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ORIENTAL TALES,

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE,

BY

J. HOPNER, ESQ. R. A.

At vos exiguo pecori furesque lupique

Parcite ; de magno est præda petenda grege.

TIBULLUS.

LONDON :

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1805.

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P R E F A C E.

IT would be affectation, on so slight an occasion as the present, were I even qualified for the task, to enter into an elaborate enquiry concerning the origin and progress of Tale writing. It may be sufficient to hint, what I presume is pretty generally allowed, that it took its rise in the East, from whence, through the medium of Persia, it spread, in the times of the Caliphs, over the western world, where it was eagerly received, and sedulously cultivated.

It will readily be supposed that my acquaintance with the tales and apologues of France and Italy is not very extensive; I cannot however refrain from observing, that my surprise has been more than once excited, during the perusal of the few which have fallen under my hand, at the little claim they have to originality. In useful inventions Europe must undoubtedly take the lead, but in the productions of fancy Asia has always been pre-eminent. Pilpay, and other Orientalists, have furnished Boccaccio and his followers with their most amusing fables; and from the tenth to the fourteenth century, the literature (if it may be so called) of the south of Europe was confined to little else but imitating and embellishing them.

Enough of these discussions, to which I am as little accustomed as equal:—I feel

a more becoming solicitude to offer some apology for laying these trifles before the public, as they seem to draw my gravity under suspicion; and may probably be thought too light even for the amusement of a father who has five children, more than one of whom is nearly arrived at man's estate. But this circumstance, which might have been objected against me by the more scrupulous, has indeed been the accidental cause of my engaging in a pursuit so remote from the regular course of my studies. My eldest son having the prospect of an appointment in India, the attainment of the Persian language became an essential point in his education; and among other books laid before him, was the *Tooti Nameh*, or *Tales of the Parrot*. It was in a translation of this work that I first read the tale of "the Ass and the Stag," the genuine merit of

which struck me so forcibly, as to engage me in an attempt at putting it into verse, where I conceived the humour and whimsical gravity of the dialogue would be seen to more advantage. Whether I was right in this conjecture will be ascertained by those less partial than the most diffident author ever was supposed to be: and to their decision I shall readily submit: satisfied that what I may lose on the side of vanity, I shall gain in a more just estimation of my own powers, and in the subsequent management of them accordingly.

Let it not however be inferred from this, that I have the slightest intention of ever making my appearance before the public again as a Poet. I have too great a reverence for this art, to suppose that I may attain, at my leisure, what men with greater advantages have not been able to

acquire after the most diligent study. My object in publishing these trifles was rather to prove my love than display my skill: and when I am called upon to shew “some vanity of mine art,” it shall be in a mode in which I have a more legitimate claim to attention and public favour. If it be urged that this demonstration of attachment to excellence out of my peculiar line of study was unnecessary, I reply—that I cannot think so. Every thing that artists may hope to achieve with the view of raising themselves in the just estimation of a public so little disposed in their favour, should be attempted. The general opinion entertained of the extent of our acquisitions, is sufficiently indicated in the judgment passed upon Sir Joshua Reynold’s Lectures: for, since they cannot be styled clumsy performances, the honour of having written them has been awarded

to others, not only against the evidence of common sense, but of men of the highest respectability, who had ample means of better information.

On what this hostility to English artists is founded, it would perhaps be difficult to guess. Few men act more discreetly, or labour with greater diligence to obtain that to which, in the present state of art in Europe, they have decidedly the best claim. The income arising from any liberal profession, however great it may be, is not a sufficient stimulus to noble exertions; and those, therefore, cut off the incitements to a virtuous ambition, who withhold their praise. He who is condemned to pursue his studies with ideas of loss and gain, will stop at that point where exertion ceases to be profitable, and labour to live now, instead of hereafter.

It is from this adverse spirit in the

Public, that our annual exhibitions are received with an approbation so studiously cold, while the affectation of disappointed taste is marked with every expression of contemptuous endurance. This, if just, would be equally humiliating and depressing: but it is impossible to refrain from observing, that, if we are disappointed in our hopes, our pride can suffer but little from the fastidiousness of those who only turn from us to glote upon a species of painting as little regulated by the feelings of art, as the country from which it comes is by any sense of morality and justice. It is not that the French are behind us in the principles of painting: neither are they behind Raffaele or Titian—they are, to use a homely phrase, out of the course; they have not even the merit of being vicious, as they cannot so properly be said to labour in

a bad taste, as to have no taste at all! Their school formerly provoked, at least, a severity of criticism; it now only excites contempt.

