadily fixed on the red speck, he let fly the arrow.

He had aimed well. The red spot disappeared and his arrow passed clean through the dome. But in the same moment there resounded many deafening peals of thunder, which became louder and louder, until he saw the different portions of the dome, first tremble, then separate one from the other, till at length the whole fell in with a tremendous crash, and he fully expected to be buried in the ruins. But all the parts of the building seemed to fall through the earth, and the next moment the entire structure had vanished, and he found himself standing on a large waste covered with bushes and furze; before he had quite recovered from the shock, there stood before him a tall man, with black grizzly hair, and a long dark beard, dressed in a loose brown robe, girded about with a white shining belt, on which were engraved a great number of blood-red hieroglyphical characters, such as ill-shaped birds, deformed men, the distorted limbs of animals, circles, crooked lines, and many other indescribable forms. His countenance was distorted with rage, his eyes flashed fury, and striding towards him with clenched fist, he cried out, "Miserable worm! unthankful hound! Is this the return thou makest me, for all the hospitality I have shewn thee in my palace through the hands of my servants? Knowest thou what thou hast done? Hast thou not, with wanton hand, deprived me of the fruit of many years hope? Thou hast shot away the talisman of the King of Spirits, the rose-coloured diamond, from its place in the dome of my steel palace, and I cannot again

obtain power over it for the space of twenty years, for thus it is decreed by fate—That, for the term of twenty years it shall remain as the key-stone of the dome of my palace, during which period I am to entertain all strangers that shall enter therein, and find amusements for them by means of my genii; and that during this period of twenty long years, none of the guests who may visit the palace, shall in any way interfere with the talisman. On these conditions only can it be made to serve me. I had arrived so near the expiration of the term, when thou hast defeated all my expectations! Thou worthless hound!”

The words and angry mien of the magician terrified Nasereddin exceedingly, yet a gleam of joy passed through his mind, when he thought that he had gained some intelligence of the rose-coloured diamond, and that it was so powerful a talisman of the King of Spirits. “That is doubtless,” said he to himself, “the talisman belonging to my ring!” and when at length the magician, almost choked with anger, ceased speaking, he replied, “With justice have I deprived thee of this talisman, thou shalt not obtain its valuable services—it is mine.”

“What!” cried the magician, “Thou worm! choosest thou to set thyself in opposition to Muhuli-Kauki, who is feared even in the kingdom of the Genii? Well then, let us see what thou canst do? Thou claimest a right to the talisman! good! I will soon settle that.” So saying, he seized Nasereddin by the nape of the neck, in the same way that one would lift a cat, and murmuring three words he ascended from the earth to a great distance, carrying him along through the air. How long they proceeded in this way Nasereddin knew not, for his sight and hearing were quite gone, and he soon became utterly insensible.

When he recovered, he found himself lying on the sea shore, and Muhuli-Kauki standing beside him. "Here I can leave thee to thy fate!" said he, "and thou wilt be quite safe as regards the talisman, for thou wilt find it no easy matter to travel from here to the distant land where I intend to rebuild my palace, and especially with the means that I am about to take, to secure thee." So saying, he picked up a red feather that was lying on the ground before him, and muttered two or three words, then taking a sharp dagger from his girdle, he pricked Nasereddin in the forehead before he was aware of it, and placed the feather in the wound; in the same instant he felt that the feather had taken root, and that he was undergoing a great change; he threw out his arms to strike the magician, and lo! instead of his arms he had got a large pair of wings covered with red and green feathers; he attempted to speak, but instead of his natural voice, his ears were annoyed by a hoarse kind of screech. "So, so," said Muhuli-Kauki sneeringly; "now we shall see how thou wilt be able to contest with me the possession of the talisman. As a parrot on this desolate island shalt thou live and die." With these words he again ascended from the earth, and soon disappeared from the sight of the transformed Nasereddin.

CHAPTER V.

MUHULLI-KAUKI'S threat seemed, according to all appearances, likely to be fulfilled—for days, weeks and months passed on, even a whole year had transpired, and Nasereddin still remained

a parrot flying about the island. Yet he was not like the other parrots, which were very numerous there; for he still retained the human powers of thought, feeling and memory, notwithstanding his outward transformation. At first he entertained the hope of finding some human inhabitants in his new abode, and of getting into their society; he flew to every part of the island seeking them, but found that all his hopes in this respect were vain: he could not accommodate his actions to those of the other birds, for they were irrational creatures, and seemed to regard him with suspicion, as though he did not belong to their species. They avoided him, and sometimes when he forced himself into their company, trying to mix with them unnoticed, they would annoy him, by pecking at him, and persecuting him in divers ways. He remained therefore always alone in one part of the island, by the sea-shore, near a fresh spring, which taking its rise in a neighbouring vale flowed in a little rivulet down to the sea. On the banks of this stream he found everything necessary for his subsistence. At first he kept account of the time, but afterward gave that up intentionally, "for," thought he, "I shall only make my misery appear greater by keeping an account of the number of days and weeks that I suffer." One day when perched on a tree surveying the boundless surface of the sea, he discovered very far away on the verge of the horizon, the white sail of a ship; as he watched it, it drew nearer and nearer, and he began to hesitate whether he should fly to it; "but then," thought he, "the voyagers in the ship will doubtless have been long without any fresh meat, and very probably they would shoot at me on my approach, and it may be my fate to be cooked and devoured like any other ordinary bird." Whilst thus reflecting he observed a

small boat launched from the vessel's side, which was steered directly toward the island. This in a great measure banished his fear, and he felt his heart beat with joy at the prospect of again seeing human beings after such a long privation. There were six sailors and the ship's captain in the boat, they landed at the very point where the aforementioned streamlet flowed into the sea, and having tasted to ascertain if it was fresh water they drank very copious draughts of it. Then the captain ordered the men to fill a cask that they had brought with them in the boat, with the water. While they were busied in so doing, he took a stroll along the banks of the streamlet. Nasereddin could no longer resist the temptation, so he flew and perched on his shoulder. The man, somewhat alarmed, tried to shake him off, but the bird still clung to him, and rubbing his head against his cheek, looked at him so imploringly, that he said, "No, no, I see you are not a bird of prey, therefore I need not apprehend any danger from you; come, my fine fellow!" and he held out his hand for the bird to perch upon it, which he did, and tried by every means to make him understand that he wished to remain with him. While so doing the captain observed the golden ring which remained fast on one of his claws, notwithstanding his transformation. "Oh!" said he, "now I understand why you are tame; I know you have already belonged to some one by the ring you wear on your foot." The bird nodded his head as though he understood what the captain said, "Good! good! you seem to be altogether a very docile bird; if you will go with me I will treat you well." The bird again nodded his head and caressed him. After seeing that they had got sufficient fresh water, he took him with him to the ship, and all the passengers expressed

their great admiration of the beautiful and intelligent bird, and before long an occurrence took place, which attracted the particular attention of his master, and secured him his still warmer affection. On one very fine day, when the sea was quite calm and the ship glided gently over the surface of the water, some women who were passengers had assembled on the upper deck, and were conversing pleasantly together. One of them had a very valuable necklace which she was shewing to the others, stating that it was a present from a beloved sister who was far away, and that she held it in great value ; it was passed round from hand to hand, they praised the brilliancy of the stones, the tasteful way in which they were set, and the very ingenious fastening which it had ; every one found out something beautiful in it, that had been overlooked by the others ; when suddenly the ship's progress was arrested with a violent shock, which overturned everything ; all hastened below deck in the greatest confusion, and crept into their hammocks. The ship had touched upon the sands, and it was only with great labour and difficulty that the crew succeeded in getting her off again. Just as they had done so, the captain was surprised at hearing a great uproar in the ship, the women were all wrangling and quarrelling together. On inquiring the cause of this clamour, he after some difficulty found out, that during the confusion which followed the ship's striking, the necklace had been lost. He assembled all the passengers both male and female on the deck, and desired the owner to state to whom she had shewn it, and also if she could recollect those who were standing by at the time. The woman said she could not for certain say which of the ladies had it in her hand at the time the accident happened, but she was quite sure that all those around

were present, and that it was passed from hand to hand, every one seeming anxious to let the others see it. Then said the captain, "The only way to find out the thief is, that every one be searched; the honour of the innocent demands this, otherwise suspicion will rest on all." As he spake these words the parrot came hastily flying and perched upon his hand, and nodding his head very quickly kept turning it to a part of the vessel where a number of the sailors were conversing together. "Ho, ho!" said the captain, laughingly, "why, my little parrot, do you also want to mix yourself up in this affair? do you mean that you know of some better way of discovering the thief?" The bird nodded his head as in token of assent, and kept looking very cunningly towards the men. "What then, do you know the thief?" said his master; and the bird again nodded his head. "Indeed!" continued the captain, much astonished, "then point him out to me." As soon as he had said this, one of the sailors separated from the others, and was going away in a great hurry, saying that he had some work to do; but the parrot immediately flew up to him and fixing his claws in the nape of his neck kept fast hold of him; the man tried to loosen his hold, but he pecked at his hands with his curved beak so that he was soon glad to take them away. "Hold, fellow!" called out the captain; "you are the thief!" The suddenness of the accusation deprived him of all power of concealment. He confessed, that he had observed one of the ladies in her fright let fall the jewel; that he had picked it up, and as no one was near to accuse him, he had determined on appropriating it to himself, concluding his confession thus: "The only observer was this little bird, which sat perched on the shrouds, directly over the spot where I picked it up; he seemed to watch me

like a human being, and looked at me reproachfully, as though he would say—you are doing wrong.” The man gave up the necklace and was punished for the robbery, but from that hour the parrot was held in great respect by all on board the ship, and those who were disposed to do evil, feared to commit it in his presence, knowing that he disapproved of it, and was capable of accusing the offender. After a long and prosperous voyage the ship arrived at last in the harbour of a large and populous city. The friends and acquaintance of the voyagers came to welcome them home and congratulate them on their safe return. These entertained their friends at home by relating what they had seen and experienced in foreign lands, and among other things mentioned the incident of the necklace, and the sagacious bird, which had discovered the unknown thief. Every one was anxious to see so curious a bird, so it came to pass that the captain’s dwelling was never free from visitors, as all desired to be able to say that they had also seen it. Amongst others came a very aged man, who seemed to examine it with particular attention; after looking at it some time he turned to the captain and said, “Sell me this bird? I will give you a good price for it, for I cannot conceal from you that I am exceedingly pleased with it.” The captain, however, would hear of nothing of the kind, but replied, “I would not part with it for ten pieces of gold, such a docile creature is nowhere to be found in all the earth, and besides I am now so accustomed to its society, that I could not think of parting with it. Now just watch him how knowing he looks with his eyes, as though he understood every word we are saying. Ah! there are many among us who are not so sensible as that bird. What say you, my little parrot, you would

not like to be sold, eh?" The parrot shook his head and looked at him thankfully. "Do you observe," continued the captain, "how sagaciously he looks at me? have you ever seen such expressive eyes in any creature of the kind?"

"Truly," said the old man, "he is doubtless very sagacious, but you will soon be obliged to go to sea again, and then you will be obliged to part with him, and on account of his extreme rarity I will willingly give you the ten pieces of gold." So saying he drew from his bosom a purse and began counting out the money, but the captain called out angrily, "Hold! hold! keep your money! who told you I would take ten pieces of gold? I would not sell him for twenty pieces, if you were to offer me so much. When I go to sea, I will take him with me. Shall it not be so my parrot, we will travel together, eh?" The parrot again nodded assent.

"Indeed, this is very astonishing!" said the man, and he walked thoughtfully away. On the following day he came again, bringing with him some friends who were likewise anxious to have a sight of so remarkable a bird; just as they were about leaving he again approached the captain, and said he had then got twenty pieces of gold; but the other replied, "Pray do not tease me any more about it, I will not sell the bird at all; for if anything should occur to oblige me to part with him, I would much rather present him to some kind friend." "But it may perhaps occur otherwise," continued the man; "your pet may perhaps be stolen from you; or perhaps some one may poison him, for it is very possible that he has made some enemies." "Enemies!" retorted the captain very angrily, "who could be the enemy of such a good and beautiful creature?" "If he had

not been so sagacious," answered the man, "he would not have discovered the unknown robber of the necklace in the ship, and doubtless this thief will have no great liking for him."

The truth of these last remarks made the captain quite speechless. "And then, again," continued the man, "he might leave you of his own accord. Such creatures are not like others, slaves to the will of their owners. Now just ask him, if he would not leave you when any one should promise to reinstate him in the same condition that he was when he received the ring that now hangs on his foot." The captain looked at him and said, "Is it true, would you then forsake me?" And the bird nodded assent. The old man went away laughing, leaving the captain quite out of humour. From this time he became very uneasy, and began to think of the probability that he might lose the bird by some means or other. After reflecting awhile, he said to himself, "If then I must part with him I should like if possible to find him a good master, to whom I would much rather give than sell him." While he was yet thinking what he should do, he was aroused by the appearance of one of the servants from the royal palace of the sultan, who desired him to bring this remarkable bird to the palace immediately, stating that the sultan and his daughter, the Princess Mulibet had heard of it, and were very desirous of seeing a creature so very uncommon. He now made up his mind what he would do with the bird; he took it perched on his hand and went with the servant, but he had scarcely left the house when he was again accosted by the old man. "Well," said he, "have you considered the matter? what say you to one hundred pieces of gold?" "No," said the captain, "the bird

has already an owner ; I now take him to the sultan as a present.”

“Oh, then, that is just as good,” said the old man ; “he is going where I intended to take him :” and without further ceremony he walked by the side of the captain, accompanying him to the palace.

The sultan and the Princess Mulibet were impatiently waiting for the bird. When the captain entered, in walked the old man also, and said, “I here bring the remarkable bird, my lord and king,” at the same time introducing the captain with the parrot. But the captain was quite indignant because he had thus intruded, and replied, “No, my lord and king, it is I who have brought the parrot. This man has tried all his art to induce me to sell it him, but I value it more than gold, therefore I bring it to you as a present, sire.”

“I accept this present,” answered the monarch, “and you shall see that I well know how to value it. Do not make yourself uneasy on account of what the wise instructor of my daughter may have said, for doubtless you have brought me the bird yourself. But it was he who first drew my attention to it, for his penetration has discovered something relating to it, that will astonish you—that is, if he has not been deceived by its outward appearance.”

At these words the grave teacher of the princess went near and examined the bird very closely, then said, “I have not been deceived, my sovereign lord. You shall soon have proof of that.”

Then turning to the princess, he said, “Now is it for thee to shew whether all my instructions in the mystic knowledge have been fruitless.” The Princess Mulibet arose from the cushion on which she was reclining, and drew near. After she had carefully contemplated the bird for some time, she commanded a

fire-pan full of burning coals to be brought, then desired the captain to put the bird on one of the cushions and to place it in the middle of the apartment. When all had been done as she commanded, and they all stood round waiting in great anxiety to see what would occur, she repeated in a kind of singing tone the following lines :—

Appearance oft deceives the eye
And will the best of things belie,
For wicked spirits ready hover
The good with evil veil to cover.
Good spirit, now thy power show,
Their ill designs to overthrow,
And to this work, oh, lend thine aid !
Let truth shine forth and falsehood fade !

After this she knelt down before the bird, and leaning over him, said, “ It grieves me to put you to pain and to shed your blood ; though the smart will be of short duration, and of your blood only one drop shall flow, still this must be so, if I am to be your deliverer ;” with these words she took hold of the parrot’s head with the left hand, and with the right a little red feather that grew somewhat higher than the others in the middle of his forehead, this she plucked out and threw on the burning coals, where it was instantly consumed. The parrot uttered a suppressed scream from the pain, and a drop of blood flowed from his forehead ; this she kissed off with her lips, and the next instant, Nasereddin stood erect before her, clad in the same apparel that the servants of Muhuli-Kauki had arrayed him in, on the last morning he spent at the steel palace.

A cry of joyful surprise burst simultaneously from the lips of the sultan and the captain; as for the old man he stood by, smiling in silent satisfaction. The Princess, however, had not yet risen from her kneeling posture, but blushing deeply, kept her eyes fixed on the ground. Nasereddin bent over her, and while tears of joy and gratitude flowed down his cheeks, he cried out, "Thank you! thank you! noble princess, you have given me more than life; let these tears prove silent witnesses of the gratitude of my heart." He held out his hand to assist her in rising, but she refused by silent gesture to take it. "Come," cried her father, "come to my heart, my beloved Mulibet." With a trembling voice she replied, "I cannot, my father;" at which he looked round in the greatest alarm.

Then the old man stepped forward, and said, "I can unravel all the mystery. It is decreed in the book of fate, that this young prince could only in this way, by the aid of a young lady of noble birth, be delivered from his transformation, as we have seen. But it is further decreed, and we must all attend to fate's decrees, that the drop of blood should be kissed from the prince's forehead, and this kiss that she has given to the stranger is the cause of her blushes and her maiden confusion."

"Is that the cause of it?" inquired the king; and as she bowed her head still lower in reply, he raised her up and said, "Then I will soon put an end to thy embarrassment. Truly it does not seem quite right that my daughter should embrace a stranger. But to her lover and intended husband, she may without blushing grant that favour." He then led her, to her agreeable surprise, and placed her in the arms of Nasereddin. The captain now approached in the most ridiculous embarrassment, and begged

Nasreddin, with many apologies, to excuse the disrespectful way in which he had hitherto conducted himself toward him. "Pardon," said he, "pardon me, noble prince, I should not have behaved so, if I had known of these wondrous circumstances! But I in my simplicity thought you to be only an ordinary bird, and as such I treated you." Nasreddin told him not to make himself uneasy on that account, for he had great reason to be thankful to him as his deliverer; had it not been for his aid he might always have lived as a miserable parrot on the lonely island, and perhaps have never found out the means necessary to restore him to his natural state. The news was soon spread abroad through the city, that the Princess Mulibet was affianced to the stranger, Prince Nasreddin, and three days were set apart for festivity, on which the people were invited to appear in the gardens of the palace, where nothing should be spared for their entertainment, but every arrangement made for sport and merriment.

CHAPTER VI.

IN the first night, as Nasreddin lay again in his human form, on a soft downy bed, after retracing in his mind the many remarkable adventures of the last few days, and congratulating himself on the happy change from his former miserable state, he fell into a sound sleep, and there appeared in his dream the little dwarf again, with his long grey beard, just the same as he

had seen him so often before. The old man touched him on the forehead with his wand, and said to him, "Let not thy good fortune make thee forget the rose-coloured diamond, for without its possession thy prosperity will be but of short duration."

On the following day as he was in the company of the princess and her father, they expressed a wish that he would recount to them the history of his former life, and what adventure had led to his marvellous transformation. He gratified this wish, and related to them how he came to undertake the journey in quest of the rose-coloured diamond, which should occupy the place of the white one in the ring which he wore on his finger, and told them of his dreams, also the one of the preceding night. The Princess Mulibet heard his narrative with great attention, and when he had concluded, she said to him, "I think you have acted very unwisely, my dear prince, in that you did not at the first appearance of the dwarf in your dream attend to his warning, and act according to his directions. And much as it will grieve me to part with you, I advise you by all means to set forth immediately in search of this costly and powerful talisman of the King of Spirits, and to return with it in your power, for I clearly see that your happiness and consequently mine also can have no duration without it."

"But where can I find it?" asked Nasereddin, "shall I again wander out in the world without any mark to which I may direct my steps, leaving it to chance whether I go in the right way or wrong?" The young Princess replied with great earnestness, "There is no such thing as chance in this world, everything is ordained by the will of Heaven, and the genii

serve their dread king, to direct all things according to his bidding, and to make them fulfil his purpose. With regard to the course of your journey, let us consult the old man who has been my instructor in mystic wisdom."

The old man laughed when they asked him, "Ah! well do I know," said he, "where Muhuli-Kauki, has now built his palace, in the dome of which is placed the rose-coloured diamond as the key-stone. 'Tis in Africa in the centre of the land of Ethiopia. And you are in possession of that which gives you a right to the talisman before any other mortal, and will facilitate your obtaining it, I mean the ring in which the gem was fixed by the great King of Spirits. With the stone which is now in the ring, if you can but get to touch the other diamond, and call out,

Let falsehood give way,
And truth have the sway!

the white diamond will instantly spring from its setting and take the place of the rose-coloured one in the dome of the palace, while that also will spring to the place of the white one in the setting of the ring on your hand. By this contrivance the dome will still remain standing, and Muhuli-Kauki will learn late enough, that the talisman has departed. But there is one great difficulty to be overcome, for you must quite unobservedly climb to the centre of the dome, the sides of which are so slippery that the foot of no mortal can ascend it." They sat long trying to plan some means by which it might be possible to arrive at the top of the dome, but the entire day passed over and still they had hit on no contrivance likely to succeed.

As Nasereddin lay meditating in bed, not having yet fallen asleep, he felt something touch his forehead, which had just

the same effect as when the dwarf had touched it with his wand in the dreams. He cast up his eyes, and behold! there stood the same diminutive form in reality, that he had so often beheld as an apparition in his sleep, who spoke to him thus, "So long as thou art willing to trust to me, so far will I help thee, I am the genius whom the King of Spirits has sent to watch over thee and direct thy course. Take the mantle out of this egg and cover thyself with it, and besmear the soles of thy feet with the salve that is in this little box." So saying he gave him a golden egg, and a little silver box; and as Nasereddin examined the egg and could not tell how to open it, "Press it," said the genius; he gave it just a little squeeze with his fingers, and it sprang open immediately; inside he saw a thin little gauze mantle, like the soft skin of a bat. But as he drew it forth it opened wider and wider until it became so large as to cover him completely.

"In this robe of invisibility no man can see thee," said the genius: "now besmear thy feet with the salve contained in the little box, which will enable thee to walk over the surface of the polished steel; for know, this salve was procured from beneath the magnet mountains, and is prepared by the genii of those mountains; it has a power possessed by naught else on earth, which is to make other bodies act in the same way on iron as the loadstone does." Nasereddin opened the box, and rubbed the salve on the soles of his feet. Then resumed the genius, "Thou art now thoroughly equipped. But Muhuli-Kauki's palace is so far off, that it would take thee at least a year to arrive at it; sit on my shoulders and I will carry thee thither." Then thought Nasereddin to himself, "How can I sit on the

shoulders of such a little feeble creature ?” But the genius said somewhat angrily, “I cannot help thee, if thou wilt not trust me !” seeming as though he had understood his inmost thoughts. So Nasereddin without further delay proceeded to mount ; he put one leg over one of the dwarf’s shoulders, and then drew the other leg over the other shoulder, in the same moment he was raised high above the earth, and proceeding through the air with the speed of the wind. When he came to himself, he was standing on the polished dome of the steel palace ; recollecting the advice of the instructor of his betrothed, the Princess Mulibet, he immediately touched the key-stone of the dome with the diamond of his ring, and glad was he to find his hopes fully realized, for he had scarcely touched it and uttered the words, “Falsehood give way ! let truth have the sway !” when he found the rose-coloured diamond in the setting of his ring. “Mount quickly !” said the voice of the genius close at his side. Again he placed his legs across the dwarf’s shoulders, and flew through the air. But how astonished was he, when looking round in the clear light of the moon, to find himself in the place where the dwarf set him down. He stood on a mountain that he had often been on before, and in front lay the well-known country of Candahar. “How is this !” said he, “wherefore hast thou brought me here ? Or am I only dreaming, and the adventures that I have experienced are they only the pictured fancies of a pleasant vision ? Yet no ! thou who hast appeared in all my dreams, standest now in reality before me.”

“Throw off thy mantle,” answered the genius ; “thou art not dreaming, but hast here a duty to perform toward thine uncle ; who has acted the part of a father towards thee. Enter this

cavern, and touch the forehead of the man whom thou wilt find sleeping therein, with the stone in thy ring." At the same moment he struck with his wand upon the mountain, which made a crashing noise like thunder, and then yawned wide as if rent in twain, disclosing the opening to a dark cavern. Nasereddin entered and soon came to a large vault, supported by thick pillars, on which, as well as on the ceiling, were designed all kinds of hieroglyphical figures. The moon shone through the entrance, discovering to him a human figure lying extended on the ground, his head supported on a rough mass of rock, in such a deep and breathless sleep, that he might, on account of the extreme paleness of his aged features, have been easily mistaken for a figure sculptured in stone.

As Nasereddin approached nearer, he recognized in the sleeper the countenance of his foster-father, Abdul-Babur. "O thou dear fosterer of my youth," cried he, "hast thou finished thy course during my long absence, and liest thou here buried in this rocky vault?" Then again he bethought himself, and continued: "Or art thou still alive, and is thy present condition only the work of some wicked magician?" He instantly drew the ring from his hand and touched the old man's forehead with the stone, and remained bending over him, attentively watching, with the ring still between his fingers, when presently he observed the left hand move, and then the old man raised himself, and looking round in the greatest astonishment, said, "Is it possible that I can have slept so soundly?"

Then the genius, who had been waiting at the entrance to the cavern, came forward, and related to him how falsely the Grand Vizier had acted towards him, and how during his possession of



the ring, he had reduced the inhabitants of the city and the whole country to the lowest state of misery and distress.

This relation made Abdul-Babur's heart nearly burst with grief, but the genius consoled him: "All will work for the best," said he, "Nasereddin, your brother's son, is now in possession of the talisman that belonged to his father, which was sacrificed to the craft and wickedness of the magician Muhuli-Kauki, because he thoughtlessly made known the secret of the ring, and did not always wear it on his finger. He lies buried by Mossul, and I conducted his wife and only son to the caravan at Bagdad that they might find thee, their nearest relation. With the talisman of the King of Spirits, thy brother's son will be able to assist thee in regaining the throne of thy kingdom, and in possession of thy ring thou wilt yet reign prosperously for a long period over thy people. Hasten now to Candahar;" with these words the genius disappeared.

The sun was just rising as Abdul-Babur and Nasereddin approached the gates of the city, where they found some men talking together, and lamenting the distress of the times. "Yes," said one to the other, "if Abdul-Babur were but to appear among us now, and see how the Grand Vizier abuses the power entrusted to him, he would soon put an end to our grievances, and restore our prosperity." "I wonder what can have become of him," said the other, "his disappearance is still a mysterious secret." "But his appearance shall openly be made known!" cried Abdul-Babur. "Here is Abdul-Babur, your rightful sovereign—he is come again, not to see and lament your misery, but to dispel it." The men stared at him as though they dared not believe their eyesight—but they soon recognized him, and cried out, "Abdul-Babur is returned! joy to Candahar! joy through-

out the land!" The welcome news spread like lightning through the city. The people assembled in thousands and conducted Abdul-Babur to the royal palace.

Bahadur, the former Grand Vizier, having heard the rejoicings from the interior of the palace, sent his servants out to inquire the cause. These returned, and informed him that the people were shouting and rejoicing, because of a report that Abdul-Babur had returned, accompanied with an unknown Prince, and that they were rapidly approaching the palace. On hearing this, he was seized with great fear, but he pretended to be quite indifferent about the matter. "Abdul-Babur returned!" said he; "who do you think will believe such an idle report? It is probably some impostor, who, somewhat resembling him, is trying to make use of this circumstance as a means of obtaining the throne." He then sent for the officers of his guards, and commanded every entrance to the palace to be well guarded, and all the doors to be barricaded with whatever implements they could at the moment collect together. His commands were obeyed in every particular. But the captain of the guard came before him soon after, saying, that the unknown Prince had sent him to state, that it was not necessary to come to open war, in order to prove the right of Abdul-Babur. "He challenges you to single combat," said the captain, "and if you should be the conqueror the government shall remain in your hands, and Abdul-Babur, with all his adherents, will retire from the city without further contention, but should he overcome you, Abdul-Babur will take possession of the throne as formerly."

"What need is there of this?" replied he, much excited, "the throne is mine, and wherefore should I go forth to fight for what is already mine own?" But when the captain told him that all

the people had gone over to the side of the unknown Prince, and reminded him that the handful of men composing the guard would not be strong enough to make long resistance, he determined to risk the fight, feeling confident in the protective power of his ring.

The place appointed for the combat was chosen, and the eager crowd forming a large circle, stood anxiously awaiting the result. Bahadur soon came forth from the palace, clad in bright armour and mounted on a fiery charger. He waved his sword over his head, and cried out, "Where is the adventurer who dares to challenge me to combat? Let him come forward, that I may shew him who is the rightful possessor of the throne of Candahar." Nasereddin instantly entered the ring, and advancing directly in front of him, said, "Hast thou then entirely forgotten Nasereddin, the son of thy sovereign's brother? Prithee advance then, that I may refresh thy memory." "But you have neither arms nor horse," replied Bahadur. "I require neither," answered Nasereddin. Without waiting for more words, Bahadur brandished his sabre and aimed a blow at his opponent's head that must have proved fatal, had not Nasereddin with almost incredible activity, stooped down and allowed the horse to bound directly over him; then making a tremendous spring, he leaped upon the horse's back behind Bahadur, and clutching his arms tightly round his body made him bellow out with pain. The people gave a loud shout of joy. Then Nasereddin raising his antagonist in his arms like a child, hurled him with great violence over the horse's head, the horse reared, and galloping furiously forward, planted one of his hoofs on Bahadur's chest, and left him stretched a lifeless corse on the ground.

Abdul-Babur now came forward, and taking the ring containing the ruby from the finger of the dead man, placed it upon his own : and then resounded from the assembled crowds loud and long continued shouts, "Hail ! Abdul-Babur ! Hail ! to the father and deliverer of his people !"

Zaleika, the forlorn daughter of Abdul-Babur, was instantly released from her imprisonment, and Abdul-Babur ordered all the provisions that the palace contained to be brought forth, and to be given to the people. This was the first day of festival that had occurred in Candahar for a long, long period.

Nasereddin's protecting Genius conducted him back to the city where he had left his affianced, the Princess Mulibet ; he found her in great grief, bewailing his sudden and mysterious departure.

Her studies in necromancy were all neglected, and the investigations of her learned instructor were no longer regarded, because they gave no information concerning, and had no power over the wearer of the talisman of the King of Spirits.

After a few days his marriage with the Princess was celebrated ; the sultan soon after resigned his throne, and delivered the government of his kingdom into his son-in-law's hands.

The two rings uniting their power, Nasereddin soon raised his kingdom to a state of greater splendour and prosperity than it had ever known before ; and the state of Candahar flourished anew, under the government of its lawful sovereign Abdul-Babur.

THE END.

THE STORY OF HASCHEM.

CHAP. I. — THE LOST SON.

MORE than a thousand years ago, there dwelt in the renowned city of Bagdad, a man named Naïma, who, although considerably advanced in years, still retained in full vigour the use of all his faculties, both mental and bodily. Having devoted the activity of his younger years to the pursuit of business, in the course of which he had occasion to travel much in foreign lands, he had not only obtained great experience, but had also managed to accumulate a considerable fortune. His property was not sufficient to allow him to live extravagantly; yet it was enough to provide him with all necessary comforts for the rest of his days.

In the early part of his life, Naïma had lived in the city of Mossul; but he was induced to remove to Bagdad, partly in compliance with the wishes of a friend, to whom he had been much attached from the days of childhood, but principally on account of his anxiety for the education and advancement of his only son. He thought that the youth would derive great benefit from residing in this city, which was then under the government of the far-famed Caliph Harun al Raschid, and was visited by

strangers from all parts of the earth, — the cleverest artists and most learned men of the land.

In this expectation he was in no way mistaken. Haschem, his son, was a young man possessing, in addition to very extraordinary talents, a good heart and an amiable disposition. He took every opportunity in his power to advance himself in learning, and to improve his mind. In bodily exercises also, he was very skilful, and altogether he approached as near perfection as it is possible for a human being to arrive. It was therefore natural that he should become the joy and pride of his father, and be beloved and admired by all who knew him. He was often held up to children by their parents as an example, well worthy their imitation. In the same degree that the father considered such a son as the greatest treasure he could possess on earth, so was the son equally attached to his parent; and this reciprocal love added to the great friendship of Saad, and enabled them to pass many years in uninterrupted prosperity and happiness.

It happened one evening that they walked out together, as was frequently their custom, into the gardens which surrounded the walls of the city. It had been a very warm summer's day; but a shower, which had fallen in the after part, rendered the air cool and agreeable; and, being warmly engaged in conversation, they were induced to wander much farther than usual. The last of the gardens was some distance behind; and they strolled on over a wide meadow, until they came to the foot of a woody hill, where grew some tall palm-trees, whose shade invited them to lie down and rest awhile. They did so, near a murmuring streamlet which flowed from one of the neighbouring rocks, still continuing their conversation with great warmth.

The subject on which they were arguing was the danger to which even the most virtuous men are exposed ; and how easily, through the predominance of some one passion, they may be misled, when they are too self-confident in their virtue. " I have known people," said Saad, " possessing the best and noblest characters that I have ever met with in the course of my life, who, through too much self-confidence, have been led to the commission of an action which they might otherwise have easily avoided, but which has proved to be the first link in a long chain of crime and vice, that in the end has dragged them to the ground ! "

Naima maintained, on the other side, that the heart which is from earliest childhood accustomed to be actuated by virtuous principles, will not easily be led astray ; and, even suppose it should, that it will soon see the folly of its course, and immediately return to the right path.

They argued long in this manner ; each endeavouring to substantiate his opinion, by bringing forward examples that had come within his own experience. Haschem, who had been lying at their feet listening with great attention to their conversation, sprang up all at once, and ran as fast as his legs could carry him up into the wood close by. His father and Saad looked after him in great astonishment, — for they could not imagine what had induced him to start off in this manner, — when they observed that he was trying with all his endeavours to catch a snow-white little bird which was flying before him. He soon ran out of their sight, behind the shrubs which grew very thickly. They called him, and entreated him to return, but all to no purpose. They waited a quarter of an hour, and then another ; but still Haschem did not come back. At length, being somewhat anxious for his

safety, they walked to the place where he had disappeared; but they could discover no signs of him. They called out his name, until the wood resounded with it. The echo answered them; but Haschem came not. It was now growing late, the sun had set, and Saad proposed that they should return home: "For," said he, "your son is old enough to find his way; and it is likely that he will already have reached home by another path." But it was some time before the father could make up his mind to return without his son, who was his constant companion, and the object of his unremitting anxiety.

When they had returned to the city, his friend accompanied Naïma to his house. They entered hastily, and inquired after Haschem; but he had not come home. Saad's consolation was no longer of any avail: Naïma would not listen to him, but, throwing himself on his bed, burst into tears. Saad reproved his weakness, and represented to him that the affair might still be of very trifling importance; suggesting to him, that the youth, in his eager pursuit of the bird, might have gone too far, and not been able to find his way back. "And doubtless," said he, "he will have found some place to lodge in until to-morrow morning, when he will return early, and laugh heartily at your unmanly conduct."

As soon as Saad had gone, Naïma gave way to the gloomiest fears, and his grief knew no bounds. He cried bitterly, tore his beard, and rolled on the floor, like a man reduced to the greatest despondency. Some of the servants and slaves, quite unaccustomed to such a display of extreme passion on the part of their master, stood by in speechless astonishment; while others ineffectually tried to console him.

After a sleepless night, the afflicted father was in no degree less anxious. He would have sent out messengers to search in every direction, as soon as morning dawned; but his friend Saad, who had come early to inquire whether he had received any intelligence of the wanderer, represented it as foolish to send out so soon. "For," said he, "consider that in all probability your son has found out some place to rest, and has doubtless passed a much more comfortable night than yourself. If he had risen at the earliest dawn, and started to return, he could not have yet got home. If you send these messengers out now, perhaps he may return in a short time, and their search for him will answer no purpose. Just wait till mid-day."

Naïma acceded to his friend's proposal, and gave the messengers instructions to start out at noon. But he could not rest: so he went out himself, and proceeded through the gardens, in the same direction as on the previous evening. His friend accompanied him, although unwillingly; for he still insisted on the great likelihood of Haschem's return, while they were seeking him; — telling Naïma that he might by this means make his suffering of longer duration than was necessary, and have to blame himself for having protracted his own misery.

"I have hitherto given way to you in every thing," replied Naïma: "pray, do now let me have a little of my own will, that I may go and seek him." — They walked on, till they came to the brook running by the tall palm-trees. Then they climbed the woody hill, and called out the name of the lost one in every direction; but he neither made any reply, nor came to their call. At noon they again returned home, inquiring of all they met on their way if they had seen the youth, — describing his

person minutely to each ; but no one could give any intelligence of him.

Naïma, immediately on arriving, despatched his messengers in every direction, promising each a considerable reward ; but to him who should bring his lost son to his arms, a tenfold reward. They all started out in good spirits, for each hoped to be able to earn the tenfold prize ; but in this they were all doomed to be disappointed. Naïma waited their arrival in the evening with great anxiety ; but not one of them appeared. On the following day, some of them returned. They had made a good day's journey in the direction pointed out to them, searching diligently as they went, and inquiring of every person they met ; but nowhere could they obtain any intelligence of the lost son. Then came the others, — one after another ; but all their endeavours had been alike fruitless.

Almost every vestige of hope was now banished from the mind of Naïma. Yet still one of the messengers had not returned ; and, although it seemed quite unreasonable to suppose that he would remain so long away if he had succeeded, still the father's hope grasped at this last chance, as a drowning man does at a straw. But when, on the tenth day, the man returned home, and told him that all his endeavours had been quite useless, Naïma's grief knew no bounds. His good friend was always at his side, endeavouring to console him, and tried with him to find out some way of accounting for the boy's absence. Had he been murdered, or had he died by any other means, they would surely have found his body somewhere. It was absurd to suppose, that he would conceal himself intentionally ; for he could have no reason for doing so. He could not be detained in prison by an enemy ;

for he had none. He might possibly, in his eager pursuit of the white bird, have approached too near the banks of the river, and have fallen in, and been carried down by the stream.

No sooner did the possibility of such an accident present itself to the mind of the father, than he ordered two of his servants to go and search diligently on both banks of the river. They followed its course, till they came to the part where it joins the Euphrates, and then still further to where the Chat el Arab flows into the sea. But, after a long and tiresome search, they returned, without finding any traces of him they sought for.

Naima and his friend now considered Haschem as lost for ever; and the father's manly heart was completely broken. Grief for his lost son soon altered his appearance, and he became suddenly a grey old man. All joy had departed from his mind; and the only consolation he had in his great grief was when, of an evening, his good friend Saad would sit by his side, and talk of the virtues that he had observed in the lost son; and how he had conceived the hope, that the youth might have some day become his son-in-law, and the husband of his lovely daughter Zoraïne.

CHAP. II. — THE KIND-HEARTED RULER.

IN those days, the good Caliph al Raschid made a practice of visiting the streets of Bagdad by night. He usually went in disguise, accompanied by his grand vizier Giafar, and Mesrur his lord chamberlain, in order that he might see with his own eyes, and hear with his own ears, whether his people were happy and contented. Late one night, as he was passing through a certain street, he could not but remark the great stillness that seemed to pervade every dwelling. Proceeding onward, he observed two men standing at the door of one of the houses, speaking in a very low whisper. The caliph, addressing them, said, — “Why do you whisper together as if you were planning some crime? — and, tell me, why does this dismal stillness pervade the street, as though its inhabitants were all dead?”

“Do not you know,” answered one of the men, “that in the next house lives the unfortunate Naïma; and that this is the hour which his friend Saad usually spends with him, trying to console him in his affliction? All the neighbours entertain feelings of the greatest respect for this man, and cautiously avoid any thing approaching to merriment, for fear of torturing his mind with the recollection that those who live around him are so much happier than he can be.” — Without allowing the caliph time to make more inquiries, he entered the house, followed by his friend.

“Have you ever heard anything of this unfortunate Naïma?” demanded Harun al Raschid of the grand vizier. Giafar ex-

pressed his entire ignorance of the name. — “Let us stand in the doorway of the next house,” said the former; “and perhaps by this means we may be able to find out the cause of his grief.” They accordingly did so; and, observing a chink in the door through which the light shone, the caliph peeped in, and, after attentively watching for some time, turned to his companion, and said, — “I can see two grey-headed old men sitting together by a lamp, in a well-arranged apartment; and truly the one seems to be anxiously striving to administer consolation to the other, who is quite overburdened with grief. Both appear to be in about the same station in life; and I feel really very anxious to discover what can be the affliction that causes poor Naïma so much sorrow. Order him to appear before me at the palace early in the morning. Perhaps it may be in my power in some measure to relieve him.”

Early on the following day, the grand vizier obeyed the orders of the caliph; and much surprised was Naïma, on receiving a summons from such high authority to appear at the royal palace. On his arrival there, he was conducted into the grand saloon in which the divan generally assembled; but on this occasion he found himself, when the servants had retired, left quite alone. He passed in review before his mind all the history of his previous life, but could not recollect any act which he had committed that might have caused the just caliph to be displeased with him; for well he knew, that al Raschid had some unaccountable way of discovering the most secret offences of his subjects, and of bringing them to justice; but he could remember nothing that he had done, during the whole course of his life, of which he had need to be ashamed, much less aught deserving punishment. While

Naïma was still wrapt in these meditations, a curtain was drawn aside, and the caliph entered, followed by the grand vizier and the lord chamberlain. Naïma instantly prostrated himself, bowing until his forehead touched the carpet on which the caliph stood.

“Naïma,” said the caliph, addressing him, “you appear to be in great grief; and, from the great respect which your neighbours evince towards you, I am led to suppose that you are a man deserving of greater happiness in your old age. I should much like to know the cause of your sufferings: can you explain it in the presence of these two witnesses, or would you prefer to tell me alone the source of your tears?”

“Ruler of the faithful!” answered Naïma, “my grief is truly a heavy burden on my soul; yet is the cause too insignificant, that the great and mighty caliph should on its account for one moment withdraw his attention from the important cares of his kingdom.”

But Harun al Raschid replied, — “Whatever can so afflict the heart, and be the reason of so much distress to even the meanest of my subjects, — that is certainly not too unimportant to require my attention. For, in watching over the interests of the kingdom at large, my care must necessarily be directed to individual cases; for they are but the separate members which compose the grand whole; and therefore any attention that I may give to your misfortunes cannot be ill bestowed. But, pray, tell me, what is the cause of your grief and tears?”

Then Naïma narrated to him the circumstances of his son's unaccountable disappearance, — how that he had caused search to be made for him in every direction, and how every endeavour

had proved unsuccessful. "I must therefore," said he in conclusion, "mourn for him as one that is dead. The certainty of this would doubtless greatly tend to lighten my grief, and restore my mind to tranquillity; but occasional gleams of hope light up my soul, and suggest the possibility of his being yet in existence. But where lives he? and what may he be enduring? — these are the thoughts that rend open anew the closing wound in a father's heart."

"Truly you have great cause for sorrow," replied the caliph; "and I can well understand, that this dread uncertainty must be much more painful to you than even the certain knowledge of his death. But you have done wrong in not making me earlier acquainted with your misfortune. Not only have I dominion over all the faithful, but in distant lands have I kings and rulers, who are my servants. Their eyes see for me, — their ears hear for me, and their hands are ever ready to act for me, when occasion may require. What to you and your friend, assisted by your small number of attendants, may have been impossible to discover, may still be found out by me. Go home, and rest assured that you shall soon have intelligence of your son; that is, if he be still on earth, and living in any of the territories over which my power extends."

With these words the caliph quitted him, having first obtained from him some sign by which his lost son might with certainty be known.

In the evening, Naïma told his friend Saad of the gracious and encouraging promises that the caliph had made him. Saad, however, fearing that his friend might be too much elevated, and rely too much on the hope of again finding his long-lost son, thought

it his duty to damp in some measure his expectations. He said to him, — “Dear friend, I once heard a proverb, the truthfulness of which made a great impression on my mind. It was this: ‘Trust not too much in princes, for they are men.’ These few words contain an apt reference to the boundaries with which Fate has surrounded even the mightiest on the earth. However wide may be the field over which their power extends, still it has its limits; and every span of the ground belongs to that Almighty Being at whose will we must all bow, from the most servile slave to the most mighty ruler.”