It may, I think, be maintained, that on the taste of the artists depends at all times that of the public—but the world is ever more ready to receive bad impressions than good. “How ill must he be playing (said an Athenian, who heard at a distance a performer on the flute) since he receives such loud applauses from the multitude!”

Johnson observes, in his Preface to Shakspeare, “that it very often happens that a wrong reading has affinity to the right;” this is applicable also to painting. There are very indifferent pictures (and if the public insist on it, they may class all of the English school under this head) that still bear relation to good art; but

I have no difficulty in affirming that the works of the present French school do not; and that, whether they be painted by David or Madame Le Brun, in the eye of true taste they are things of no value. In the Preface I have just mentioned, the learned critic, by way of illustration, draws a comparison from what he supposes to be the common practice of artists, which it may also be useful to notice. He says: "A poet overlooks the casual distinction of country and condition, as a painter, *satisfied with the figure, neglects the drapery.*" On this I would beg to observe, that what is often slightly marked in the works of the best artists, must not always be taken for neglect. In the noble picture of King Charles on Horseback, that adorns the Queen's House, a part of one of the hind legs is simply an outline on the bare canvas: yet under

the circumstances in which it is seen, it is better, and more truly expressed, than if it had been, in the vulgar sense of the term, finished—the labour of the great David might encumber, but certainly would not mend it.

Smoothness and finishing, whatever the young connoisseur may think, are not convertible terms! A piece of drapery by the pencil of Rembrant, who was certainly not remarkable for the polish of his surface, differs from the piece in the woollen-drapery's, or in Madame Le Brun's shop; as much in appearance as in value: the woollen from the shops has its market price;—the representation of it from the study of Rembrant, in the language of painters and critics, is inestimable.

Few things have tended to produce more error in the judgment passed on pictures, than the imposing quality of

smoothness, which is generally conceived to be the effect of successful labour, and close attention to finishing; and appears to have been spread over the works of the insipid, as a kind of snare to catch the ignorant. On the art of spreading these toils, and on a feeble, vulgar, and detailed imitation of articles of furniture and dress, rests the whole of Madame Le Brun's reputation. Respecting smoothness, could her admirers see by what simple means, and in how short a time, this appearance may be produced—that the roughest picture, while wet, may, with a soft brush, in five minutes be polished to the surface of marble, I am persuaded that it would lose all its charms, and that they would view with contempt a quality which neither requires the patience of labour, nor the happy exertions of skill, to effect.

To enter into the detail of furniture and dress requires indeed both time and labour ; but time and labour are surely misapplied, if they do not enable us to express objects with as much truth as may be effected by a more facile and happy mode of execution. I speak of dexterity, which is the result of science and experience, and which discovers a sure and ready way to express its purpose. On the misunderstanding of this principle rest most of the judicial errors of vulgar criticism ; we cannot too often, therefore, remind the public of the sentiments of a man on this subject, as distinguished for his deep knowledge of the theory, as he was eminently skilful in the most refined practice of his art. “ If we examine,” says Sir Joshua Reynolds, “ with a critical view, the manner of those painters whom we consider as patterns,

we shall find that their great fame does not proceed from their works being more highly finished than those of other artists, or from a more minute attention to details, but from that enlarged comprehension which sees the whole object at once, and that energy of art which gives its characteristic effect by adequate expression.

“Raffaelle and Titian are two names which stand the highest in our art; one for drawing, the other for painting. The most considerable and the most esteemed works of Raffaelle are the Cartoons, and his fresco works in the Vatican; those, as we all know, are far from being minutely finished: his principal care and attention seems to have been fixed upon the adjustment of the whole, whether it was the general composition of each individual figure; for every figure may be

said to be a lesser whole, though, in regard to the general work to which it belongs, it is but a part: the same may be said of the head, the hands, and feet. Though he possesses this art of seeing and comprehending the whole, as far as form is concerned, he did not exert the same faculty in regard to the general effect which is presented to the eye by colour, and light and shade. Of this the deficiency of his oil pictures, where this excellence is more expected than in fresco, is a sufficient proof.