On the same day, the caliph despatched messengers throughout his own dominions, and sent to his ambassadors in the neighbouring kingdoms, and even to the most distant lands, wherever he was on friendly terms with the rulers, — strictly charging them to search diligently, with all possible speed, and to make it known immediately if they should find Haschem, or obtain any intelligence that would be likely to lead to his discovery. But week after week went by, then month after month, even a whole year passed over, and there came no news of the lost one, whether living or dead, from any quarter. Thus all hope of again finding him was entirely banished.

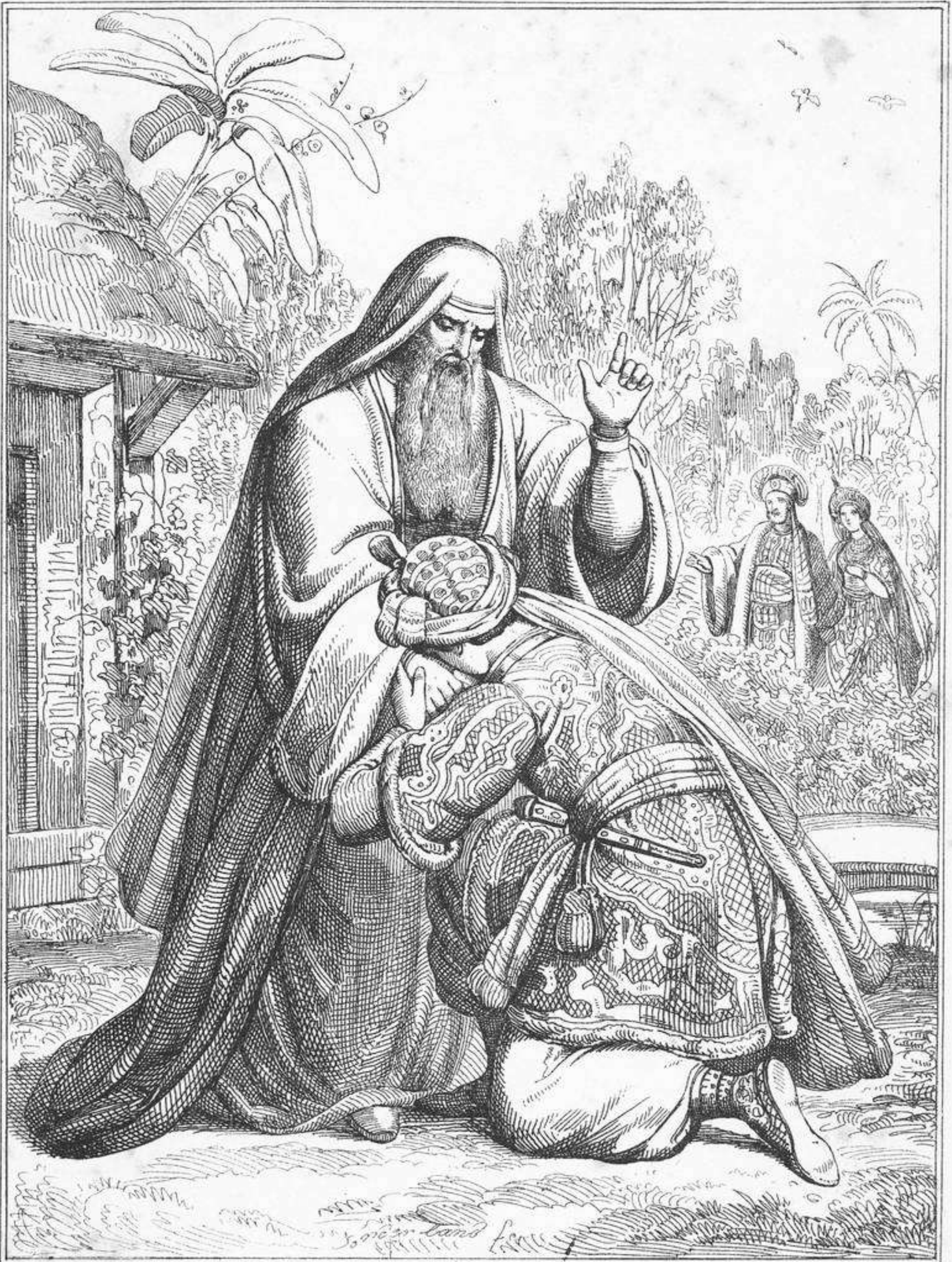
CHAP. III. — THE PRISONER.

HASCHEM, however, was still alive, but in such concealment that it was utterly impossible to discover the place of his abode. He had on that fatal evening continued in pursuit of the white bird, without really knowing in his own mind wherefore he sought it. He had a desire to become possessed of so rare and beautiful a creature; and, as it did not fly very high nor swiftly, he imagined that he might easily be able to catch it. The slowness of its flight led him to suppose, that it must have injured its wings. Often did he spring forward, and reach out his hand, so as almost to touch it; but the bird, on every such occasion, flapped its wings a little quicker, and was soon some distance in advance. Haschem fancied it must certainly get wearied, and become unable to fly further; and with this hope he exerted himself, and ran faster. But the bird seemed tired, only while he was a little in the rear; and, every time he approached near, it flew quicker, and soon again escaped his grasp.

Proceeding in this way, he reached the summit of the hill, and descended to the vale on the other side, through which he continued the pursuit, running with all his might. The dusk of eventide came on; yet still could he see the snow-white wings of the little bird fluttering before him in the twilight. At length the creature perched upon a little bush. Haschem hastened up: but, when he would have seized it, again it escaped him; leaving only one of the white feathers of its wings, which he held tightly grasped in his hand.

Night was now coming on; still he would not give up, but continued his pace with greater speed than before. The bird seemed to fly much quicker; but, having pursued it so long, and been once so near catching it, Haschem's desire to obtain it was greater than ever. Tearing on through the high grass, and straining his eyes towards the object of his pursuit, he could no longer see the ground over which he was proceeding. Suddenly his foot came in contact with a little embankment which crossed his path, and he was instantly precipitated into the mud at the bottom of a deep ditch beyond: his head soon sank, and he became quite senseless.

When he awoke to consciousness, he found himself lying on the grass, and a stern-looking grey old man, dressed in a long black robe, standing by his side. On his head, instead of a turban, he wore a high pointed cap, on the top of which was a tassel that shone as though it were made of fire. "Has life returned to you?" said he: "you deserve to have perished in the mire. But come, we have a long journey to perform before the day dawns." So saying, the old man took Haschem under his left arm, and mounted with him in the air as swift as an arrow. Haschem immediately returned to a state of unconsciousness. How long he travelled in this way, he knew not; but, when at length he awoke as from a deep sleep, the first thing that caught his eye was a beautiful cage made of wires of gold, suspended from a ceiling by a long chain of the same material. Inside sat the pretty white bird which he had followed so eagerly. On looking round, he found himself quite alone with this little bird in a large room, the ceiling of which was of white marble, and the walls of brightly polished stone, of a pale green colour;



the windows were covered with beautiful lattice-work, so closely entwined as not to leave an opening through which the little bird could have escaped, even if it had not been secured in the cage. Against one of the walls stood a large crystal urn, from which flowed a clear stream of water falling into a capacious basin, and then sinking in some way underneath, so that it did not overflow. He sat for some time observing all these things, and thinking over the adventure that had brought him there, when, suddenly, a large curtain, which hung before the entrance to the apartment, was drawn aside, and the old man in the black robe came in, bearing in his hand a little golden box. Addressing Haschem, he said, — “ You wanted to catch the white bird? Now, there you have it in the cage: in this little box you will find food for it, and there is plenty of water. Give great attention to it, and, above all things, do not let it out of the cage.” So saying, he instantly disappeared again.

Haschem at length arose, and began to look about him. He found, on looking through the windows, that he was in quite a strange land. The mountains, and even the trees, were of a form different from any he had previously beheld. The room appeared to be a great height from the ground; for he could make out, that it was the upper story of a very lofty tower. He drew aside the curtain which covered the entrance; but all he discovered was a strong metal door, which resisted his strongest endeavours to open it. He now became very low-spirited and unhappy; for he was suffering greatly from hunger, and had as yet discovered no means of obtaining food. He tried the walls all round to see if possibly he might discover any secret doorway; then endeavoured to open the strong wire-work before the window, so that

he might put his head out, and call for help to any of the passers-by, — but all was of no avail. No outlet could be found: the fence before the windows resisted his strength, although he strained with all his might; and, as far as his eye could reach, there was not a soul to be seen that he could call to his aid.

In a state of despair, he threw himself on a couch, and, wringing his hands, cried out, — “So, then, I am a prisoner, and in a prison surrounded with riches and splendour. Of what benefit is it to me, that these walls are made of precious stones? — that these bars, which confine me, are of gold? Imprisonment is still the same, whether the bars that secure it be of gold or of iron.” And when, in the course of a short time, his sufferings from hunger became more painful, he cried out bitterly, — “How much rather would I be confined in the most miserable dungeon, and eat the common food that is given to prisoners, than remain here in this splendid room, and die of starvation!” — Again he went to the window, and screamed aloud for food; but no one came at his call: no voice answered him.

After all these useless exertions, he threw himself again on the sofa. His eye, wandering round the room, happened accidentally to light on the cage suspended in the centre, when he observed that the little bird in its prison was likewise fluttering about in a very agitated state, and continually going to the empty trough, pecking in vain for food. “Poor brother-sufferer!” cried Haschem, “you shall not longer want; for you are provided for: come, I will give you some food.” He then reached the little trough and the little glass, attached to the cage; and filled the one with the seed from the little gold box which the grey old man had brought him: the latter he replenished from the

fountain. He had scarcely replaced them in the cage, when, on turning round, he was agreeably surprised to find behind him a table covered with the richest delicacies. He was too much astonished at first to eat; for he could not imagine how it had come there: but his gnawing appetite would not allow him to question long, — and he therefore attacked the dishes with a vigour only known to those who have fasted long. Although the food was different from that which he was accustomed to in his father's house, he found no fault, but ate till he was satisfied; and, taking the golden goblet which stood on the table, he drank of the water of the crystal fountain.

Having thoroughly satisfied himself, he lay down, and fell sound asleep. On awaking, he felt quite refreshed and well: so he arose to inspect still further his solitary abode. He found that the table and all the dishes had entirely disappeared. At this he was not well pleased; for he had intended to make a supper off the remains of his former repast. But he did not distress himself much about it; for he felt assured, that he was not destined to be starved to death.

He had now plenty of leisure to examine more minutely the nature of his dwelling. He inspected it carefully in every part; yet neither in the ceiling, walls, nor flooring, could he find the least crevice or opening: all was even and secure. Again he went to the window; but there, as before, he saw nothing that could give him the least hope. He could only discover that he was at a great height from the ground, and that the building stood on an extensive and dreary plain, bounded in the distance by very lofty mountains with pointed summits. Having carefully examined all around him, and finding nothing

from which he could obtain the faintest gleam of hope, he again turned his attention to the little bird still fluttering about in the cage. Presently it remained very quiet on one of the perches, and fixed its beautiful eyes on Haschem, who could not but gaze at it in return; for those eyes seemed possessed of both speech and feeling, — only he could not understand them.

The darkness of night put an end to this intercourse. On the following morning, he found that the bird wanted food again: so he replenished both the little trough and the water glass in the cage. He had scarcely finished the operation, when, behold! the same well-covered table appeared in the same place as before. This day passed away like the former; and so did several more in the same dull uniformity. The only change that Haschem could obtain from the overwhelming grief which absorbed all his thoughts was when the little bird, having emptied the trough in its cage, fluttered about, and attracted his attention. Haschem, always understanding what it required, immediately gave it a fresh supply; and, as often as he did so, he found at his side the well-furnished table.

On the ninth day of his imprisonment, Haschem was aroused by the sudden appearance of the old man, who, regarding him sternly, said, — “This is the day on which you are allowed to take air and exercise. You have hitherto fulfilled your duty, in providing for the wants of the little bird: you are therefore permitted to spend this day in the garden.” — So saying, he conducted him through the doorway into a long, dark, narrow passage, at the end of which they descended twenty steps. Here their progress was interrupted by a small trap-door, which, however, opened of its own accord; and Haschem counted again

twenty steps. Here was another similar door, which conducted to twenty more steps; and so they continued descending, until they had passed nine of these trap-doors, the last of which opened into the garden. "Here you will remain until you are recalled," said the old man; and he re-entered the building by the same door, which immediately closed after him.

Haschem, being very curious to know the nature of the building in which he had been imprisoned, was glad to have an opportunity of examining it externally. He found it to be an immense castle, consisting of nine stories, each about fifteen feet in height. It had nine corners and nine sides. On each floor were three windows, so arranged that there was one on every third side, but not on the same side all the way up; for each wall had three windows, and throughout the building there appeared the greatest regularity of design. The walls were built of large blocks of a bright yellow stone, highly polished; so nicely joined together, that the building appeared as though it consisted of one mass; and it was only upon a very near inspection, that the joinings could be discovered. The bars before the windows were all of fine gold, and the door by which they had quitted the building was of beautiful green bronze, curiously wrought.

There was nothing in all this splendour that tended in any degree to gladden Haschem's heart; for it showed him how difficult it would be for any one to deliver him from such a prison. But a new hope suddenly rose in his mind; for, thought he, "I am now no longer confined in this prison, but here free in the garden; and, as I can jump and climb as well as a monkey, I shall soon find some way of escape." Accordingly he turned from the

castle, and ranged through the garden, in order to find some way of carrying this intention into effect; but he soon discovered that all his expectations were vain. He quickly reached the boundaries which enclosed the garden, and found it surrounded on all sides by tall polished steel railings, arranged so closely together, that it was with difficulty he could thrust his arm between them. He tried to climb over them: but they were so slippery, that he could not obtain any hold; and, after two or three useless endeavours, he fell with violence on the ground. This served to convince him, that any further attempt to escape would be useless; and the gleam of hope which had arisen in his mind faded away, leaving him in a more forlorn condition than before. In vain he sought to find some opening or doorway; for the high railings were thickly set around him on all sides, and were all equally bright.

Haschem now entirely lost his courage, and wandered about the garden in the greatest sadness. As the day advanced, the heat became oppressive: so he sought out a shady place, and, lying down on a mossy bank, gave vent to his grief. He wept aloud when he remembered his poor father, who, he knew, would be mourning his loss; and then he thought of all his friends at home, till, weary and overpowered by the heat, he sunk into a sound sleep.

When he awoke, the well-provided table again stood by his side. So he arose and ate; and, being somewhat refreshed, he once more thought of the possibility of escape. Among other plans, he conceived the idea of cutting pieces from the branches of the trees, and forming a ladder between the rails; but, when he would have commenced the undertaking, he found that he

wanted the necessary means ; for he had no knife or sharp instrument wherewith to cut the branches : but he was soon aroused from all his schemes by the gruff voice of the old man, saying, — “Night approaches : follow me.” Haschem followed, and was conducted again to the uppermost room ; and the old man closed the door fast as before.

There was no change, worthy of notice, in his apartment, excepting that the poor little bird seemed very sad and weary, sitting dismally on the lowest perch in the cage. Its feathers were all ruffled, and its eyes looked melancholy. “Poor little thing !” said Haschem, “what do you want ? Are you ill ?” — He fancied that the bird seemed to understand him, and appeared for a moment consoled by his kind inquiries ; yet it soon sank into its former melancholy.

Day after day passed on in just the same way ; Haschem’s sole occupation being the little attentions that the poor bird, his fellow-prisoner, required, — and then taking his own food. But by far the greater portion of his time was spent in vainly watching at the windows for some one to come, and deliver him. He was conducted to the garden in the morning of every ninth day, and allowed to remain there until evening. So welcome was any change of scene, that Haschem always looked forward to the ninth day as a grand holiday.

In this way passed several months, without any sign of change. Haschem had often questioned the old man as to the cause of his imprisonment, and inquired how long it was likely to last ; but the only answer that he could obtain was — “Every man has some peculiar destiny : this is yours.”

CHAP. IV. — THE RELEASE.

ONE day, when the old man had as usual conducted Haschem to the garden, he appeared again, about a quarter of an hour after, in a very agitated state, and ordered him back to his apartment. When the old man left the room, Haschem could not but remark the unusually angry expression of his face. The little bird, to which Haschem had now become much attached, sat at the bottom of the cage, and seemed more mournful than ever he had seen it. He approached it; and, after watching the bird some time, he observed a little door that so exactly corresponded with the rest of the wire-work, that it had hitherto escaped his notice; and indeed the most scrutinising examination would not have detected it, had not his eye by chance fallen on it. On observing the door more closely, he discovered a tiny bolt, that slid into a very minute ring, which served as a fastening. Haschem instantly pulled back the bolt, and opened the door. While he was doing this, the bird seemed to become much more lively; and, as soon as the cage was opened, flew out, and, descending to the floor of the room, was instantly transformed into a beautiful young lady, clad in a white flowing robe. Her long black hair hung in graceful ringlets over her shoulders, from beneath a thin white veil, fastened by a beautiful diadem, set with most precious stones. Her skin was white as snow, saving the most delicate rose-tint which bedecked her cheeks.

Haschem, quite overcome with astonishment, gazed at her for some moments. At length, recovering his speech, he said, — “ I

adjure you, by the beard of the Prophet, to tell me whether you be a human being or a fairy spirit."

"I am a feeble girl," said she, "and entreat you to deliver me from the power of this cruel enchanter. I can well reward you for so doing; for know I am the only daughter of Radga Singa, the King of Selandiv; and this wicked enchanter has ensnared me away from my father's palace, and keeps me imprisoned in this cage. He has an ugly son, hateful as night, whose wife he wants to force me to become. Every ninth day, he brings this horrible creature to me, praises all his excellent qualities, and urges me to accept him; threatening me with all kinds of torture, if I consent not by the next new moon. By that time I shall have been a whole year in this wretched place; and, after that period, he tells me he will wait no longer, nor waste any more good words upon me. I entreat you to help me." — With these words she burst into a flood of tears.

"Noble young lady," replied Haschem, "how gladly would I aid you! but, alas! I am only a poor helpless man, quite unable to deliver myself from the power of this tyrant. Did I not understand you to say, that the enchanter always brings his hateful son when he visits you? I wonder that I have never seen this monster."

"Because," answered the princess, "he always takes care to send you away when he brings him."

"Still," continued Haschem, "if he comes with him, he must pass me in the narrow passage; and that is not possible without my observing him."

"Ah! but it is though," replied she; "for he always carries his son in his pocket."

“In his pocket!” cried Haschem, astonished. Why, how can that be?

Then the princess related to him how that the young man was, on such occasions, transformed (like herself) into a small white bird, and that the enchanter placed him in the cage beside her. She, feeling a most inveterate dislike for his company, fluttered about her cage in order to avoid his approach; while he continually pursued her, tormenting her with protestations of love and affection. “Oh!” said she, “I am sure you must always have noticed, when you returned on the ninth day, how weary and exhausted I was.”

Haschem expressed his great astonishment at what she had narrated; and again assured her, that were it in his power he would gladly render her some assistance, at the same time lamenting his own utterly helpless condition. The princess thanked him; at the same time intimating, that she did not think his endeavours would be so useless as he imagined. “For,” she added, “I consider it a very favourable omen, that the enchanter, being called away by some messenger so soon, neglected, in his haste, to fasten my cage so securely as usual, and that you happily returned much sooner from the garden; for this is my birthday, and is the only time that the charm has no power over me. Had you released me from the cage on any other day, you would have had me still a helpless little bird, unable to speak one word to you. It is only on my birth-day that, on touching the ground, I resume my natural form; for on that day the charm remains in the cage.”

“If that be the case,” said Haschem, “the charm shall soon be broken;” and seizing the cage, he dashed it with violence on

the ground, and jumped on it until it was flattened and broken; then, rolling up the pieces together, threw them into one of the corners of the room. But, in the same moment, they heard a tremendous crashing noise, like the roll of mighty thunders; and the entire building shook. Then they heard the door open; the curtains which concealed it were drawn violently back; and, on the next instant, the enchanter stood before them, seeming almost mad with rage. "Ha! wretched worm!" said he, "what have you presumed to do? Who counselled you to despise my power, in breaking this charm, and destroying my cage?" Haschem was so overcome by fear that he could not answer a word.

The enchanter, then turning to the princess, said, — "And you! fool that you are, to imagine that this insignificant worm could protect you against my power! I will soon show you how useless it is attempting to oppose me."

He then drew from one of the pockets, in his long black robe, a small box, which he opened, and out flew a little bird, and perched upon the table. He took out another little box, which he had concealed in his girdle: this one contained seed; and, carefully taking out a single grain, he laid it before the bird. The bird had scarcely pecked at the grain, when, instead of the bird, there stood before them such a hideous monster of a man, that both Haschem and the princess screamed with fright. His head was unnaturally large, with red smoky eyes; his nose, small and flattened; his chin, broad and prominent; his mouth, closed with lips of a bluish hue; and his head, thinly covered with bristling white hairs. A huge hump projected from his back, and his shoulders were so high as completely to conceal his ears. In the same proportion as the upper parts of his body

were monstrously large, so were the lower limbs small and decrepit; and it seemed a wonder how two such thin legs could support and move about the weight of his upper members. But he sprang about with the greatest agility; balancing himself first on one leg, then on the other; twisting his hideous person into all manner of contortions, making it, if possible, more miserably frightful than it was by nature.

“My son,” said the enchanter, addressing this misshapen wretch, “behold your bride! I had intended to celebrate your nuptials at the next new moon, but she would not wait so long: she has to-day brought about her transformation by the aid of this youth, her friend. Approach, my son, and give the bridal kiss; then show your gratitude to this young man.”

As the monster now approached the princess with a malicious grin, and she turned from him in disgust, extending both her hands to keep him off, Haschem's presence of mind returned to him. Resolved to risk all, he placed himself between them; and, as the monster came near, struck him such a violent blow, that he reeled back, and fell with his head against one of the projections of the marble fountain. A stream of blood instantly flowed on the floor, and the monster uttered a most dreadful groan. Haschem now dreaded the rage and fury of the father, and already considered his life as lost.

The magician seemed at first astounded; but, when he perceived the deadly wound inflicted on his son, he threw himself on him; and, wringing his hands together, his feelings of revenge were quite overcome by his great grief.

Haschem did not hesitate a moment, but instantly seized the hand of the princess, and conducted her through the passages,

and down the stairs (the doors being all left open), until they reached the garden; but they soon came to the insurmountable tall iron rails, which enclosed it. "Of what avail is our flight?" said Haschem: "here we are still in the power of the enchanter; and, even if we had reached the other side of these railings, and concealed ourselves in the most secret cavern, still, by his mystic knowledge, he would be able to discover us, and take vengeance on us."

"I am of a different opinion," replied the princess; "for there are certain Powers that we respect and fear, over which the unnatural workings of the enchanter can have no control; and, can we but once reach the other side of these rails, I feel assured that we shall be concealed and protected from further pursuit."

They continued walking on, until they came to a place where a violent hurricane had rooted up and thrown down several of the trees; one of which in falling had rested on the points of the rails, the upper branches hanging down on the other side. Haschem no sooner observed it, than he leaped for joy; but, as no time was to be lost, he instantly began ascending the trunk, carefully leading the princess after him. When they had reached the top, and clambered over the spikes of the rails, they lowered themselves as far as they could on the overhanging branches, and then dropped. As they fell on the earth, they found it rather harder than was agreeable; but both escaped without any injury, and started off as fast as their legs would carry them towards the distant mountains.

CHAP. V. — THE HISTORY OF THE PRINCESS
HANDA.

HASCHEM and the princess proceeded onward for some hours, without once looking back, until, with the ruggedness of the road, and their rapid travelling, the princess became at length quite exhausted, and they were obliged to stop to rest. Haschem soon found out a little hillock, overgrown with moss, on which they sat down beside each other. When they had somewhat regained their strength, Haschem asked the princess if she would relate to him the history of her previous life. To this she consented, and after a few minutes began as follows: —

“There is little in the history of the early part of my life worthy of your particular attention. My name is Handa, and I am the only daughter of the sultan of the island of Selandiv. My mother came from the far distant West, far beyond Arabia and the Caucasus. She was brought from her own country in a large ship, and sold to my father as a slave; but her exceeding beauty and amiable disposition soon won his heart, and she became his favourite wife. The days of my infancy were spent in happiness with my mother: but I can recollect little of her; for the change from the cold climate she had been accustomed to, to the extreme heat of our own, soon undermined her health, and she died when I was quite young. I can remember being very miserable when I could no more see her: but my young heart soon forgot her, and my life passed on very happily; for my father was dotingly fond of me, deeming me his greatest

treasure on earth. Yet was his love always tempered with wisdom. During the day-time, he entrusted me to the care of a kind instructor; but every evening, as soon as my father had done with the cares of government, he would send for me, — and once every week, he devoted an entire day to me. On these occasions, we used to go in a light bark to a beautiful palace my father had on the side of a mountain, not far distant from the capital, which commanded an extensive view of the sea. The palace was surrounded by a large garden, filled with all kinds of rare trees and shrubs, so that the air was much cooler and more invigorating than in the crowded city. There we passed many a happy day, and I always looked forward to a visit to the palace as a great treat.

“Thus passed the happy days of my childhood: but, as I grew up, my father was no longer the only object of my affection; for there was a young prince (a son of one of the neighbouring sovereigns) who often joined our little party, when we went on these excursions to the palace on the mountain. By frequent intercourse in this way, we grew very fond of each other; and my father, esteeming his character, fixed on this young prince, whose name was Mundian-Oppu, as one proper to become my husband, and, as such, to succeed him on the throne of Selandiv.

“But it happened one day, while we were all seated on one of the terraces that faced the sea, that a ship of foreign build came and cast anchor as near as it could approach the shore, in front of the palace. A foreigner left the vessel, and came ashore in a little boat; and, bowing very respectfully, begged permission to show us his wares, which he assured were of the most costly kind. The way in which the man praised the many curious

articles that he enumerated, made me feel very anxious to see them ; so I begged of my father to grant the stranger the permission that he asked for.

“The man had in no way overrated the costliness of his goods ; for he displayed an immense number of jewels, far more beautiful than any I had ever seen : there were precious stones cut in every art, and mounted in the finest chased gold. Some, that I admired more particularly, were purchased by my father. I could not help observing, that, during the whole time that we were employed in examining the various articles, the stranger kept his keen eyes steadfastly fixed on me ; but, as he seemed desirous of making himself in every way agreeable, my vanity made me conclude that the man was smitten with the beauty of my form, and I therefore showed no displeasure at it. As he exhibited every article, however costly it might be, he seemed quite at a loss for words to describe its utter insignificance in comparison with those that he had in the ship, where, he informed us, in addition to an immense collection of curious jewels, were some extraordinary birds, and among others the little snow-white bird, — the most beautiful of the feathered tribe.

“The description of all these wonders at length excited my curiosity to such a pitch, that I begged permission of my father to go to the ship with the stranger, and inspect them ; and my good father was weak enough to allow me to gratify my unreasonable curiosity. At the same time, he ordered a suitable train to be ready to accompany me : but the man objected to my servants on account of the smallness of the boat, in which he said not more than three people might safely venture ; and also said that he did not choose to expose his wares in his ship to

so many people. 'These rare objects,' said he in conclusion, 'are worthy to be gazed at only by princely eyes; and I dare not, without much danger, expose them to the view of the vulgar. But, as I do not wish or expect that so mighty a king would trust his fair daughter alone to my care, let her be accompanied by the prince Mundian-Oppu, with whom she will surely be quite safe.'

"This was agreed to, and accordingly we entered the little boat, and very soon reached the merchant's ship. When we got on deck, we were much surprised at the unusual appearance of every thing around us. On all sides were creatures of every description, many that we had often seen, and with whose names we were familiar; but also a vast number of such as we had never beheld before, — and they were all employed in the performance of duties that quite astounded us. For instance — instead of the men usually employed to steer the ship, there were large monkeys at work, and up on the mast was seated a large eagle who managed the sails. Descending to the cabins, we there saw a great number of cages made of polished ebony, with thick golden wires, wherein were animals of every kind and colour, who moved about, and seemed to be striving for liberty.

"I now recollected the snow-white bird that the man had mentioned, and inquired for it. He pointed to a little cage, hung to the ceiling; and, that I might more nearly inspect it, he reached the cage, and took it down. He then opened the door, when the little bird flew out, and perched upon my hand. 'This bird,' said the man, 'is the only one of the kind, and very peculiar is its nature; for, without my careful attention, its life would endure but a few days: but I have found out the seed

which will prolong its existence, of which I give it only one grain every week, and that is sufficient for it to subsist on for the following nine days.' We were curious to see this seed which possessed such virtue, of which we had never yet heard mention, and begged of the man to show us some of it. He opened a little box, and took out three small seeds, one of which he gave me to feed the bird with, and another for me to taste : the third he gave to the Prince Mundian-Oppu.

"I offered the seed to the bird, but could not induce it to peck it up ; and, as I continued to push it nearer, the bird kept going back until it lost its balance, and fell with the wings distended to the floor. I grasped at it to save it from falling, and, in so doing, pulled some of the feathers out of its tail. At this I was very much grieved, and the merchant appeared equally so : but he soon made light of the event, and, with a wicked smile, pressed me to swallow the seed he had given me, telling me that it would prevent any evil effects that might be the result of the fright I had sustained ; and he advised the prince to do likewise : so we both swallowed the seeds at the same time. Instantly, I felt a most mysterious change come over me, and found myself transformed into a little white bird, similar to the one I had but a minute before been trying to feed ; and, on turning to where the prince stood, I saw in his stead a little bird of like dimensions, but quite black.

"The stranger, who was none other than the wicked magician, seized me in a moment, and, thrusting me into the little cage, made the door of it fast. The monkeys instantly turned the rudder, and the ship cut through the water with unusual swiftness, sailing on until it got on the main ocean. I could still see my

father sitting on the terrace, and the servants all running to the shore in the greatest confusion, as they observed the ships sailing off. I vainly endeavoured to catch the sound of their voices; but, alas! what could I do, shut up in that small cage? The little black bird flew away to the mountain; and, since that time, I have had no intelligence of the prince Mundian-Oppu.

“When we had proceeded in this manner some distance, though I could still see afar off my father’s dwelling, — or, rather, the outline of the mountain on which it stood, — the magician came, and, taking my cage in his hand, ascended high in the air, and carried me to the apartment where you found me, at the top of the high tower. How it was he managed to bring the other white bird with him, I know not; but he immediately took it out of his pocket, and put it into the cage along with me; at the same time saying, — ‘There, there is an agreeable companion for you.’ Thinking it to be a real bird, I withdrew from it; for, thought I, ‘although I am much more unfortunate, still my nature is far superior to this little creature’s. But, as I receded, the bird followed me, striving by every art to make itself agreeable, until at last I lost all patience, and pecked at its eyes, when in return it pecked at mine. The wicked enchanter gazed on us some time; then drew a small box from his pocket, and, taking out a grain of seed, laid it before the cage, which he opened. The bird, hopping out, instantly pecked up the seed, and in the same moment was transformed into the unsightly human monster that you saw in the castle. The enchanter then intimated to me, as I have already told you, his intention that I should become the wife of this hateful fiend; and moreover promised, that, whenever I consented to be married to him,

I should immediately resume my original form and nature. On the other hand, he assured me, that, as long as I refused, it was in his power to keep me in the condition I then was, except on my birth-day; and that he was determined to exercise this power.

“The rest of my history you are acquainted with, and I have now no greater desire than to get back to my father in Selandiv; for well I know that he must live in great sorrow for my absence, if his grief has not already brought him to the grave.”

CHAP. VI. — THE PRINCESS'S RETURN.

THE sentence with which the princess concluded her narrative reminded Haschem of the unhappy state in which his father would be, on account of his own long absence; and he pictured to himself the disconsolate appearance of the old man; for he knew that his parent, who was so kind when he was with him, could not but grieve much at his sudden departure. After thus reflecting some minutes, he said, — “Princess, your anxiety cannot be greater than mine: notwithstanding, I solemnly bind myself to take no steps to find out my father, until I shall have safely conducted you to your father-land, or have found out others whom I may confidently trust to take you to your beloved parent. May God preserve his life, and also that of my dear father, to enjoy the happiness of our restoration!”

The length of the princess's story having given them ample time to rest, they arose, and proceeded on their way. But they had not gone far when the day began to wane; and the approaching darkness reminded them of the necessity of finding some convenient place where they might repose for the night. Fortune was, however, very kind to them in this respect; for they came to a spot where thick bushes had grown all round, and completely enclosed a small space, leaving on one side only an opening, which served for an entrance. This formed a most comfortable place for the princess to repose in; while Haschem stretched himself on the grass outside, in order to keep watch.

The night passed off without any danger assailing them

Haschem had intended to keep awake all night, fearing lest they should be surprised in their sleep; but the fatigues of his journey prevented his carrying this resolution into effect: for the day had long dawned before either of them awoke. Fortune, who seemed now determined to deal more kindly with them, soon guided their steps, on the following morning, to some trees, bearing a very delicious kind of wild fruit. At first they tasted it cautiously, being afraid of poison; for they had never seen the like before. But their intense hunger, and the pleasant flavour of the fruit, soon induced them to risk all danger on that score.

Having satisfied themselves, they again went forward, and walked on till sunset. After travelling in this manner for three days, the way at every step becoming more difficult, they arrived, on the morning of the fourth, at the foot of the mountains, where they were glad to find the country inhabited. Haschem inquired of the first person they met what was the name of the state they were entering; but, when informed, they were none the wiser: for they had never heard of the place before. They then asked how far distant they were from the sea, and what course they should take to reach the coast, when the man answered, that, on the other side of the mountain, there was an extensive plain, which was bounded by the ocean. They made all haste over the mountain, and came to the country which had been described; and at length, after a weary wandering of seventy days, they reached the seacoast. To their great delight, they found a ship lying at anchor; and, on demanding of the captain in what direction he was about to sail, he replied, — “We are bound direct for Selandiv, there to take in a

cargo of spices ;” and, in answer to Haschem’s questions as to the port whence they came, and the name of the place they were lying at, the captain informed them that the ship was a merchantman from Balsora, and that a dreadful storm had driven it on this coast, the name of which was quite unknown to him. The princess was greatly pleased to learn, that the ship was destined to her native country. Taking one of the precious stones from the diadem she wore on her head, she gave it to the captain as the price of her own and Haschem’s passage. On the following morning, the ship weighed anchor ; and, after a quick and agreeable voyage, they arrived at Selandiv. The ship cast anchor at the very place where the wicked magician’s ship had stopped, when he induced the princess to leave her father’s home.

They landed in a small boat, and Handa conducted her deliverer through the various winding paths in the beautiful garden which surrounded her father’s palace, until they could see the terrace from which she had first noticed the magician’s ship. Here they proceeded cautiously, concealing themselves behind the shrubs which grew very thickly. Presently they observed the figure of a grey-headed old man, who seemed quite worn out with grief: the tears trickled down his pallid cheeks as he looked steadfastly towards the sea. “ Ah !” said he, sighing deeply, “ thus was it on the day that my sorrow commenced : *there* lay the robber’s ship at anchor ; and *there* the boat landed, which bore off my daughter and her lover ! — at this very hour too ! Ah ! she is lost for ever ! I must die alone, for I shall never behold my dear child again.” He ceased speaking, and, leaning his head on his hands, sobbed aloud.

At this moment, the princess Handa would have rushed up to

him; but Haschem held her back, saying, — “Let me first go, and inform him of your return, and so prepare his mind in some measure; otherwise the surprise and joy will be too much for him, and may cause his death.”

Then Haschem went up to the terrace, and, kneeling down, bowed his forehead to the earth before the king, who immediately raised him up, and said, — “Whence come you? Are you a beggar? and do you seek assistance from me? Go round to the palace, and your wants shall be supplied.”

Haschem, however, stood up, and replied, — “Well may you take me for a beggar in the miserable condition in which I am obliged to appear before you, great king Radga Singa. Yet know that, in this tattered disguise, you behold a powerful magician, who can instantly dry your tearful eyes, and convert your extreme grief into joy and laughter.”

“Can such a man be found on earth?” inquired Radga Singa.

“Yes,” continued Haschem: “I need only repeat three magic words, and the change shall instantly come over you. Are you prepared for the greatest happiness that your heart can conceive?”

At these words, a ray of hope seemed to dawn on the father’s soul, beaming through the tears which bedewed his eyes. — “What is that you say? Who are you that dare thus to treat with me?” said he vehemently.

Haschem again repeated the question, “Do you feel yourself prepared?” — “I believe I am,” answered the king; his eyes sparkling with hope as he arose.

“Then approach, princess Handa! your father is prepared!” cried the youth; and the princess instantly ran, and threw her-

self in the extended arms of her dear father. Then was fulfilled what Haschem had promised: the mournful eyes of him who had been so long accustomed to weep, now shed tears of joy. The father and child remained for some time locked in each other's embrace, until at length Radga Singa, recovering his speech, turned to Haschem, and said, — "Truly you are a magician, such as I have never beheld; for by your words you have chased away the gloomy clouds of grief that have so long hovered round my soul, and placed me in the broad sunshine of joy and happiness. But I will not now question who or what you are, neither in what way I can show my thankfulness to you; nor will I stop to question you, my daughter, what may have been your lot during your long absence, but will give my whole soul up to joy at seeing you again."

Then they all went in the king's bark to the city; and, as the news got abroad of the unexpected appearance of the long-lost princess Handa, innumerable crowds of the people assembled before the palace, desiring to have evidence of the report they had heard. The princess no sooner appeared on the steps of the principal entrance of the palace, than the air was rent by a deafening shout from the multitudes, who long continued their acclamations, crying, — "Long live the princess Handa!"

CHAP. VII. — THE REWARD.

ON the following morning, after the king had heard the history of his daughter's imprisonment, and how she owed her deliverance entirely to Haschem, who also told his history, Radga Singa became very thoughtful, and summoned his council to meet early on the next day, to advise with him as to the best means of rewarding Haschem in some way adequate to his great services.

Several of the council would gladly have voted for his appointment to the post of Adigar, or grand vizier, the highest office, next to the sovereign, in the kingdom; but they feared he was too young to fulfil the duties of that station. Others were for his being made governor of one of the provinces, but here also the same objection was raised; and they all agreed, that he was certainly too young to fill any important place in the government. After they had consulted together for some time, the eldest of the assembly arose, and, addressing the king, said, — “Radga Singa, my gracious king and sovereign! the youth has certainly rendered your majesty great service in the restoration of your daughter, the princess Handa; but it appears to me (and with great reverence I state my opinion), that the council, which meets only to consult for the welfare of the country, is not the source to look to for a decision in this weighty matter, which more immediately concerns your noble family; and, if I might venture to suggest to your majesty, I should say that, as your family is benefited thereby, it is from thence that the most suitable reward can come. Were I in your position, I would name him Mundiana, and give

him my daughter in marriage; for truly, by his long care and attention, he has showed himself worthy of so great a reward."

To this the council all acceded, and the king also confessed that it was his wish. "For," said he, "I am now growing old, and would fain have to succeed me, some one who shall worthily fill my place when I am dead; and gladly would I see my daughter married to a kind and generous husband. The prince Mundian-Oppu, for whom I had intended my daughter's hand, has disappeared; and this youth, although of meaner birth, is certainly of nobler mind, and will doubtless, under my tuition, soon gain that experience which will fit him to govern the people when I am gone."

So, without further delay, he sent orders for Haschem to appear before him. On his entering the assembly, a band richly worked in gold and silver was placed upon his forehead, and the king said aloud, — "I surname you Mundiana;" and the whole assembly greeted him, saying, — "Hail, Mundiana!" At this, Haschem could not help smiling, and said, — "I pray you excuse my ignorance; but what does Mundiana signify?" Then the eldest of the council approaching him said, — "This name is the greatest honour that the king can bestow upon any man, and you alone have been found worthy to receive it; no other lives who can bear this name, for there is no hope of ever again seeing the prince Mundian-Oppu."

While this was going on, a large elephant, covered with the most costly trappings, and a richly embroidered and ornamented seat on its back, was led to the entrance by its keeper. The newly entitled Mundiana was placed in the seat, and carried through the streets of the city on the elephant's back; while

heralds went before, crying aloud, — “Hear what Radga Singa, our gracious king, doth proclaim to all people. This youth hath restored to him his greatest treasure, which he had long lost. Our king, in gratitude, hath been pleased to surname him Mundayana; and hath, moreover, ordained him to become the husband of his lovely daughter, the princess Handa. To-morrow will the betrothment be celebrated, and our good king doth hereby invite all his people to join the festivities in the royal palace gardens.”

Haschem was quite bewildered with the sudden change in his condition. Here was he dressed in the richest clothing, and had received costly arms from the king as a present; then he had also received a name, importing the greatest honour that the king could confer; to crown all, he was to become the husband of the beautiful princess, and to succeed to the throne of Radga Singa, and reign over a rich and beautiful land.

The great prosperity that now attended him on all sides quite drove from his mind all remembrances of his former condition. He quite forgot his poor unhappy father, and the pleasant companion of his childhood, Zoraïne, the daughter of Saad, who was still his father's faithful friend; and he no longer looked forward with joy to the happiness that would await him on his return to his father-land.

The solemnities of the betrothing were celebrated on the following day. The princess Handa had with willingness agreed to her father's wishes, without any great display of joy, and without giving vent to expressions of love for her intended husband. Notwithstanding, she was very kind towards him, and was careful not to display the least coldness or want of attention; for her thankful heart, now that she was surrounded with so much

happiness, could not forget what he had done for her when she was in so great misery.

After the first few weeks which were devoted to festivity in honour of this great event, had passed over, the king took Haschem to the council-chamber, at the time of the general assembly, in order that he might be initiated into the business of the state; where his wise decisions, in cases of the most difficult nature, greatly astonished both the king and the council, and his great sense of equity and justice called forth universal admiration, so that very soon no case was decided without first consulting his judgment; and it often happened that he differed from all around him. But he could always furnish such good arguments for his opinion, that he generally converted those who had thought differently. Indeed, the wisdom of the king's intended son-in-law soon became proverbial throughout the land; and the people congratulated themselves on the prospect of having so able a successor to the throne.

Month after month passed on in this way, Haschem continually gaining popularity, his wisdom earning the respect and admiration of all around him, until a whole year had elapsed, and the day for the celebration of his marriage with the princess, and thus becoming heir to the throne, was already fixed. But it happened one day he went to visit the princess in her chamber, as was his custom; and, having followed the servant who announced him very closely, he entered the room immediately, and was much surprised to find the princess hurriedly wiping her eyes, as though she had been crying; and, on approaching her more nearly, he found her still in tears. He tenderly questioned her as to the cause of her grief. At first she refused to give any explanation; but, as

he pressed her very earnestly to allow him to be acquainted with and to share her grief, she at length replied, — “ Well then, knowing as I do your good nature and great wisdom, there is no reason why I should fear to inform you of the cause of my tears ; for I know you will not blame me for having a kind and feeling heart. You know that I was once beloved by Mundian-Oppu, the son of the neighbouring sovereign : I also related to you that he was transformed by the magician into a black bird, and that he flew away to the hills on the island where our country-seat is situated. You can easily imagine that I still take great interest in his fate, knowing what I myself suffered when in a similar condition. Being unable any longer to suppress my desire, I went to a magician, famed for his skill in the mystic sciences, and begged him to inform me, if it were in his power, of the fate of the prince. This man replied that he was still living in his transformed state, and that, for fear of the huntsmen that we call Dodda-Maddas, he had quitted our island, and flown away to some far distant region ; and he also said, that it was decreed by Fate, that, if I ever gave my hand to another, he could not resume the human form, but must continue as a bird to the end of his days. It was pity for his hard fate which called forth my tears.”

This recital made a great impression on Haschem. He saw at once that it was only a sense of duty to her father, and of gratitude to himself, that actuated the princess in her conduct towards him, while her heart and affections were still fixed on the banished prince ; and also that he could only purchase all his prosperity, in becoming the husband of such a noble princess, the son-in-law of the great king Radga Singa, and the successor to the throne of

Selandiv, by the ruin of the unfortunate Prince Mundian-Oppu. He asked himself whether this would be right and just; and his well-tutored conscience could not affirm that it savoured of either. This made him reflect, and he saw at once that the dazzling light of fortune had led him from the path of duty. Then came the remembrance of his old father, and the thought that he was probably at that very time deploring the fate of his dearly-beloved son. Haschem reproached himself bitterly for having neglected his good parent, and for not having sent some messenger when he arrived at the island of Selandiv. These thoughts aroused his mind to a sense of duty, and he determined no longer to delay the performance of it. Accordingly he went immediately to the king, and told him all; and at the same time begged permission to return to his kind father, whom he had too long neglected.