“It is to Titian we must turn our eyes to find excellence, with regard to colour, and light and shade, in the highest degree. He was both the first and the greatest master of this art. By a few strokes he knew how to mark the general image and character of whatever object he attempted; and produced, by

this alone, a truer representation than his master Giovanni Bellino, or any of his predecessors, who finished every hair. His great care was to express the general colour, to preserve the masses of light and shade, and to give by opposition the idea of that solidity which is inseparable from natural objects. When these are observed, though the work should possess no other merit, it will have, in a proper place, its complete effect ; but where any of these are wanting, however minutely laboured the picture may be in the detail, the whole will have a false and even an unfinished appearance, at whatever distance, or in whatever light, it can be shewn." Lectures, Vol. I. page 226.

I have, as the reader sees, availed myself of the present occasion to express my sentiments on this subject, not as it may affect me, but public taste, so intimately

connected with morals, and, indeed, with every thing that distinguishes a great from a barbarous nation. All private considerations in matters of this moment must give way to a more imperious duty; and whenever a spurious art appears among us, powerful enough in its patronage, not in its inherent strength, to do mischief, I trust I shall neither want patriotism nor courage openly to meet, and cordially to assist in its defeat and extermination.

Although the age of chivalry is past, it may still be thought that the common laws of gallantry required me to spare the artist, in honour of her sex. But, in her overweening presumption, Madame Le Brun has destroyed distinction, and ostentatiously waved her privilege. She has challenged hostility, when she might have escaped with impunity by falling

into that rank which the mediocrity of her talents, and the state of the arts in this country, rendered it decent for her to take. To expose successful imposition is, at all times, a hazardous enterprise, and, unfortunately, personal considerations, in the present case, add a degree of unpopularity to the danger,—but silence might have been mistaken for acquiescence; and the world has nothing more painful to inflict than the imputation of inferiority to such miserable productions. That these are not merely the fretful and interested wailings of personal disappointment, every one the least acquainted with my intercourse in society will, I am persuaded, do me the justice to believe. Were this a fit occasion to enlarge on matters of private concern, or to unbosom myself on such a subject, I could display instances of benefits con-

ferred upon me, in consideration of my professional character, which in the few boastful events of my life, stand as eminently distinguished as do the personages who, in addition to the high respect and veneration due to their rank and talents, have bound me to them by indissoluble ties of the warmest gratitude.

It is no trifling consolation to me, that the few strictures which I have advanced on the expensive trash of this lady,* cannot, by the most prejudiced of her partisans, be attributed to any suggestions of jealousy, which always implies a common aim; which has in view the same excellence to excite ambition—the same powers

* The world will scarcely believe that Madam Le Brun demands thrice the sum for her labours that Sir Joshua Reynolds received for works, which are a lasting credit to the country, at the latest period of his honourable life!

to invigorate contention. Enthusiasm is sufficiently contagious, but who has ever heard of the attractions of inanity; or what English artist could be warmed with the frigid productions of French art?

“ Where burnish’d beads, silk, satin, laces vie,
In leaden lustre with the goosberry eye;
Where broadcloth breathes, to talk where cushions
strive,
And all, but Sir, or Madam, looks alive!”

But it is time to resume the subject of my Publication, and give some little account of my plan and resources. Four of the following Tales are selected from the *Tooti Nameh*, or *Tales of the Parrot*, viz. the Ist, IId, IVth, and VIth. The IId is founded on one of a set published in a small volume by the Rev. W. Beloe. The Vth from the *Heetopades of Veesh-noo-Jarma*; and the VIIth and VIIIth are from the fables of the 12th and 13th

centuries, published by Mons. Le Grand. On these, as they have all the air of an Eastern origin, with the exception of changing sheiks and imams, into monks, &c. I conceived that I had a legitimate cause of making reprisals, and have therefore converted them into imams and sheiks again, with a view of preserving uniformity.

Should some of these Tales appear to bear a little hard upon the female character, I would request the fair reader to consider that they represent Eastern manners and morals ; and that they are the actions of a people whose gods were monsters, or whose prophet was Mahomet. In a Christian country, I presume, these things could not happen ; and yet if our theatres are places to which ladies resort to view themselves “ as in a glass,” there is not then much to choose between the man-

ners of the East and of the West. But vice upon the stage is so cheerfully lit up, and so agreeably set to music, that it may possibly pass for virtue ; which will readily account for our ladies sitting with so much complacency at the representation of modern comedies, the most admired of which do not exhibit a single immaculate character to hang our hopes upon ; or to shew that virtue may at once appear amiable and genteel.