When Haschem had finished speaking, Radga Singa sighed deeply; and, after reflecting some little time, he suggested whether it would not be better to send a ship for Haschem's father, and bring him to the island, where he might enjoy the continual society of his son, and end his days in peace. But Haschem assured him positively, that he could neither become his son-in-law, nor his successor on the throne. "For," said he, "I can never purchase such happiness at the cost of another's misery. Were I ignorant of the decree of Fate, it would be different; but, when I know that through my prosperity the prince Mundian-Oppu would spend all his days in the transformed condition in which he now is, and that I should rob him of the possibility of ever resuming his natural form, it would be in the greatest degree unjust and cruel of me not to sacrifice willingly my future prospects of happiness."

All the persuasions and arguments that Radga Singa could use were of no avail. The king's councillors also, with the two grand viziers and the governors of the provinces, entreated him to remain in the land, and to continue to take part with them in the business of the state. But he still adhered firmly to his resolution. To the princess, who wondered much at his noble-mindedness, he faithfully promised, that, as soon as he had seen his father, and consoled him, he would consult all the magicians and wise men in his country as to the dwelling-place of Mundian-Oppu, and get them to use all their influence to restore him to her arms in his natural form.

As there were no means of persuading him to remain longer, the king presented him with all kinds of costly gifts, and in particular with many precious stones, from the royal treasury; and fitted out a ship, well provided with every thing necessary for a long voyage, which also he gave him for his own special use. Haschem took his leave, accompanied with the blessings and good wishes of all those who knew him.

CHAP. VIII. — THE RETURN HOME TO HIS FATHER.

THE heavens seemed to smile approvingly on Haschem's resolve ; for the weather was fair, and the wind favourable ; so that, after a pleasant voyage, the ship arrived safely in the destined port. On landing, Haschem, accompanied by some of the attendants, went and purchased camels, which he loaded with the presents that he had received from the King of Selandiv ; and, passing through Balsora, he commenced his journey along the banks of the river which flowed to the city of Bagdad.

It was on a beautiful evening, when, drawing near the city, he came to the place mentioned in the beginning of this story, where he had lain himself down at the feet of his father and his friend Saad, and listened to their wise reasoning ; and some of the arguments then made use of again recurred to his mind. " Well," said he to himself, " it is true that the most virtuous are exposed to great danger, when too self-confident. This, alas ! has been my case. I have trusted overmuch to my own judgment, imagining that my discretion would never allow me to wander from the path of duty ; but how completely has the result proved the contrary ! Have I not, for a long time, neglected my father, as though such a being had never existed ? and was I not near committing a still greater sin, in sacrificing to my vanity the happiness of the princess and her lover ? But you also, my dear father, were quite right when you maintained that the heart that is led early in the paths of virtue, even if it should in after-life go

astray, will not proceed far without finding out its error, and will then hasten back to the right way. I have proved the truth of this also; and many thanks to you, my good father, who trained me in the right path."

At the conclusion of this soliloquy, he turned his head to look for the tall palm-trees which formerly stood near the spot; when, lo! they had all disappeared, and in their place stood a lonely hut. While he still regarded it, wondering at the change which had taken place in his absence, the door of the hut opened, and a venerable old man, whose features showed evident marks of long grief and suffering, came out. Perceiving Haschem, he gazed at him with some astonishment; for it was not usual to see a youth so richly clad wandering in that lonely place. The young man gazed at him in return, and immediately recognised the features of his aged parent. He instantly ran towards him, and, falling on his knees, seized his father's hand, and kissed it with rapture, while he moistened it with his tears. "My father," cried he, "then is it really you? Can it be possible that you have so much altered in so short a time? Alas! I have been the cause of all this. Father, forgive your thoughtless son, who, while nursed in fortune's lap, had quite forgotten you."

Naïma placed his other hand on his son's head, and, blessing him, said, — "Stand up, my son! rise up! He who feels truly penitent is already forgiven!" Haschem arose, and threw himself in his father's arms. They remained some time embraced. When Haschem raised his head from his father's bosom, he observed a man approaching, accompanied by a very beautiful young lady, whom he soon recognised to be Saad, and his former play-fellow, Zoraïne.

After the first congratulations were ended, they sat down; and Haschem recounted all his adventures, since the fatal evening on which he parted from them. He told the whole truth, confessing that he had forgotten his father and them; that he had very nearly committed greater injustice, while blinded by the unexpected prosperity which attended him; and had become vain, devoting his whole soul to the attainment of outward honours and distinction.

While yet seated, they observed in the distance three birds, flying towards them. As they came nearer, they found that the foremost of the three was a black bird, anxiously trying to avoid a large bird of prey, which pursued and would have easily seized upon it, but that it also was pursued by a still larger bird; to avoid which it was continually obliged to allow its prey to escape, when just about to pounce upon it. At last they came quite near, and the black bird perched on Haschem's knee. The next instant, the second bird fell at his feet, and was instantly torn in pieces by the crooked bill and sharp claws of the largest bird, which transformed itself immediately to a venerable-looking sage. He turned to Haschem, who stood gazing with astonishment at what had occurred, and said, — "Now, quickly dip the forefinger of your right hand in the blood of this cruel wretch, and besmear the beak of the black bird."

Haschem obeyed in silence; and he had scarcely touched the black bird's beak with the blood, when, lo! a fine young man, clad in princely robes, stood before them.

"Can you divine who this is?" inquired the sage.

"Is it Mundian-Oppu?" said Haschem.

"It is none other," replied the old man; and, as Haschem still

stood staring and wondering at all he saw around him, he continued, — “I know you cannot understand why all this has happened to you. I could easily explain it; but to what end? It is not good that weak mortals should know all the secret workings by which their fate through life is directed and governed. Enough is it for you to know, that it was indispensably necessary, in order to prove you, that you should undergo all this. You have now been thoroughly tried, and found true: therefore Fate awards you the hand of Zoraïne, the companion of your childhood.”

Haschem turned first to Zoraïne, and then cast an inquiring look at Saad her father. He, however, replied, — “With joy do I submit to Fate’s decree; for, by so doing, I witness the fulfilment of the most ardent desire of my heart.”

“But,” resumed the sage, “I must inform you, that this dead bird now lying at your feet was none other than the cruel enchanter who transformed the princess Handa and the prince Mundian-Oppu; for it was expedient for their future welfare, that they also should be tried. So Fate ordained it. But, inasmuch as this enchanter was actuated only by selfish motives, and would fain by his cruelty have extorted more than Fate had ordained, the King of spirits has commissioned me to seize and slay him.” — With these words, the sage instantly disappeared.

They then proceeded on their way to the city, greatly rejoicing in each other’s society; and Naïma, who had built the lonely hut on the boundary of the wood, deeming it the fittest place to give vent to his grief, determined to abandon such an abode, and to live henceforth in the society of his children.

As for the prince Mundian-Oppu, he returned to Selandiv, in the very ship that had brought Haschem home. There he was received with indescribable joy, and soon became the husband of her to whom he had long before been betrothed. Haschem's name, however, was ever remembered with feelings of gratitude by all the inhabitants of the island.

As soon as the Caliph Harun al Raschid heard of Haschem's return, he ordered the young traveller to be brought into his presence, and desired him to relate his history; and the caliph was so pleased, that he appointed him to an important office in the royal household. So important did he consider the event in Haschem's history, that he had it inscribed among the records of the kingdom. In course of time, Giafar the vizier, who had grown old, expressed a wish to retire, in order that he might end his days in quietude; and the caliph appointed Haschem in his place. In this office he continued many years, and gave great satisfaction both to the caliph and to the people, among whom he became a great favourite.

THE THREE TRIALS.

NEAR the ancient city of Bagdad, there once lived a young man, named Jalaladin. When a very little boy, his father had removed with him and all his property to that place: where they came from, or where our hero was born, nobody ever knew.

The father and son dwelt together, in a little cottage outside the walls of the city, in great seclusion, and with still greater economy; for they had not even a servant to wait upon or help them. They were always busily occupied from sunrise to sunset; now trimming up their little cottage, making every thing about them neat, orderly, and clean; then cooking their frugal meals, simple and plain enough they were to be sure: and, when all was finished in-doors, then they had their pretty little garden adjoining, the cultivation of which demanded all their leisure hours.

As they never went into the great and famous city which they lived so near, except to make such little purchases as they absolutely needed, young Jalaladin knew but little of the ways and doings, the pleasures and amusements, or the sorrows and troubles, of that far-famed place.

With nothing to disturb their every-day life, weeks, months, and years rolled on; each season finding them still enjoying very contented, if not very merry lives. But those weeks, months, and years, although they added greatly to the strength and vigour of the son, had quite an opposite effect on the father. His shoulders were beginning to stoop; he could not see so well as he had been wont, and his hearing was very indifferent. He certainly did not, like some silly old men, apply to the learned doctors of Bagdad to remedy these ills; but bore them as well as he could, knowing that he was an old man; until at last he became so weak and helpless as to be unable to leave his bed.

Early one morning, after a night of great suffering and pain, the poor old man called his son to his bedside, and addressed him as follows:—

“Jalaladin, my dear child, my increasing pains and infirmities plainly tell me, that I have lived the full time allotted to man. Yes, my son, I am going to the long home where my forefathers have gone before; but that troubles me not, for I am weary and worn out by the harassing cares of this life: but, when I think of your being left alone in this selfish, unfeeling world, as you will be when I am no more, I am sorely troubled. After my death, you will find that we are not so poor as our sparing style of living may have led you to suppose; but let not the sight of treasures I am about to leave you, vast as they may appear, lead you to imagine them inexhaustible. Bear in mind that there are 365 days in the year; and the least extravagance, if indulged in daily, will amount up to a large sum by the end of the year. Therefore, whenever you are about to make any purchase, first ask yourself whether you can

do without it. Provide yourself only with that which is necessary. Never lay out your money on useless ornaments or finery, because others possess them, or you desire them. In your dress, choose that which is neat and durable, in preference to gaudy and expensive clothing. Mankind naturally desire many useless things; and, from desiring them constantly, begin to think they are so necessary that they cannot do without them. This is the worst of all extravagance: but I trust that you, my son, will, in imitation of me, learn to bound your wishes by your necessities; and, by leading a moderate and temperate life, increase, instead of diminish, the treasure I bequeath you. But, lest you should be so unfortunate as to neglect these well-intended cautions, and plunge into extravagance and thus be reduced to poverty, I have still one remedy left for you. Take this cord, tie one end of it to the large nail you see in the wall opposite, and fasten the other tightly round your own neck, and hang yourself."

Uttering these last words, he drew, with great pain and difficulty, a stout new cord from beneath his pillow; handed it to his son, — fell back on the bed, — and, with one long sigh, expired.

Jalaladin was deeply affected by his father's advice, especially by the latter part, at which he was fairly overcome. He determined to preserve the cord — not much relishing the idea of using it — as the last gift of his poor old father.

For some weeks after this sad event, Jalaladin was miserable. He testified his intense grief for his dead father by sparing no trouble or expense about the funeral; and, when that was over, he found himself a lonely and friendless stranger in the wide

world. By degrees, however, he became more accustomed to this somewhat gloomy state; and he felt much solaced, when, on turning over the old lumbering furniture, he found that his father had been quite correct in speaking of his prosperous state of affairs. This happy feeling was much increased on opening a strong iron closet, which had always been locked and barred in his father's lifetime, in which he beheld large heaps of heavy gold-pieces lying intermingled with bright, glittering jewels of great size and value. This sight quite dissipated his grief; but, calling to mind the excellent advice he had received, he resolved to continue the same quiet, economical style of living he had been accustomed to all his life.

Each morning, at sunrise, found him hard at work in the little garden; then he would be off to the great city-market to make his little purchases. The cookery and household duties were still performed by himself, and so the little cottage was kept in much the same style as before.

But one day, whilst on his way to the market, as usual, to buy some meat for his dinner, he passed by a house, the door of which was ajar. The sound of merry voices coming from within, he pushed the door a little wider open. The mirth and fun still seemed to increase, followed by songs and merry peals of laughter. He now put his head inside to see what was going on, and beheld a spacious and beautiful court-yard, with an elegant fountain playing in the centre; in front of which was spread out an azure silk canopy, spangled with gold and silver, and supported on light pillars. Beneath were five young men, reclining on ottomans, covered with soft cushions of richly embroidered satin and velvet. In the midst stood a table, tastefully

laid out with the most exquisite and delicate viands, temptingly arranged in costly dishes. On a side-table, of white marble, was a goodly display of richly embossed gold and silver tankards, and goblets of chastely cut crystal. Five slaves were in attendance to hand the dishes or the wines, as they were required.

The sight of so many good things, and so much apparent enjoyment of them, at first made Jalaladin's mouth water, which peculiar sensation was quickly followed by another, namely, discontent. "Here," thought he, "are these young fellows feasting away together, merry as crickets; whilst poor Jalaladin must buy his own dinner, cook it himself, and, worse than all, be his own company afterwards."

Muttering these doleful reflections to himself, he was about to withdraw from the doorway, when one of the youths, happening to catch sight of his now somewhat lengthened face, rose, and, advancing to where he stood, welcomed him in a very friendly manner; begging him, with a persuasive smile, to join their conviviality for the day. Jalaladin, eyeing the stranger's rich and graceful robes, and then his own plain and somewhat worn apparel, said his dress was unbecoming their society, and added two or three other excuses. But the other youths, coming towards him, joined their persuasions, and told him they must have his company for that day.

He was then led by them to one of those luxurious ottomans, on which he soon found himself very comfortably seated; his new acquaintances pressing him to make himself quite at home among them. The slaves attended on him with delicacies, the existence of which he had never heard of. All his sour thoughts

and grumblings were soon neutralized by the sweets he was swallowing; conversation was resumed in the same merry strain that had at first attracted his notice. The unpolished simplicity and freedom with which he expressed his wonder and admiration at all he saw, amused and pleased his new friends; and, before he had finished eating, he felt perfectly at ease with them.

The repast having been removed, the slaves handed to each guest a full goblet. Jalaladin looked at the liquid within, turned the goblet about, seemed very foolish, and would not drink. The master of the feast, observing him, said, "Our new friend does not drink with us." Jalaladin said, in rather a sheepish tone, he did not know what the drink was, and feared it might be the forbidden drink of the Prophet, — wine. What was his surprise when they all burst into a hearty laugh, as if he had said something very good and funny? When able to speak, the master of the feast asked him if he knew why the Prophet had denied the use of wine to his followers. As he did not know, he could not answer, but begged to hear the reason. On which the other rejoined as follows:—

"When the Prophet was on earth, he found that all dissensions and quarrels among his followers arose whilst the wine was moving freely among them: therefore, to prevent strife, he forbade its use. But wine, my dear fellow, does not make everybody quarrel. Some, for instance, it only makes talk rather faster, and a little thicker; whilst others, on the contrary, are ready to embrace all the world — friends and foes, whilst under its influence. And think you that our great Prophet meant to suppress such noble and generous feelings? No, no! it is only a forbidden drink to those who quarrel over it. Now, we never

quarrel: on the contrary, you will find us the merriest souls alive. Hence, although doubtless we transgress the letter of the law, its intentions are amply fulfilled."

To give effect to this speech, which perchance had likewise made him rather thirsty, he put his goblet to his lips, and gradually raised its foot till it pointed to the stars, greatly to the admiration of those around him.

"Bad counsellors corrupt good citizens," says the proverb. Jalaladin proved that it says true. His father had, from his earliest youth, enforced a strict observance of all the commands of the Prophet, and the precepts of his religion. Nothing is so unpleasant as being laughed at; and, dreading a repetition of their mirth at his expense, Jalaladin raised the goblet to his lips, and sipped just a little: it was only a little, but that little was remarkably good, and it made him feel very comfortable. "I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," thought he, and emptied his goblet with as much gusto as the others. The attendant slaves immediately replenished it; he drained it again and again, till a feeling of indescribable happiness pervaded him. His blood circulated with rapidity, and with a joyous tingling through his system. He felt strong as a giant. All sorts of funny ideas came into his head. He was no longer timid and bashful, but joined without restraint in the mirth and conviviality of his friends, blessing his stars for leading him among them.

"Hear me, friend," said one of them, in rather a husky voice, at last, "I wish you could always be among us: join our society in fact, for you are a jovial fellow." The others loudly applauded this proposal.

“With all my heart,” said Jalaladin; “but I should wish first to know what are the rules of your society, so that I may be able to judge whether it would be convenient for me to carry out its object: you may have regulations that I cannot observe.”

“Make yourself quite easy on that score,” said another. “Our society is the simplest thing in nature, with regard to rules; and its object is as innocent as agreeable. Here are we five independent young men, with not too large fortunes, who have made an agreement among ourselves, that one of our number shall daily entertain the other four at his own house; and thus we pass our time, as you see, very gaily. He whose turn it is to receive the others, of course, provides all that is necessary for the entertainment; and, although it may be rather expensive for the day, yet he saves it by being the guest of the others for the next four days. By these arrangements, we manage to lead a very jovial life; meeting each day to crack our jokes together.”

Jalaladin’s heart (thanks to the wine) was fairly overflowing with the love of good fellowship. His secluded cottage and garden had suddenly lost all charm for him; so, embracing his new acquaintances with quite brotherly affection, he begged to be admitted one of their enviable circle. They agreed that he should join them the following day; and late in the evening he returned home, very merry, and dreamed all night of future happiness.

On wakening the following morning, he felt rather thirsty, and very uncomfortable. “Alas!” said he, “I have not only slighted the last counsels of my father, but, wicked wretch that I am, broken the laws of our holy Prophet.”

From that sore subject his thoughts wandered to one still sorer,

namely, the enormous expense he had rendered himself liable to. "How, in the name of goodness, am I to provide such fare as I feasted on yesterday, — such dishes, and such wines! My furniture, all put together, would scarcely be worth one of those delightful ottomans on which I reclined; but, ere five days are gone, I must provide furniture of the same style and expensive nature, in order to entertain these five new friends of mine."

Revolving these unpleasant reflections in his mind, he lay, till it was long past sunrise, racking his brains for some contrivance by which to rid himself of the engagement he had made the previous evening; but "I have given my word," thought he, "and to forfeit that would be worse than all: so what can't be cured must be endured."

Consoling himself thus, he rose from bed, dressed himself, and then proceeded to open the strong iron closet in which his treasures were stored. The sight of them sent care to the winds. "Why," said he to himself, "were I to live every day in the same style as yesterday, I should make but little impression on these piles of gold."

So filling a purse from one of the heaps, he went forth, with a light heart, towards the city, to make such purchases as might be necessary. On passing through the city-gates, he hired two of the porters, who were lounging about there, as usual, waiting for a job, to carry his marketings. First he bought sundry couches and settees, richly covered and embroidered; next, a handsome table, of choice sandal-wood, curiously worked in mosaic, large enough to accommodate a party of six; then, a soft downy carpet, the gorgeous pattern of which seemed worked with the colours of the rainbow. He next proceeded to a goldsmith's,

where he considerably lightened his purse by purchasing some massive tankards and goblets of the precious metals, richly wrought and chased. Thence he proceeded to the china mart, where he procured a goodly assortment of all that was curious and elegant in porcelain and Japan, adhering, as near as he could remember, to the patterns he had seen on the previous day. In this way, he roamed about the city ; at one time buying some elegant ornament to decorate his best apartment ; at another, something handsome in the way of dress to decorate himself. Amusing himself thus, the morning sun flew by, and he found the time drawing nigh when he had agreed to rejoin his friends.

He was received with a hearty welcome, and many inquiries after his well-being, and so forth. Dinner was quickly served ; and, during the first course, the host of the day said to him, — “Good friend, you would do well to bring one of your own slaves to wait upon you : such is one of the rules of our society.” Jalaladin, with much confusion, acknowledged he had no slaves ; mentally resolving to obtain one the following morning.

This day passed in much the same way as the preceding. Joke succeeded joke, followed by merry peals of laughter. The wine again sparkled in the goblets. Jalaladin certainly for a moment thought of the Prophet’s commands, his father’s counsels, and his own headache ; but the fun going on around him soon drove these uneasy thoughts far away. He emptied his goblet : it was refilled and drained again and again, till he became as happy and as merry as on the day before.

By the third and fourth day, he had got thoroughly used to this new mode of living. He could not imagine how he had managed to endure his former dull and stupid life, and at times

thought very hard things of his old father for bringing him up like a hermit, denying him that pleasure of pleasures, — the society of friends of his own age, and capabilities of enjoyment. “Now,” thought he, “I am beginning to live, not vegetate;” and he strove, during his intercourse with his new friends, to render himself worthy of their kindness.

In the meantime, he bought two slaves; — the one to attend to his kitchen, and do the duties of cook; the other to wait on himself at home or abroad, and his guests whilst at table.

At length came the day on which Jalaladin gave his first entertainment; but no sooner did his friends arrive, than they all began to express their surprise as to how he managed to live in such an outlandish-looking place. He excused himself by saying that he was much attached to the house, having been brought up from his childhood in it; also that it was the house in which his father had lived, and he could not bear the thought of leaving it.

His friends much applauded his filial affection. “But,” added they, “you must also consider our comfort. It is absolutely necessary for you to have a larger and nobler dining hall; or — what would be far better — why not erect an elegant and commodious pavilion in that garden of yours?”

“In such a dark, dismal cupboard of a room as this,” continued one, “mirth and gaiety are out of the question. The dampness of yonder dingy old hangings communicates itself to the mind, and makes it quite melancholy.” “Yes, brother,” said the next, “you must have the pavilion in the garden, — indeed you must; and, while you are about it, let it be something worthy of the guests it is to contain.”

Dinner was now served, and was followed by the wine. The subject of the pavilion was again resumed, and discussed with animation. The plan on which it should be built was laid down; each of the company suggesting some novelty by which it would be rendered more elegant or commodious: nothing was forgotten, from the patterns of the carpets to the colour of the hangings. Jalaladin felt fully convinced, that a larger apartment was necessary; and, being also fully convinced of the propriety of following his friends' advice on every subject, resolved to have the pavilion built and decorated exactly as they had suggested.

Early the following morning, he called on a builder, and gave the orders for its erection. The man suggested many improvements on the original plan, tending to make it more substantial and elegant, and, of course, more expensive. Jalaladin agreed with him in every thing, hoping thereby to surpass the style and grandeur of his friends; which, he thought, would doubtless increase their esteem for himself. Determining to enjoy their surprise, he allowed none to enter the garden till all was finished and complete. As money was freely forthcoming, the builder called forth all his ingenuity; and a very beautiful pavilion was erected in an incredibly short time.

The six friends were assembled for their first merry-making within it. Every thing was pronounced tasteful, elegant, and worthy the owner; and Jalaladin felt gratified with the flattery he received. "But, my dear friend," said one of them, all of a sudden, "what a disgrace is this garden around us to your good taste! It makes our glorious pavilion resemble a gilded boat in a duck-pond; and the prospect is as vile as the garden. See, on one side lies a kitchen-garden filled with cabbages, and all kinds

of vulgar inelegancies; whilst, behind, stand some nondescript buildings, resembling old barracks or stables, or any thing else you like to call them. Now, were I living here instead of you, I would buy up the whole lot of them together; pull down the old stables and barracks, and have the ground laid out in pleasure grounds, worthy the delightful palace they surround." The others chiming in with this opinion, Jalaladin felt quite chapfallen to think that his pavilion was so absurdly set off by the neighbouring buildings. However, by means of his heavy gold pieces, he bought up, as he was advised, the whole of them. And dear enough he had to pay for his bargain, the owners being by no means anxious to part with their property. His poorer neighbours, also, thought him very covetous and hard-hearted for buying their little dwellings over their heads, as he deprived many of their only shelter. But why should he care for that? — they had been an eyesore to him, he had paid for them, and they were soon levelled with the ground. He now sent for a skilful gardener, who planned and laid out the whole in flower beds, soft level greens, promenades, bright sparkling fountains, and cool, refreshing arbours, all most tastefully arranged. When finished, it was found necessary to engage a head gardener and several workmen, to keep every thing neat and in order. Nor did the expense end here, for his house was too small for the accommodation of so many servants; therefore, a little cottage was built in a corner of the grounds for his gardeners to live in.

Thus every outlay brought with it a whole world of additional expenses. Their mutual entertainments also increased greatly in luxury and splendour; each host wishing to surpass the feast of the previous day, by providing, without regard to expense, the

most delicate meats and luscious wines. The same feeling actuated them with regard to furniture, and each day produced some new and unheard-of piece of extravagance.

By degrees they gave up the system of alternately playing the host for the day, and became constant guests at Jalaladin's table, praising his feasts up to the skies, and acknowledging that his pavilion and pleasure gardens had fairly surpassed them all. This was indeed delightful news. He had discovered at length that he was a man of taste, and was looked up to as such.

He made another discovery shortly afterwards not quite so agreeable. His heaps of gold had been rapidly decreasing day by day, and were now no more. Jalaladin thought of his father; then of the bright gems and jewels that still remained. "There are plenty of them," said he to himself; "enough to keep us merrily for many a long day." He then selected a few, and, taking them to a jeweller, sold them. Every three or four days, he went on the same errand, the jeweller lowering his price at each visit. At last nought remained but an emerald ring: it was sold; and, with the little money it brought, Jalaladin entertained his friends for the last time. At the conclusion of the feast, he told them of his poverty; also that, being unable to entertain them any longer, he now trusted that one of their number would exchange the duties of guest for that of host to himself and the rest. Much to his surprise, all his friends drew very long faces, and seemed by no means to relish either his intelligence, or the proposal that accompanied it.

"Why, is it possible," said one, "that you have been living in this extravagant style, knowing so well that you had not the means of supporting it?"

“So,” said another with a sneer, “having eclipsed us in every entertainment, “you now go to the wall, and then talk of our treating you in the same style as you have treated us! Why, in endeavouring to keep pace with your rate of living, we have been led into incalculable expenses. It was kind of you, certainly, to set us so good an example.”

“I suppose,” said a third, “you would wish us to keep up this style of feasting each other, till our purses are brought to the same condition as your own.”

“Take my advice,” said the fourth. “If you can find out a fool inclined to part with his money for a badly designed garden in an out-of-the-way place like this, sell it to him, pavilion and all; and, with the money you get for it, establish yourself in a small divan or eating-house, where your guests will pay you in return for the entertainments you provide.”

“I am deeply affected by your troubles,” added the fifth; “but you cannot be so selfish as to wish to drag us into the mire, in order that you may escape.”

Having delivered the above sentiments and counsel, they all took their leaves; each administering some wholesome reproof, or reminding him of some old proverb in parting. But, before they were out of the door, Jalaladin had the additional comfort of hearing himself well laughed at as a fool and vain blockhead.

“These are my friends in need,” said he, smiling bitterly as he saw himself forsaken by them all. Why did I so soon forget my father’s advice? Had I not been the worst of fools, I should have known that those who despised and ridiculed the commands of our Prophet, would not be likely to respect the laws of hospitality which he also enjoins. I am rightly served.”

He shortly afterwards disposed of his pleasure gardens, pavilion, and handsome but useless furniture, and re-commenced his former economical ways and habits. Truly it was a hard struggle at first, after his late luxurious life; but that was not the worst. He was soon obliged to sell articles he could ill spare, to procure the commonest necessaries of life. As one thing was parted with after another, his constant reflection was, — “It is all my own doing: it serves me right.”

Matters at last came to a crisis. Jalaladin had not the means of procuring a meal. In despair he threw himself on his bed. It was the same bed his father died in, and the same room in which he had received his last counsel. Bowed low by want, he in vain strove to think of some resource to keep him from starvation. But the more he thought, the blacker his prospects grew. Unconsciously casting his eyes round the room, they rested on the large nail in the wall. At the same instant came his father's last words to his mind: — “Take this cord, fasten it to yonder nail, and hang yourself.”

“Yes,” said he, “the time has come to adopt this last remedy.” Then, rising from the bed, he opened a drawer, and took out the cord, fastened one end of it to the nail, and made a running noose of the other. Mounting on a high stool, he adjusted the noose round his neck, and kicked the stool from under him. The noose tightened round his neck, and then — why, then, instead of being hung as he expected, he sank down on the floor again quicker than he got up. The noose slackened round his neck: notwithstanding, he could perceive that the other end of the rope was still fast to the nail. It was a perfect mystery! Taking his head out of the rope, he looked up at the nail; and behold!

wonder of wonders! not the nail, but the wall itself, had given way to the weight of his body. Mounting on the stool once more, he discovered that, by some curious contrivance, the part of the wall that had given way formed the door of a secret cupboard. But what were his feelings, when looking within this queer place, he beheld heavy gold and bright jewels, heaped up in such quantities as made his former treasures appear insignificant! Then also he perceived, that his father had constructed this cupboard, and had stored his chief wealth therein; intending to teach him the real value of riches, previous to his possessing them. He had already learned, by dear-bought experience, their worth, and the truth of his father's dying warnings; and he now determined on a wiser and better life for the future.

Recollecting the last visit of his late friends, and dreading their re-appearance to take him by the hand, when this improvement in his fortunes should reach their ears, he sold off the small cottage in which he had hitherto lived, and bought a well-built and convenient, but not too expensive house, situated in one of the open squares adjoining the great Mosque. His new establishment wanted for nothing in the way of comfort; but all ostentatious display was studiously avoided. As the former occupant was showing him over the rooms, previous to his taking possession, he said, — "There is one piece of furniture I must leave behind me; it being a fixture, in the literal sense of the word." Upon which, he led him to an upper apartment, where, in the centre of the floor, stood a large copper urn, curiously wrought, the cover of which was fastened down by a leaden seal, on which Jalaladin beheld unknown hieroglyphics.

"You see," said the man, "where that urn stands: there it

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has stood ever since I can remember. My father, when alive, strictly warned me never to break that seal you see upon it. He asserted, that some grievous harm would shortly overtake him, whoever laid but his hand upon it. Often have my fingers itched, especially in my younger days, to break the seal; but, dreading the consequences, I have hitherto refrained. To-day, having packed up all my furniture, I wished to take the urn also, and accordingly I sent it off to my new house; but, to the great astonishment of myself and those who carried it, no sooner was it set down than it vanished, and returned to this room. I again ordered its removal, and again it returned. Perhaps some evil spirit haunts this house, and the opening the urn would be a signal for his appearance; but, be that as it may, to stand there it seems determined; and, such being the case, let me entreat you, in the name of our holy Prophet, to see that it is not meddled with. Remember the warning, — ‘Break not the seal.’”

Jalaladin shook his head, and laughed at the conclusion of this strange tale. “Leave the urn here, if you like,” said he; “but, if I find it in my way, I’ll soon find means to have it removed.”

No sooner was the man’s back turned, than Jalaladin summoned one of his slaves, and ordered him to carry away the old urn, and put it among the lumber and rubbish. “It is neither ornamental nor useful,” said he, “and quite spoils the look of this apartment, which I intend to be my bedroom.”

The slave very unceremoniously shouldered the urn, and carried it off. Jalaladin stood for some minutes, surveying the spot where it stood. “It is certainly not immovable,” thought he. At that moment, without any visible cause, it re-appeared in its

old place. He sent it away again and again; and each time it re-appeared, as if nothing had happened. Seeing that there was no ridding himself of it, he determined to leave it unmolested on the spot to which it seemed so much attached. But the circumstances attending its attempted removal were too marvellous to be forgotten.

Night drew on, and he retired to bed, but not to sleep. Curiosity to know what was inside the urn, and dread of the consequences of opening it, kept up a continual battle in his mind, and allowed him no rest. Thus he lay tossing about till midnight, when the moon's soft rays, streaming through the window, displayed the mysterious urn standing in its old place. At sight of it, curiosity put his fears to flight; and, rising from bed, he obtained a light to search for some instrument, by which to break it open. Having found a hammer and chisel, he with one blow broke the leaden seal. Immediately the cover flew back, and forth from the urn there arose a thin blue vapour, which gradually resolved itself into the form of a most frightfully ugly, dwarfish old hag, grotesquely dressed, with a pair of crutches, one of which she carried under her left arm, while she held up the other in her right hand. Having hobbled over the edge of the urn, she stood before the terror-stricken Jalaladin, and, in a shrill, discordant voice, addressed him thus:—

“Fool, fool, that thou art! living idly here, like an old dotard, whilst the blood runs young in thy veins. Up! up! I say; get thee out into the world; obtain the wonder-stone from Mount Massis, or thou wilt never be my husband.” — Uttering these words, she hobbled back, on her crutches, to the urn; her figure becoming more diminutive as she neared it. Then, bounding

into the air, she descended headforemost into its cavity. The lid closed over, of its own accord, and all things remained as before.

Jalaladin remained for some moments staring wildly at the urn, each feature of his face bearing the rigidity and livid hue of death. Gradually recovering the use of his senses, he again threw himself on his bed; but the dawn of day still found him restless and agitated. Rising betimes, he commenced with great activity the arrangement of his new house, thereby endeavouring to divert his mind from the strange and unheard-of adventure of the preceding night; but all this was useless. Throughout the livelong day, the singularly-dressed dwarf was present to his mind, and her remarkable speech was ever and anon ringing in his ears. He also felt a most unaccountable sadness of heart, which fairly bowed him down.

Weary and fatigued with his want of rest, he hailed with joy the return of night, and, retiring at sunset, was soon fast asleep. But at the hour of midnight he awoke, and, starting up in bed, beheld the urn again open. The blue vapour ascended as before; and the old harridan of the preceding night, re-appearing, limped to his bedside, swinging one of her crutches over her head. — “Fool, fool!” she said, “slothful dullard! strive to obtain the wonder-stone of Mount Massis, or thou wilt never be my husband.” Then, limping back to the urn, she threw a somerset; and, cramming herself inside, the lid closed over as before.

These visitations became a nightly occurrence; and if, from the exertions and fatigues of the preceding day, he slept sounder than usual, sundry smart pokes in the ribs, from one of her crutches, soon dispelled his slumbers; and she then addressed

him in the same language, or in words of a similar meaning. What made these visits the more distressing was, that, shortly before their occurrence, he was frequently enjoying a very delightful dream, in which he beheld a princess of high birth, and of exquisite beauty, enthroned before him, who gazed on him with a look of tenderest love. She waved a golden sceptre over him, at times bringing it so near as almost to touch him. This he longed for her to do; but, just as the desire seemed realised, a grievous thwack from his old tormentor's crutch awakened him, and effectually dispelled his bright visions.

He resorted to every means of getting rid of the urn, repeatedly sinking it in the river's deepest beds, with heavy stones attached; but, ere the midnight hour, it was back in its old place. He ordered his bed to be removed to another room; but the urn seemed to have transferred its affections from the room to himself, following him wherever he slept.

The want of rest, both to body and mind, at length made serious inroads on his health. His appetite failed, his countenance grew pale and haggard, and he was apparently hurrying to an early grave. In despair he consulted the most learned and eminent physician Bagdad could produce, who administered to him the most potent narcotics and sedatives; but nought could restore the rest he so much desired. One day, whilst visiting his physician, the latter, after hearing him repeat his symptoms, said, — "Well, sir, I have tried all that medicine can effect for your relief: I can do no more. Were your illness arising from any bodily ailment, it must have yielded long since to the active treatment I have adopted. But it is the mind, sir. Your mind contains the root of your disorder: thither medicine cannot reach.

I recommend you to seek out a true and skilful magician. Tell him your case; and, by his mysterious power and charms, he will perhaps divine the secret cause of your sufferings, and prescribe a remedy for them."

Jalaladin felt the force of these remarks. "True enough," said he, "the root of my disease is in the mind; and, till I can get rid of it from thence, I shall never regain my health."

Taking leave of the physician, he immediately wended his way to the cave of an ancient magician near the city, the fame of whose mighty skill, in divining enchantments and interpreting cabalistic symbols, was the talk of old and young. When he arrived at the cave, he told the magician of his nightly disturbance, and described the causes thereof with great minuteness; and also that, since the dwarf's first escape from the urn, an increasing feeling of wretchedness had possessed him. Restless and disquieted, he was constantly desiring some object he could neither define nor describe. In conclusion, he begged him to put his most potent spells in operation, in order to discover how the unlucky urn could be effectually removed, or that hateful dwarf be exorcised from his house.

The magician expressed the kindest sympathy and regret for his sufferings; then became buried in deep thought for some minutes. "I think," he added at length, "you spoke of the lid of the urn being secured by a leaden seal: is that seal preserved? If so, I would see it."

Jalaladin conducted him to his house, and showed him the urn, with the broken seal attached to it. The magician stooped down, and examined the mystic characters graven on the seal; then, resting his face on his hands, became again absorbed in

deep meditation. Slowly raising his head, at length he said, — “Jalaladin, the accomplishment of your desires exceeds the limits of my art. I have pondered over it well. This is the seal of the mighty Solomon, whereon is graven, — ‘He who dares to break this seal, condemns himself to be subject to the will of that within the urn.’ The decrees of Fate are omnipotent. To oppose them, the power of the mightiest magician avails nought. You are entirely in the power of the dwarf, and no earthly might or wisdom can free you from it.”

On hearing the magician’s words, Jalaladin gave way to utter despair. Throwing himself on the ground, he tore his hair and beard with his hands, uttering the most heart-rending groans. Pausing in his fury, he exclaimed, — “Am I, then, irrevocably the victim of the whims and caprices of that frightful old wretch? Is my rest to be nightly broken by her? and, when forgetting my misery in sweet celestial dreams, shall she always have the power to destroy even that small pleasure, by bruising my ribs with her crutch, that I may listen to her screeching voice? What pleasure has life in store for me? Let me die, rather than drag on a miserable existence, tormented by this accursed fiend.” Then, turning to the magician and baring his breast, he gave him his poniard, and distractedly besought him to plunge it in his heart, as the only means of giving him peace.

“No,” said the magician, who stood a pitying spectator of his anguish. “Vengeance would doubtless fall on my head, were I to do as you desire, and destroy such a one as you. No, no! my son: take courage, and live. He that is deemed worthy to break the seal of great Solomon, is doubtless born to great deeds. Said you not that the dwarf charges you to obtain the wonder-

stone from Mount Massis? Take my advice: go to the mountain as ordered, and there try your fortune. Who can say but that you will there find an end of your troubles, far nobler than destroying yourself like a coward?" — Thus reproving him when violent, and cheering him with brighter prospects when despondent, he sat hour after hour by his side.

The fiercest storm of mind must eventually subside or destroy its victim; and Jalaladin, brought to reason by the friendly voice of the magician, at length grew calm, and began to hope that brighter prospects might dawn. "But whither," said he, speaking at length, "must I direct my way, if, in obedience to this strange mandate, I set out on my journey? I know not Mount Massis, even by name; and, though I find it, I shall be as far from the object of my search as ever. For where shall I look for the wonder-stone?"

The magician promised to devote the night to the study of these matters; "And, ere to-morrow at noon," said he, "I will bring you all the information I can acquire." Then, renewing his exhortations to take comfort, he departed.

That night the dwarf re-appeared at the usual hour; omitting, however, the usual salutation with her crutch. He awoke without the feelings of terror he had hitherto experienced in her company. She scrambled up, and poised herself on the foot of his bed, saying, "Wilt thou at length listen to wisdom's voice, and arouse from thy slothfulness? It will be for thy happiness, and mine also." — Then, nodding her head, and screwing her mouth into her best apology for a friendly smile, she vanished as before.

Next day at noon, the magician returned, according to promise.

“After much patient research,” said he, “I have discovered that the wonder-stone lies hidden in a strong castle, guarded by supernatural agency, about midway on the ascent of Mount Massis. He that would obtain it, must possess undaunted courage, much firmness, and still more wisdom; for this mountain is not only steep, and perilous of ascent, but also guarded by ever-watchful genii. He that is not ready to accomplish whatever command these genii lay upon him, even to the most minute particular, be it ever so hazardous and apparently insurmountable an undertaking, will but return with shame and disaster, instead of attaining the object of his search.”

Jalaladin exclaimed, — “Doubt not my courage. I would joyfully face danger in its most appalling form, if, by so doing, I could escape from my present miserable life. But,” continued he, “where am I to find this Mount Massis? I never heard of such a place.”

“Perhaps,” rejoined the magician, “you may know it better by another name: it is also called Mount Ararat. Many years before the Hegira, the whole earth became the scene of a mighty deluge, by which the human race was entirely swept off, with the exception of one holy seer, his wife, and children; who, forewarned by Allah, escaped, in a great ship, the universal ruin. As the waters retired from the earth, this ship rested on one of the two peaks in which the mountain is divided at its summit. Since that event, the mountain has been deemed sacred; and many marvellous and mighty wonders have taken place thereon.”

“I have often heard my father,” said Jalaladin, “speak of the marvels of this same mountain; but, pray, tell me in what direction I must travel to arrive at it.”

The magician thus instructed him : — “ First, journey to the ancient river Tigris ; then trace the windings of that river to its source, and in the vicinity you will behold the mountain.”

Jalaladin immediately set about arranging matters for his departure, leaving his house in charge of a trusty slave. He selected a few chosen followers to attend him on his journey, nor did he forget a purse well stocked with gold and valuable jewels. He then set out on the nearest route to the river. No untoward accident marred his departure. It was the commencement of spring ; and the bright sunny weather, without being oppressively hot, diffused life and verdure over the face of nature. This, with the pleasing and beautiful change of scenery he beheld around him at every stage of his journey, pleased his eye, re-invigorated his health, and gradually brought back that tranquillity of mind to which he had so long been a stranger. The farther he travelled from home, the lighter grew that horribly unaccountable disquietude and heaviness of heart that had oppressed him ; and another circumstance, in some degree, contributed to this desirable change : since his departure, the dwarf had ceased her nightly visits.

The travellers at length reached the source of the river. It sprang from the centre of an immense plain, on the borders of which stood a range of hills. The horizon beyond was obscured by a chain of lofty mountains, stretching from east to west ; from the space between which, and the forementioned hills, rose a huge mountain standing quite alone, its head towering high into the heavens, whilst the clouds floated like a loose drapery around it. Some wandering Arabs, whom they accosted, informed them that, according to report, this mountain was

divided at its summit into two rugged rocks, which might be discerned, on a nearer approach, beautifully white, and glistening with the sun's rays. Onward they went; and, as they drew nigher the mountain, the more lofty and majestic it seemed to grow. Around the base they found a tract of country abounding in the most luscious fruits and beautiful flowers, growing wild, and requiring no other hand but that of nature for their cultivation; beyond which tract, and approaching the mountain's side, stood a little village.

Entering this village, Jalaladin inquired its name from an old man, who informed him it was called Semainum. "Semainum!" said he: "why, that means the city of eight. Wherefore is it called by so strange a name?"

The old man smiled at his ignorance. "Didst thou never hear," said he, "of the mighty deluge, which drowned the whole of our race, save one man and his wife, his three sons and their wives? These eight fixed their abode on this spot. Their descendants, in after years, built this town; giving it the name of Semainum, in commemoration of their ancestors' escape."

Jalaladin immediately asked whereabouts on the mountain stood the castle wherein was lodged the wonder-stone. "You give me news now," said the old man: "this is the first time I have heard of there being any castle on the mountain; and, as to the wonder-stone of which you speak, I never heard of its existence."

He then made inquiries of the other inhabitants, all of whom were alike ignorant as to any real castle thereabouts. They told him, that, high up the mountain, its surface was rent into deep yawning ravines and caverns, around the entrance of which,

huge masses of rock lay piled together in the most fantastic forms. These, to the distant traveller's eye, might assume the appearance of ruined turrets and battlements. "One of these strange groups," continued they, "has, from its striking resemblance, and for the sake of distinction, been long known by the name of the Castle. But, as to climbing up there, attempt it not. More than mortal strength is required for the ascent. According to tradition, a stranger once undertook the perillous adventure; but he never returned, and doubtless he was dashed to pieces among the rocks."