I hope I have been more prudent, in a worldly view (having neither the aid of light nor music), in giving to these Tales, as far as they would admit of it, a moral tendency ; for my bookseller, good man, has taken them upon trust. Yet I have formed a secret resolution that he shall not lose either by the vitiated taste of the town, or the absence of all taste in the author. The critics will give me leave

to say, the circumstance of having been subject to popular criticism for upwards of twenty years, is alone sufficient to render a man less sensible either to censure or applause ; after all, this is but my summer tenement ; and I may exclaim with the honest Hibernian, who was warned to quit a house that was on fire—" It is nothing to me, I am only a lodger !"

The little embellishment prefixed to this volume I entrust to the world with some degree of anxiety. It is the first production of my third son, Lascelles Hoppner ; a boy, whose talents, how highly soever they may be rated by the fond partiality of a parent, constitute the smallest part of his claim to my affection.



TALE I.

THE ASS AND THE STAG



THE ASS AND THE STAG.

ONCE on a time, no matter when,
But 'twas some ages since; say ten—
(For asses now more wise appear,
And deer affect to herd with deer)
Once on a time then, it is said,
An Ass and Stag together fed;
In bonds of love so closely bound,
That seldom were they separate found.
The upland lawns when summer dried,
They ranged the meadows side by side;

And when gaunt famine chased them thence,
'They overleap'd the garden fence,
Dividing without strife or coil,
Like ministers of state, the spoil.

In that gay season when the Hours,
Spring's handmaids, strew the earth with flowers,
Our pair walk'd forth, and frisk'd and play'd,
And cropt the herbage as they stray'd.
'Twas evening—stillness reign'd around,
And dews refresh'd the thirsty ground ;
When, homeward browsing, both inhale
Unusual fragrance from the gale.
It was a garden, compass'd round
With thorns, (a perfect Indian mound,
Through which they saw enough within,
To make a drove of asses sin.
No watchdog—gard'ner—all was hush'd ;
They bless'd their stars, and in they push'd ;
Fell to with eager haste, and wasted
'Ten cabbages, for one they tasted.

And now the Ass (to fullness fed)
Cherish'd strange fancies in his head ;
On nature's carpet idly roll'd,
By care or prudence uncontroll'd ;
His pride froth'd up, his self-conceit,
And thus it bubbled forth :—“ How sweet,
Prince of the branching antlers wide,
The mirth-inspiring moments glide !
How grateful are the hours of spring,
What odours sweet the breezes bring !
The musky air to joy invites,
And drowns the senses in delights.
Deep 'mid the waving cypress boughs,
Turtles exchange their amorous vows ;
While, from his rose's fragrant lips,
The bird of eve love's nectar sips.
Where'er I throw my eyes around,
All seems to me enchanted ground ;
And night, while Cynthia's silvery gleam
Sleeps on the lawn, the grove, the stream,

Heart-soothing night, for nothing longs,
But one of my melodious songs,
To lap the world in bliss, and show
A perfect paradise below !
When youth's warm blood shall cease to flow,
And beauty's cheek no longer glow ;
When these soft graceful limbs, grown old,
Shall feel Time's fingers, icy cold ;
Close in his chilling arms embraced,
What pleasures can I hope to taste ?
What sweet delight in Age's train ?
Spring will return, but ah ! in vain."

The Stag, half pitying, half amazed,
Upon his old associate gazed ;
" What ! hast thou lost thy wits ?" he cried,
" Or art thou dreaming, open eyed ?
Sing, quotha ! was there ever bred
In any mortal ass's head
So strange a thought ! But, no offence—
What if we first remove from hence ;

And talk, as erst, of straw and oats,
Of scurvy fare, and mangy coats,
Of heavy loads, or worse than those,
Of cruel drivers, and hard blows ?
For recollect, my gentle friend,
We're thieves, and plunder is our end.
See! through what parsley we've been toiling,
And what fine spinage we are spoiling !
' He most of all doth outrage reason,
' Who fondly singeth out of season.'
A proverb that, in sense, surpasses
The brains combined of stags and asses :
Yet, for I must thy perils trace,
Sweet bulbul * of the long-ear'd race !
Soft soul of harmony ! yet hear ;
If thou wilt rashly charm our ear,
And with thy warblings, loud and deep,
Unseal the leaden eye of sleep ;
Roused by thy song, and arm'd with staves,
The gard'ner, and a host of slaves,

* The Persian word for Nightingale.