Jalaladin, undaunted by their narrations, merely inquired in what part of the mountain lay this so-named castle. "Climb thither," said he, "I will, or perish in the attempt." His followers now endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, but without success. He requested them to await his return in the village they were now staying at, and gave them some of the gold and valuable stones which he had with him. "If," added he, "three moons wax and wane, and I return not, get you back to your homes. Take all my wealth and possessions. Let the land be divided fairly between you. And now farewell."

So saying, he struck off from the beaten path, and was soon lost to sight in the gloomy shades of a thick forest, which skirted round the base of the mountain. After toiling through the brushwood for some time, he found the trees gradually grow thinner and wider apart; and at length he arrived at a wild open space, where the bushes became intermingled with fragments of rock. As he left the forest further and further behind, these masses of rock increased formidably in size and number, till, at

length, they formed serious obstructions to his upward progress. Now he was obliged to slide down one precipice ; then to clamber up another on his hands and knees ; then, again, meeting with one too steep to ascend, he had to walk far out of his way to get round it. The toil seemed endless ; but the more wild and uneven grew the path, the more did his courage and determination stimulate him to increased exertions. On he went ; at one time bruised and sore from stumbling over sharp, jagged, thick stones ; then, tearing not only his clothes but his flesh by creeping through the thorny acacia bushes. Many a time had he to lower himself down dark abysses, holding on by his hands, whilst his feet sought the next projection, from their all but perpendicular sides, — more than once losing his hold, and narrowly escaping being drowned in the black torrents which foamed and roared below. In this fashion, Jalaladin pursued his journey ; and, though bold and courageous of heart as at first, he felt his strength fast failing him, when, on suddenly emerging from one of those frightful chasms, he beheld on an eminence, high above his head, the rudely built walls of a tower, the attainment of which made his former difficulties, in comparison, appear trivial. Straining every nerve, and well nigh fainting in the attempt, at last he reached a flat surface of rock, resembling a gigantic platform. No great way beyond, rose what appeared the entrance of the castle he had so long sought ; but whether the uncouth edifice before him was the handiwork of nature or of art, it was most difficult to determine. That which appeared to be the doorway was formed of two enormous pillars of unhewn granite, placed upright ; whilst a third block, still more rough and unsightly, laid across their tops, completed the structure. Renewing his exertions, Jalaladin began to cut a

way with his scimitar through the thickly entangled underwood and brambles; and, at length, he arrived exhausted and breathless at the entrance. Darkness prevented him seeing what was within: so, stretching himself on the ground, he lay there awhile to recover his breath and strength. After a time he aroused himself, and was about to enter the cavern, when a powerful man, bearing in his hand a strong yew-bow, and with a quiver full of arrows slung across his shoulder, suddenly stood before him. "Take this bow," said he, "and choose one of these arrows. Then return, and do thy duty."

Jalaladin was quite confounded by this unexpected appearance; but, mechanically taking the bow, and choosing an arrow, he asked, — "What is my duty? Whither am I to go?"

"Yonder," said the stranger, "must thou travel onwards, till thou arrivest at the great sea. Go along its southern shore, till thou reachest a wide plain, across which thou must journey to the great lake, called the Eagle Lake, which lies beyond it. Each morning, at sunrise, thou wilt observe an innumerable flight of black eagles arrive, and settle on the wood adjoining the great lake. Amongst them is one — and only one — white eagle. Shoot that; and, in proof of having done so, return here with its left wing."

Jalaladin had hoped that, in attaining the castle, his difficulties were drawing to a conclusion, and now, no sooner was he arrived, than he was again ordered off on a long and tedious journey through a country of which he had never before heard. The stranger's words fell like a peal of thunder on his ears. "Whatever they command thee, perform to the minutest particular," were the magician's words; and he resolved to submit. Casting

his eye back over the scene of his late wearisome journey, he beheld the sun fast sinking below the horizon, and a thick damp mist enveloping the mountain; then, turning again to the man, he said, — “Night is fast approaching. Wearied and exhausted with the day’s exertions, I shall be lost or meet my death in again descending this mountain, without daylight to guide my steps. May I be permitted to pass the night here?” The man nodded assent, saying, “Follow me.”

Entering the castle, they proceeded along a dark passage, which terminated in a large and dismal-looking apartment. The walls were formed of the same rough blocks of granite as the portal, and supported a vaulted roof, from the centre of which was suspended a small iron lamp, whose feeble light added to the dreary look of the room. Here his conductor left him alone; but, soon after, two attendants made their appearance, bringing with them a couch, on which they made signs for him to be seated; then they brought in a table, with a substantial repast laid out upon it; and, setting it before him, they retired to a respectful distance, and awaited his commands in the strictest silence.

Jalaladin ate and drank freely of the provisions, and found himself greatly refreshed after the fatigues of the day. The attendants watchfully supplied him with every thing he wanted, before he had time to ask for it. But scarcely had he satisfied his rather large appetite, when they removed the table, and made signs for him to follow them. He immediately rose, and they led him through a narrow side passage, till they arrived at a small doorway, and, drawing aside the curtains, motioned to him to enter. What was his amazement to find himself standing on the threshold of a room, exactly resembling, in every respect,

his own bedchamber at Bagdad! Every thing was adjusted in the same order as he had left it.

“You seem surprised,” said one of the attendants, speaking for the first time. “But our ruler, being anxious to make your repose as agreeable as possible after the fatigues you have undergone, has given you your own bed and bedchamber.” Thus saying, they left him.

But Jalaladin’s curiosity was too much excited to sleep immediately. Taking the chamber lamp, he closely examined each article in the room. The bed was the same, the hangings were the same, — every thing exactly resembled the furniture he had so lately purchased for his new house; and, in order that nothing might be wanting to complete the resemblance, there stood his old source of vexation, the urn, occupying the same spot from which he had so often tried to remove it. However, he had seen too many unaccountable things within the last few hours, to be much affected by the re-appearance of this undesirable piece of furniture. So, throwing his weary body on the bed, he was soon lost in slumber, and quickly dreaming again of the beautiful princess, as on former nights. There she was, seated on her golden throne, her costly robes glittering with innumerable gems, and waving her sceptre towards him. Waking as usual in this part of his dream, he beheld the old dwarf, ugly as ever, shaking her crutch at him. “Mind,” she said, in her horrid voice, “you make no stupid mistake. Leave not this castle without a dog, — they must give you one.” Then, frowning and brandishing her crutch, she returned to her old quarters in the usual way.

“A dog!” said Jalaladin; “what, in the world’s name, do I want with a dog? But the old plague seems to understand the

nature of my journey: so, I suppose, I had better take her advice." Pondering over his strange adventures, he was soon as sound asleep again as ever.

In the morning, when he awoke, he found himself, much to his amazement, lying on a bed of dried moss, spread out in a small rocky cavern, through the roof of which the sun shone brightly. Before him stood the stranger of the previous evening. "Arouse thyself," said the man: "go, and do thy duty."

"I am ready," said Jalaladin; who, after a few stretches and yawns, arose. "But," remembering the words of the dwarf, he added, "may I not be allowed a dog to accompany me?"

The stranger pronounced some unintelligible words, and instantly a large dog bounded into the cave, licked his hands, and fawned upon him. The man drew a small piece of stick from his pocket, showed it to the dog, and at the same time pointed to Jalaladin, to whom he said, — "So long as thou retain this stick, so long will the dog attend thee: therefore keep it carefully. But now depart: do not return to the town below, but go directly eastward;" and, as he spoke, he pointed towards the rising sun.

The dog immediately started off in that direction, followed by Jalaladin, who was much pleased to find his dumb leader choose a path, which, though not very straight or level, was not by any means dangerous. Whenever any insurmountable obstacle to their progress presented itself, the dog struck off in another track, which shortly turned towards the east; and Jalaladin willingly followed wherever he chose to lead. They soon reached the plain beneath. After traversing it for some time, the ground became irregular and hilly. As they advanced, these hills became

larger and more numerous, terminating at length in a chain of lofty mountains. When they had attained the summit of these, their path sloped gradually down to the shores of the great sea. They went onwards by the seacoast for several days, till at last they reached the second plain, which lay spread before them, to an apparently boundless extent. For forty days and nights, they journeyed over it, until they found themselves, much to Jalaladin's content, standing on the banks of the Eagle Lake. He now sought out a dry place whereon to pass the night. He was by this time well accustomed to a bed of dry grass, with a stone for his pillow, and the broad blue sky for his only canopy. Thus he lay, and slept soundly.

At the first dawn of day, he was awakened by the dog barking and jumping upon him. The animal seemed grievously disquieted, and continued leaping in all directions. Jalaladin rose up quickly, and saw that the dog was gazing intently upon a wood, on the opposite bank of the lake. Turning his eyes in the same direction, he beheld every tree quite black, from the number of birds settled upon them. "These," thought he, "doubtless are the eagles;" and then, carefully examining the trees, he tried to discover a white bird among them. While thus occupied, the dog started off, and was soon lost among the thick bushes. Suddenly, Jalaladin recognised his wild barking in the wood on the opposite side. The unusual noise aroused the whole brood of eagles, who, spreading their broad wings, flew straight across the lake, towards the bank on which he stood. Jalaladin soon discerned, in the centre of the immense body that now darkened the lake, one bird soaring high above the rest, whose plumage was white as snow. He involuntarily seized his bow, and drew the

arrow to the head. The next moment, the noble bird floated lifeless on the water, not far from where he stood. "Fool that I was," said he, "to shoot before they had crossed the water. I am as badly off as ever; for I cannot get at it, now that it is dead; for, see! it floats farther and farther away."

Whilst thus reproaching himself for his hastiness, the dog suddenly returned, and, leaping into the water, swam towards the bird, seized it with his mouth, and returned, and dropped the prize at the feet of his master, who eagerly drew out the arrow that had pierced its body. He then plucked off the bird's left wing, and placed it in his belt. As his hands were smeared with the eagle's blood, he commenced wiping them on the lining of his coat; but, whilst thus engaged, the little stick fell to the ground, from the place he had stored it in, without his perceiving it. No sooner had it fallen, than the dog, again seizing the eagle's body, ran off as fast as his legs would carry him. Jalaladin shouted out all the names of dogs he could think of, but without effect. The animal was out of sight before he could pronounce the first word.

With much reluctance he commenced the journey back alone, feeling convinced that he had been sent on a fool's errand. The way back was no longer the straight and even road the dog had led him. The woods were no longer passed through with ease. Often was he obliged to cut himself a pathway with his sabre; and then the ground was so marshy and wet, that he could rarely find a dry place large enough to pass the night on.

After a much longer journey, beset with innumerable difficulties, he at length regained the plain from which arose Mount Massis. Travelling across it for a few days, he reached the

mountain's base, and commenced searching for the path by which the dog had led him in their descent; but he sought in vain, and was obliged, as at the first, to overcome all the perils and difficulties of the ascent alone. No great improvement had taken place. There were the same clambering and stumbling, and hairbreadth escapes, as formerly. Wearied and torn, he stood at length before the well-remembered doorway, and was about to enter, when, lo! at the threshold there stood the same powerful-looking man who had given him the bow and arrow. "Hast thou done thy duty?" said the man. Jalaladin handed him the eagle's wing.

"Good!" said he: "I must now prove whether it is the one I required." Then, calling for the dog by some strange name, the animal instantly came running up to them, dragging the eagle's body with his teeth. The man took it from him, carefully fitted the detached wing to the body, and then compared it with the remaining wing. "Good!" said he, nodding his head: "I have obtained what I required. Wait here awhile. My brother will soon come, and instruct thee what thou must do for him." With these words, he re-entered the castle; the dog following him.

Jalaladin, thus left alone, became very sad; and, heaving a deep sigh, he said, — "Yet another adventure! I thought to have received the wonder-stone, as a reward for my last services; and, instead, lo! here is another new and doubtless disagreeable undertaking thrust upon me. The Prophet only knows what wild goose-chase this brother will send me on."

These communings with himself, were suddenly checked by the brother's appearance. "Take this," said the man, handing

him a long lance with a sharp steel point. "Depart, and do thy duty." — "I am ready," said Jalaladin, receiving the lance in despair; "but pray first inform me wherein my duty consists."

The man answered as follows: — "Thou must journey on the way to Mount Lebanon. Thou wilt come to the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Thence a few days' journey will bring thee to the great Desert of Sahara, in the midst of which sandy waste lies a fruitful tract of land, watered by a small stream, whose banks are covered by tall, shady palm-trees. Beneath these the wanderers in the desert are wont to repose from the sun's sultry heat, and refresh themselves with their fruit. But there lurks, in the neighbourhood of the trees, an immense black lion, which makes it very perilous for travellers to repose there. With thy arrow and lance, thou must slay this savage beast, not only for the traveller's safety, but as a necessary means for the accomplishment of thine own wishes. Having slain it, cut off the tail, and return here with it. Thou wilt require it."

As the shadows of night were fast descending, Jalaladin begged permission to pass the night at the castle, in order to recruit his strength, previous to commencing the journey over the desert. The man, nodding assent, beckoned him to follow. He was conducted into the same vaulted room as before, where a like repast was set before him, and two similar attendants waited upon him. These, when he had eaten and drunk to his heart's content, again led him to the door which, when opened on the former occasion, had amazed him by disclosing his own bedchamber; and now he beheld it again. Every thing occupied the same place as before, the old copper urn not omitted. Experience had taught him his inability to account for the wonders he was constantly witness-

ing. So, without puzzling his brains more about them, he threw himself on his bed, and was soon sound asleep.

As usual, his pleasant dream was broken in upon, at the midnight hour, by the appearance of the vixenish old dwarf, poising her crutch on one finger, much to his alarm. "Do not be fool enough," said she, snappishly, "to attempt on foot a journey over the great desert, unless you wish to be buried in the hot sands. Even if you escape that, and arrive at the trees, you will, like many others, be torn in pieces by the lion, when he has nothing better worth eating. They will give you a camel, if you ask for it." Then, tossing her crutch up in the air, she dexterously recaptured it, and returned to the urn again.

"A camel!" said he to himself: "this is a fine place to find a camel in, truly! — and, supposing they have one among the curiosities of this queer place, how am I to descend this mountain on the back of such an unwieldy brute?" Having troubled himself a short time with these conjectures, he soon fell off to sleep again.

Early the next morning, he was aroused by the man from whom he had received the lance, and found himself in the same cavern as before. "Up!" said the man; "away, and do thy duty. Time is precious. Take with thee thy bow and arrow, also my lance, and make for the desert."

Then Jalaladin, remembering the dwarf's words, said, — "To journey over this desert, I must needs have a camel." — "Thou shalt have one," said the man. Then, leading him to the doorway, he pointed to a camel, ready packed with every convenience necessary for a long journey.

Jalaladin quickly mounted, and perceived, much to his satis-

faction, that the camel was as well acquainted as the dog with the mountain-passes. The road which he travelled was by no means dangerous, nor very rugged; and whenever any massive rock or deep yawning cavern obstructed their course, the camel walked round it, and resumed its onward course. They soon arrived at the desert, without meeting with any adventure of importance, and proceeded to cross its wide and burning sands; nor were they long before they reached the fruitful track of land, where the palm-trees raised their tall heads on high.

The day was far advanced; and Jalaladin loosened the camel's load, led it to the stream to refresh itself, and then he feasted on the ripe dates with which the trees were laden. Finally, he stretched himself full-length beneath their shade, in order to rest himself; when suddenly a loud roar convinced him, that the lion was approaching, and, from the sound, could not be very far distant. Springing up quickly, he seized his bow and lance, and then took up his station behind the trunk of the largest tree, to avoid being seen by his enemy. He had not waited there many seconds, before the lion made its appearance, roaring and bounding along through the tall grass. He was about to spring on the camel, which stood quietly grazing by the side of the stream, when Jalaladin at that instant discharged his bow. The shaft pierced the lion's right eye, and remained there quivering. Doubly infuriated by agony, the lion rushed fiercely in the direction from which the arrow had come. Jalaladin stationed himself firmly, with one knee bent on the ground, and the point of the lance turned towards his assailant. The lion, on discovering him, bounded forwards with the most impetuous violence. For an instant, Jalaladin was aware of a huge dark body above him.

The next moment he lay stunned and crushed upon the earth. His fate now appeared sealed. For a long time he was insensible; but, as consciousness slowly returned, he beheld the moon shining brightly above him. He felt confused; and it was long ere he could recollect where he was, or what had happened. He only knew, that all his bones ached terribly; that he felt very weak; and that some heavy weight, lying across his body, almost prevented his breathing. Exerting all his remaining strength, he struggled to free himself from this incumbrance; and, having succeeded in his attempt, he found that his clothes were soaked with blood. Fancying he had received some severe wounds from the claws or teeth of the lion, he crawled to the stream, and, stripping off his clothes, bathed himself in the water. The coolness refreshed him, and allayed the aching of his bruises; but no scratch or wound could he find. Resuming his apparel, he returned to the place where he had lain, and soon discovered whence the blood had come. There lay the black lion quite dead, with its heart transfixed by his lance. Jalaladin's joy at beholding this sight soon made him forget the pain of his bruises; but, as he still felt weak and weary, he lay down, using his dead enemy's body for a pillow, and was soon fast asleep.

Early next morning, he arose strong and well. First cutting off the lion's tail, he repacked the camel, which had remained grazing near him; and, mounting on its back, turned its head towards the mountain. His homeward journey was as uninterrupted by accident or disaster as the outward one. The desert soon disappeared behind him; and, many days earlier than he expected, he arrived again at the mountain's base. It was near eventide when he reached it. He hesitated for awhile,

thinking it would be safer to pass the night where he was, and ascend the mountain in the morning. But the camel suddenly quickened its pace, appearing anxious to press forward, with the natural instinct of those animals, who always seem to be aware when they are approaching their customary homes, and commenced rapidly ascending the mountain.

The last ray of the setting sun had scarcely disappeared below the western horizon, ere he found himself on the rocky platform before the dark entrance. Great was his astonishment at arriving so soon; for the camel, by its increased speed, had ascended in one hour the same mountain, that had cost him a whole day's labour to accomplish; and, what was still more puzzling, instead of the rough, uneven ways by which he had descended, it seemed as if he had travelled along a level wood, without a single obstruction. Whilst he was still wondering at his quick return, the camel knelt down to enable him to dismount, and remove the packages from its back. Having done so, he took the lance and bow, not forgetting the lion's tail, and was about to enter the doorway with his trophy, when the man who had given him the lance confronted him. "Hast thou done thy duty?" said he. Jalaladin gave him the lion's tail.

"It is well," said the man, with a nod of approbation: "I must prove whether this be the right tail." He then called aloud four strange names; and immediately four large dogs came from within the castle, dragging between them the body of a black lion, which Jalaladin recognised as the one he had slain. The man then proceeded to fit the tail; and, finding it to correspond, said, "Good! I have now what I desired. Remain thou here a short while: my brother will soon come, and inform thee

what thou must do for him also, if thou wouldst have thy wishes fulfilled." — With these words, he returned to the interior of the castle, followed by the four dogs dragging the black lion between them.

"So, then," said Jalaladin to himself, "it appears I have not yet completed my task. There seems rather a large family living together here. Goodness knows how many more brothers it may contain; and, if each of them intend saddling me with an adventure similar to the preceding two, I may be half my life racing about for them, before I get the wonder-stone."

He had scarcely finished these thoughts, when the third brother appeared, and, offering him a wicker basket, said, — "Take this: go, do thy duty." Jalaladin inquired, rather sulkily, what he was to do with the basket. "See thou to it," said the man: "bring me water in that basket, just as thou now beholdest it, without lining or any other vessel placed inside of it. Thou wilt have need of this water."

"It is utterly impossible," said Jalaladin, fairly enraged. "Give me any thing reasonable to perform; ay, send me to foreign lands beyond the frosty Caucasus, or command me to fight the most ferocious of wild beasts, — and I will obey you without complaining. I will risk my worthless life in any way you please: only let the adventure be possible of achievement."

"This is not impossible," answered the man: "see thou to it, I say. Further instruction I dare not give thee. Thou mayest rest here till the morning dawns, and good counsel comes in the night. Follow me now, and refresh thyself."

Jalaladin followed as he was directed. He was led into the same apartment as on the two former occasions, and was waited

on in the same manner. He was also led into the same bed-chamber as before. At midnight he was again aroused by the old beldame, holding up her crutch as if to command attention. "Don't be a fool," said she, "and go hunting after water in the deep. The water that you carry in that basket flows not in river or sea. Mount upwards: water enough lies on high, and *there* must you seek it. Don't be a fool, I say: use your understanding. Do you hear me? Have your wits about you."

After she had disappeared in the usual way, Jalaladin lay a long time, turning about on his bed, meditating. It appeared to his mind a perfect riddle, which he could not solve. The more he thought of it, the more incomprehensible it appeared. "Not bring the water from the deep, where it abounds in the greatest plenty, but mount up on high to seek it, and then, worst of all, carry it in a wicker basket!" — Not being able to make any thing of it, he at length fell asleep again.

He awoke early in the morning, and was earnestly charged by the third brother to depart, and do his duty. Just as he was going, he remarked to the man, that climbing over rocks, and travelling up slippery mountain-paths, he knew from experience to be very dangerous: might he be allowed to have a walking-staff? "Here it is ready for thee," said the man, presenting him with a long staff, made of very light but tough wood, and shod at one end with a strong iron spike. Then, waving him a farewell with his hand, he bade him start on his expedition.

When he reached the outside of the castle, he cast his eyes round in every direction, in hopes of discovering some partially level pathway, that might render the commencement of his expedition less laborious, when suddenly the warning of the old dwarf

sounded in his ears, — “Seek not to fill the basket with the waters of the deep, but mount up high for it.” Changing his mind, he commenced his upward route; but, as he proceeded, the way grew more and more difficult. No sooner had he scrambled over one ugly rock, than another presented itself still larger and more uninviting. Occasionally, two great scraggy blocks would obstruct his progress, lying so close together, that his clothes were well nigh torn from his back, by passing between them. Finding these obstacles grow worse and worse, he determined on changing his course; so he turned to his right, and at length found a path, the direction of which promised to lead him directly upwards. This was decidedly an improvement on his previous tract, as he met with comparatively few impediments, which he was unable to get over by the aid of his staff. After some hours' hard toiling, he reached an eminence, and saw beneath him the scene of his whole late exertions. What was his chagrin and dismay to find that, with all his labour, he was no great way from his first starting-point!

Quite worn out and discouraged, he lay down beneath the shade of an overhanging precipice to refresh himself, intending to proceed when his strength was somewhat renewed. In all his ascent, he had not yet come to any spring or fountain whence he could hope to obtain the water he sought. True he had seen, here and there, issuing from crevices in the rocks, small streamlets, which dashed down from ledge to ledge, and finally lost themselves in beautiful white wreaths of misty vapour; but these were always far above his reach, on some inaccessible steep, bearing no trace of a path by which he could hope to reach them. He now began to find the air sensibly colder than it was

in the regions from which he had ascended. This, however, was not a disagreeable change; for, with the exertions which he had made in the mountain's lower regions beneath a noon-day sun, his tongue often grated like a dry rasp against the palate of his mouth, from the sultry heat.

“Am I not a fool,” said he to himself, “to be breaking my shins, in trying to reach the summit of this confounded mountain? Suppose I get up to it, am I likely to find water there? Who ever heard of a spring on the top of a mountain? — and if, by a miracle, I should find whole oceans there, how, in the name of Allah! am I to carry a drop of it down in this stupid basket?” Soured in temper by these thoughts, he was about giving up the adventure, and return while he had strength left to do so, when again the old hag's words rung in his ears, — “Have your wits about you: use your understanding.” Recollecting how useful her advice had been to him twice before, he determined to act upon it once again. “I think she said, ‘Water enough lies on high.’ That is very mysterious language: water generally flows; and, if not flowing, it must become stagnant.”

Making these reflections, he started off once more, and now found that he was rapidly progressing upwards. The cold became more and more severe, the higher he journeyed. The path soon led through a deep hollow in the mountain, shutting out the sun's rays almost entirely. A keen wind whistled through the pass. On every side of him lay huge wreaths of snow, and beautifully transparent masses of ice. Wherever the sun's rays penetrated, the snow, melting, trickled in innumerable little streams around him.

Jalaladin seated himself on the decayed stump of a tree, in

order to rest himself again, and soon felt invigorated by the cold wind that played so freely around him. Taking a little of the snow up in his hand, he held it to his parched lips. He then put some of it in his mouth, and swallowed with great avidity the water it produced. At that moment a solution of the problem flashed across his mind. "Here," said he, "lies an immense quantity of snow; and the white mountain peaks, that tower high above me, are all covered with snow; and what, after all, is snow but water? — and water in that state I shall doubtless be able to carry in my basket. Some of it may possibly melt on the way; but there is no fear of its all going ere my return." — So saying, he immediately commenced filling his basket; first squeezing and patting the snow together in his hands, till it was as hard as stone. After cramming as many of these snowballs into the basket as it could possibly hold, he started on his journey back in the best of tempers. The way seemed so entirely altered, that he imagined he must have struck into a new path altogether; for he met with not one of the thousand hairbreadth escapes he had encountered in his ascent.

About sunset he again reached the dark entrance, and beheld the three brothers standing ready to meet him. "Ah!" said the one who had given him the last adventure to perform: "so thou hast succeeded in making the wicker basket hold water!" The other two then beckoned him to follow them into the castle, and gave him the joyful intelligence that he had now obtained all that was needful to his getting possession of the wonderstone. "Know," said they, "that the stone is secured in an old massive iron chest, the bolts and hinges of which are so much rusted, from the long time it has lain unopened, that it is impos-

sible to shoot back the bolts, or raise the cover. Fate has decreed that the man who should be deemed worthy to possess the wonder-stone must himself obtain all that is required to move the bolts that have not been shifted for so many ages. The fulfilment of Fate's decrees, however, often depends on causes that to mankind appear the most unlikely. Behold in thy case a combination of events in themselves apparently trifling, yet all indispensably necessary to the fulfilment of this decree. It is well known, that to remove rusted bolts there is but one way, — by oiling them; but in this case that is not all. The only fat that will act upon these bolts is contained in the tail of the black lion; to extract which fat, the tail must be boiled in water brought in a wicker basket, and no other vessel. There is also but one way in which this grease can be effectually applied; that is, by the three longest feathers plucked from the left wing of the white eagle, the King of the Eagle Lake."

The three brothers then conducted Jalaladin to the interior of the castle. They led him into an apartment he had never before entered, in the centre of which, on the floor, stood a ponderous iron chest, fastened at the top by seven strong bolts. — "See," said they, "the chest wherein lies the wonder-stone! Let us commence our work." They then brought a copper pan; and, filling it with the snow, set it on a large fire in the adjoining kitchen; then, chopping the lion's tail up into small pieces, put them in the pan, and cooked them. The fat soon began to ooze out, and float on the top of the water. The first of the three brothers then produced the white eagle's wing, and bade Jalaladin pluck the three outside feathers, and apply the oil to the rusted bolts and hinges. In performing this operation, a few

drops of the oil fell on his hands; and, being hotter than was agreeable, he gave it a rub with the other hand. He would not have noticed this further; but one of the brothers, observing it, said, — “Thou art wise in doing that: it will strengthen thy muscles wondrously.” Hearing this, he rubbed what remained of the oil on both his arms and legs; and immediately he felt an extraordinary degree of power and strength infused into them. This was of great benefit to him; for the heavy toils and fatigue he had undergone in his late travels had seriously weakened his frame; and now he was as strong and vigorous, as if just arisen from a long repose.

“The charm has already worked,” exclaimed the three brothers simultaneously, “not only on the bolts, but also on thyself! Nothing remains for thee but to open the chest.” Jalaladin, obeying, shot back the bolts with the greatest ease; then, throwing back the lid, he beheld within a large beautiful gem, glittering with the varied hues of the rainbow. He at once recognised it as the rarest and most precious kind of onyx. It was mounted in the finest gold, richly chased; and attached to it was a weighty gold chain, so that it might be worn round the neck. The stone was curiously engraven, representing an altar on which a sacrifice was consuming; before the altar lay several figures, prostrate, as if engaged in prayer; and above them was an arch resembling a rainbow.

“Is this, then, indeed the wonder-stone?” asked Jalaladin. The three brothers replied with one voice, — “It is. Hail to thee, thou king’s son! Thou shalt soon reign on thy father’s throne.”

“A king’s son!” said Jalaladin, astonished. “My father died

some years ago in Bagdad. He was an humble, retired man; and I never heard him say that he had been in better circumstances. I can scarcely believe that he was ever a king."

"Nevertheless he was," replied one of the three. "His own people rebelled, and obliged him to fly from his country. They then chose another sultan, who, usurping his throne, reigned for many years in his stead. The usurper is now dead, and his subjects refuse to acknowledge his daughter as heiress to the throne. Therefore has the empire been rent into two factions; the one fighting against the other with deadly animosity. Hasten thou thither, and restore peace to thy people."

"But where am I to go?" said Jalaladin; "and how would the people recognise me as the rightful son and heir of their former ruler?"

"That," answered they, "will all happen in due time. Put thy trust in the magic virtues of the wonder-stone. Hang the chain round thy neck, and wear it on thy breast as a talisman." He did as they bade him; and now they said, — "Time is precious: refresh thyself with food, and be prepared for a long journey, on which thou must depart, and that speedily."

They then led him to the well-remembered apartment with the vaulted roof, and waited upon him themselves. After he had feasted to his satisfaction, they proffered him a crystal vase, containing a drink far more delicious than any sherbet he had ever partaken of. Having drained it, "Now," said they, "up and depart. Behold thy way to glory!"

Uttering these words, one of them drew a large circle with his finger on the wall, which immediately gave way, disclosing a dark arched vault. "What! must I enter that dismal hole?"

said Jalaladin, as he shrunk back, shuddering, from the chill earthy vapour that proceeded from the opening.

“Let him again drink from the goblet,” said the first of the brothers: “it will strengthen him more.” The second handed him the vase refilled; whilst the third gave him the eagle’s wing,—the end of the lion’s tail that had not been boiled,—and the bow and lance with which he had killed the eagle and the lion. Draining the vase at one draught, he boldly advanced to the dark opening, exclaiming, — “I am now ready and willing, in the Prophet’s name, to obey you; but, pray, first inform me who and what ye are.”

“We are genii, stationed here by the mighty King of spirits, to guard the mysteries of the sacred Mount Massis; but now hasten, that thou mayst arrive in time at thy destination.”

So saying, they led him to the entry; and, as he stepped in, they called after him, saying, — “As soon as thou arrivest at the end of this passage, throw on the earth the eagle’s wing, and the end of the lion’s tail; calling on our names Arjeh, Naschar, and Mana-Guma; and we will provide thee with whatsoever thou needest.”

At these words, the wall reclosed behind him; and he found himself in complete darkness, without a ray of light to guide him. Groping his way onwards, he felt that the ground was quite even, and the passage wider, so that at last he walked quite upright. He began to think it not so very unpleasant, when all at once he arrived at a part where the passage sloped downwards, without any steps. After two or three long downhill strides, the ground seemed gradually giving way under his feet, and it was with difficulty he could stand upright. Sinking at last knee-

deep, he tried to sit down, and leaned his head on his knees. The earth now sunk slowly away from him, deeper and deeper, further and further. How or where he was sinking, he knew not. This strange style of travelling momentarily increased in rapidity. Whirling round head over heels, soon made him giddy, and at last deprived him of all consciousness. How long he continued thus descending was more than he could tell. Suddenly he seemed to awaken from a heavy sleep, the motion having for a moment ceased. He was still seated as though nothing had occurred. Presently the ground on which he sat commenced heaving upwards with him, at first almost imperceptibly, but gradually higher and higher, till at last away he commenced ascending at the same furious rate he had lately descended. He was again insensible to all around. Soon after, he found that he had resumed his downward course.

Thus alternating up and down, half awake and half asleep, half conscious and half stupified, he proceeded on his dismal journey. How long it lasted, he had no idea. He began to feel the need of food, and at first thought he must have been travelling for some days; but, calling to mind the hitherto quiet state of his appetite and his still-enduring strength, he concluded that it could not have been so long in reality, and that the total darkness made it appear so tedious. Raising his head at last, he beheld at intervals, at an immense distance before him, a faint glimmering light, — a mere point. The passage now again became narrower; being wide enough for his body to pass through, and no more. He was still flying along at a tremendous rate; the light appearing to approach him, and increase in magnitude, every instant; and great was his joy at finding himself all at

once standing in quite a strange land, on the top of a hill, illuminated by the slanting rays of the sun, which was now making its appearance above the horizon. He stood for some minutes delightedly inhaling the sweet aromatic zephyrs which played around him, so different from the air which he had left.

All at once, his meditations were disturbed by trumpets sounding, horses neighing and prancing, and all the wild uproar and tumult of war, proceeding from the bottom of the hill on which he stood. Looking down, he beheld in the vale beneath, and extending half-way up the hill, a mighty concourse of men, armed and equipped for war, with banners flying. They were drawn up in two hosts, each challenging and defying the other to the attack. Irresolute which way to turn, Jalaladin immediately threw the end of the black lion's tail, and wing of the white eagle, on the earth; calling aloud the names of the genii of Mount Massis, — Arjeh, Naschar, Mana-Guma. The words had scarcely escaped his lips, ere he was mounted on a beautiful white horse, with a long black tail, with the bow and arrow slung over his shoulder, and the spear in his right hand. He gently touched the gilded reins, set with precious stones; and away flew the horse, prancing and galloping until it brought him between the contending armies.

“What are ye about to do?” said he, addressing the two opposing commanders. But they still continued their mutual defiance. Much astonished at the bold language and undaunted appearance of the strange horsemen, Jalaladin again demanded the cause of their meeting together in so warlike a manner. Then there arose, among the leaders to the right, a friendly murmuring and greeting; and the soldiers, throwing down their arms,

ran together, shouting, — “Behold him who shall restore our distracted land to peace and happiness! It is the long-promised sultan. So declares the wise prophecy of the stars. On a white horse with a black tail shall he come, on the longest day of the year. Hail to thee, mighty sultan! All-hail to thee!” — The commanding officers then approached him with great reverence, and did homage by crossing their arms on their breasts, and bowing lowly; whilst the soldiers prostrated themselves, and touched the earth with their foreheads.

But, whilst this was taking place, the leaders on the left made a sudden and furious charge, crying, — “Down with them!” Jalaladin’s horse at that moment bore him in front of the enemy. “Why,” said he, “will you continue this unnatural war? What is it you desire?” — “Do not our enemies fight for Gulnaschare?” they answered; “and know you not that this foolish young girl presumes to rule the people by the counsel of wily, intriguing men, who also pretend that Fate has appointed them to manage state affairs, till the son of the exiled sultan returns to share the throne with her? Can you possibly be such a stranger in this land as not to know also how she has, by means of her immense riches, bribed even the magicians and astrologers to deceive the people with lying prophecies, — foretelling that the Prince Jalaladin shall appear in a miraculous manner on the longest day in the year, and, with the strength of the lion and the swiftness of the eagle, overcome his enemies?”

Then Jalaladin shouted aloud at the utmost pitch of his voice, “They have not deceived the people: they are not bribed. Have they not prophesied truly? For, behold! I am Jalaladin; and woe to those who dare still oppose me! They shall prove the

strength of the lion, and the swiftness of the eagle!" — But the leaders answered with defiance; adding sarcastically, "Thou art thyself but an instrument by which they may carry on their shameful imposture? Prove thy words by thine arms."

Saying these words, they fiercely attacked him; the whole army, as by one consent, following up the charge. With the speed of lightning, Jalaladin brandished his lance, and ran the leaders down. His horse, neighing and prancing, now dashed forward, with ears erect, and eyes flashing fire. The army to the right, who had done obeisance to him, now formed into battle-array, and immediately advanced. But the enemy, seeing their leaders wallowing in their blood, and the strange adventurous youth acting as commander-in-chief to the antagonist forces, became discouraged, wavered, and finally took to flight in the wildest disorder. Some, throwing down their arms, besought their pursuers' mercy. Jalaladin and his army followed hard upon them; but his horse sprang forward with such extraordinary speed, that he soon left his followers far behind, and found himself fighting single-handed in the midst of the enemy, who no sooner perceived his situation, than they halted, and hemmed him in on all sides. Then indeed did he move about with the swiftness of the eagle, and fight with the fury and strength of the lion. The horse also seemed endowed with human intelligence. Turning and facing about wherever the danger came thickest, he seemed to command his enemies on every side simultaneously; and, whenever one more daring than the rest advanced to cut him down, he was trampled under foot, or impaled on the lance, before he had time to raise his sword. To his own astonishment, he no sooner touched his bowstring, than

another arrow was placed in his hands. He had already cut down a large circle around him, when his forces arrived, and rushed fiercely to the contest. Again the enemy fled in worse disorder than ever, Jalaladin and his victorious troops hotly pursuing them. They attempted to escape through a defile in the mountains; but, in their haste, they became so wedged together, that they all, to a man, threw down their arms, and sued for mercy.

Jalaladin, at the head of his rejoicing army, now proceeded to the capital city of the empire, leading thousands of his conquered enemies in chains. He journeyed fast; but the news of his wonderful appearance, and the glorious victory he had obtained, reached there before him, and spread in every direction. The oldest inhabitants of the city came forth to meet him at the gates, as did also the magicians and astrologers, the elders of whom hailed him as the one decreed by Fate to be sultan of the land, and then escorted him to the royal palace. As they passed through the city, each street poured forth a living crowd of inhabitants, who rent the air with shouts of joy and welcome, as though some well-beloved and long-absent sovereign was making his triumphant return.

On arriving at the palace, all the officers of the state and household assembled, bearing the regal crown; — the attendants and slaves standing around at a reverent distance, making the lowliest obeisances. Jalaladin dismounted, and was conducted through the gilded colonnades and the hall of audience, to the royal pavilion, where sat Gulnaschare, enthroned, and surrounded by a magnificently dressed retinue of attendants. At his entrance, the young princess rose from her throne, and greeted him with a

sweet and gracious smile. But Jalaladin, overcome with amazement, stood immoveable as a statue. She was no stranger to him; for before him stood in reality the beautiful princess who had so often been the subject of his dreams, previous to waking up for the interview with the old dwarf with her crutch, on her nightly resurrection from the copper urn. Smiling at his amazement, the princess graciously beckoned him to approach; and, as he came near, she descended from the throne, and advanced some steps to meet him. She then inclined her golden sceptre towards him, till its jewelled head touched his forehead.

“Have you the wonder-stone from Mount Massis?” said she. Jalaladin pointed to where he wore the beautiful gem, suspended from his neck by the chain.

“It is it,” said she; “and, possessing that, you are now worthy to become my husband, and to rule over the mighty empire of the Moguls, from which you were expelled in tender childhood, with your father.” Then, taking him by his left hand, and placing the sceptre in his right, she led him up the steps of the throne, and desired him to seat himself thereon.

“Behold,” said she to the surrounding attendants, “your rightful sovereign. It was written in the book of Fate, that his father Janghiz, by reason of his avarice, should be expelled the throne, and exiled from his dominions, by my father Khamar;—but that, when his innocent son should prove himself to the dread King of spirits worthy by many infallible proofs, he should then share the throne with me.”

“He has been proved, and found worthy!” exclaimed the magicians and astrologers! “Hail to him!—hail to the

mighty sultan!" The joyful cry resounded through the palace, and was taken up by the multitudes thronging the streets outside; and again the air rang with acclamations.

Then Jalaladin, rising, exclaimed, — "Praised be Allah and his Prophet, who have ordained and conducted me to so glorious a destiny! and above all" (turning to the princess) "do I congratulate myself on my good fortune in being the destined husband of one so beauteous and lovely as thou art."

"And yet," responded she, archly smiling, "how often have you cursed me when I disturbed your pleasant dreams with my crutch!"

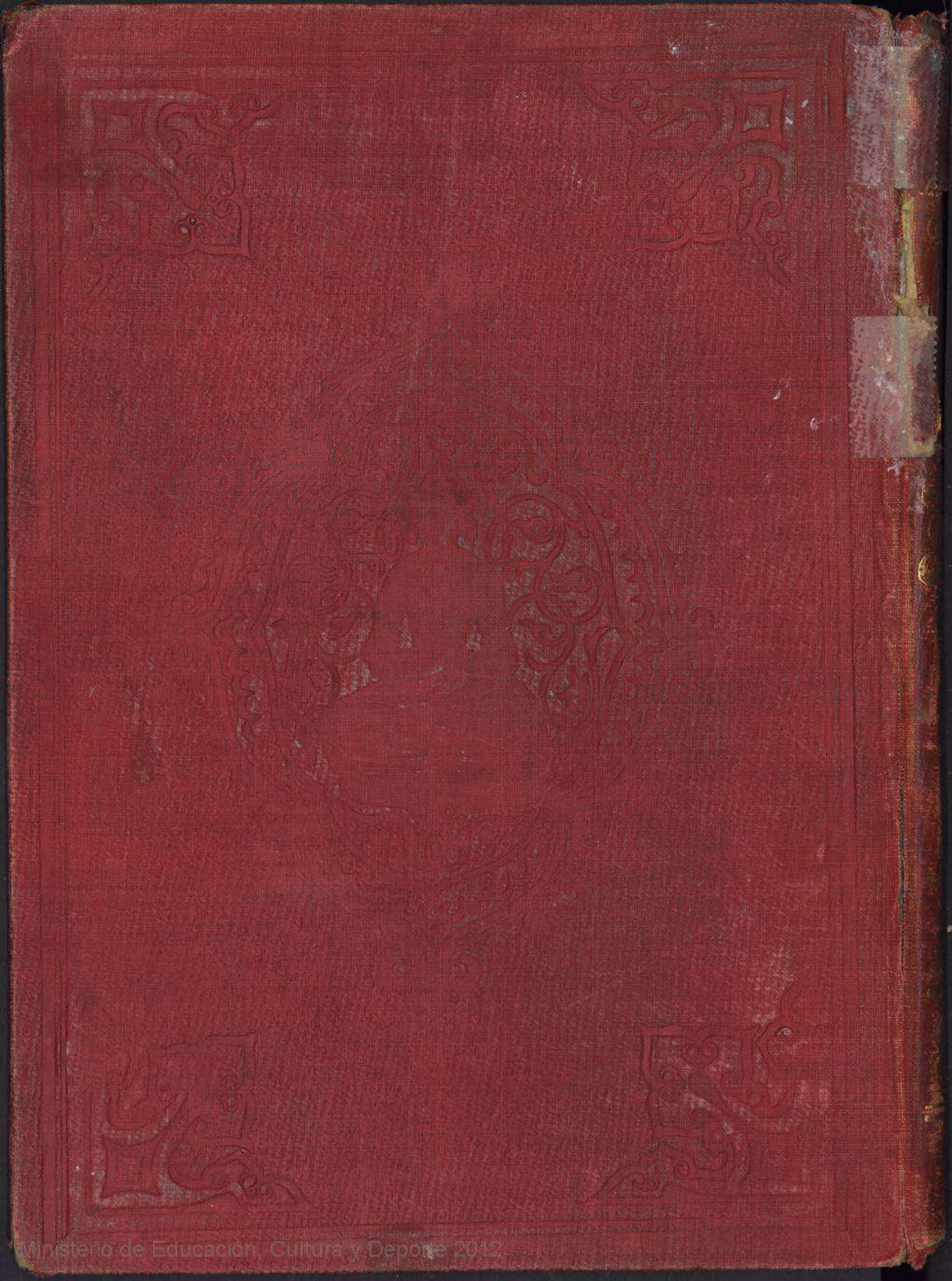
"How!" said he, "are you that hateful old beldame? It is utterly impossible."


"Stay!" said the princess: "are not many things possible and probable with the mighty King of spirits, which to us poor mortals are perfectly incomprehensible and mysterious?"

The marriage rites were immediately solemnised; and, soon after, festival followed festival in rapid succession, each excelling the foregoing in luxury and splendour. Jalaladin reigned happily over the Mogul empire for many, many years; and, by his wise government and splendid victories, greatly enlarged its boundaries, and raised it to greater splendour and fame than it ever attained in any former or succeeding reign.


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