Lest thou repent thee, when too late,
And moan thy pains, and well-earn'd fate."

Impatience stung the warbler's soul,
Greatly he spurn'd the mean control ;
And from the verdant turf uprear'd,
He on his friend contemptuous leer'd ;
Stretch'd his lean neck, and wildly stared,
His dulcet pitch-pipe then prepared,
His flaky ears prick'd up withal,
And stood in posture musical.

"Ah !" thought the Stag, " I greatly fear,
Since he his throat begins to clear,
And strains and stares, he will not long
Deprive us of his promised song.
Friendship to safety well may yield."
He said, and nimbly fled the field.

Alone at length, the warbler Ass
Would every former strain surpass ;
So right he aim'd, so loud he bray'd,
The forest shook, night seem'd afraid,

And starting at the well-known sound,
The gard'ners from their pallets bound ;
The scared musician this pursues,
That stops him with insidious noose ;
Now to a tree behold him tied,
Whilst both prepare to take his hide.
But first his cudgel either rears,
And plies his ribs, his nose, his ears ;
His head converted to a jelly,
His back confounded with his belly ;
All bruised without, all broke within,
To leaves they now convert his skin ;
Whereon, in characters of gold,
For all good asses, young and old,
This short instructive tale is told.

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TALE II.

THE FAGGOT-MAKER AND THE
FAIRIES.

THE FAGGOT-MAKER AND THE FAIRIES.

DEEP in the windings of a wood,
As breathing from his toil he stood,
A labourer, in the break, espies
The twinkling of some fairy eyes.
Curious, yet not devoid of fear,
He drew, with wary footstep, near ;
And, wond'ring, heard them sweetly trowl
Around a bright, enchanted bowl ;
Which, as he view'd it thus by stealth,
Seem'd a vast magazine of wealth,

That ev'ry want, nor those a few,
(For 'twas a female fairy crew,)
And every wish—and those, beside,
Not over-diffident,—supplied.
All viands grateful to the taste,
Are, with a thought, before them placed ;
All drinks ; the clustering grape distils,
In golden cups, its purple rills,
That take, as fancy gives the sign,
The flavour of the Houri's wine.
Robes, spangled in ethereal looms,
Gay lustre fling, and shed perfumes,
Such as exhale in dewy showers,
At orient morn, from jasmine bowers.
All, all that sickly fancy fires
When glowing still with new desires,
Within the magic rim is found ;
They dip, and every wish is crown'd.
Next morn (his wonted toil renew'd)
The fairies at their bowl he view'd.

And while he mark'd the roundels pass,
And lick'd his lips at every glass,
The fairies, who his pranks had seen,
Stept from their bower of living green,
And smiling, call'd him forth;—you guess
He was not slow to join their mess;
And ere he well had ta'en his place,
Had thrust his fingers in the vase.
Ye Powers!—thus lifted in a trice
To all the joys of Paradise,
His bosom wife—O foul dishonour!
Was lost, as if he ne'er had known her:
And, in oblivious draughts profound,
His lovely babes as quickly drown'd.
Whole days and nights in joy he past—
Why will not pleasure ever last?
Ah, why will fancy still diffuse
Her gayest tints o'er distant views?
For now affection took its turn,
His heart for home began to yearn:

To enjoy, without his babes, a feast,
Seem'd scarce example for a beast :
Could he but share it with his wife,
O Alla, what a happy life !

But thus, alone,—slow dragg'd the hour,
And pleasure lost her wonted power.

Resolved to seek his home again,
He thus address'd the elfin train :
“ A faggot-maker poor, behold,
Who many a year of care hath told :
A wife and offspring share my gains,
My pleasures, and, more oft, my pains.
To silence Hunger's piercing screams,
(Discord, that ever haunts my dreams !)
I here at early dawn repair,
Enjoy hard labour—and the air ;
And, with the earnings of the day,
Plod back at night my weary way.
But all my cares—and cares abound,
In Plenty's cup have late been drown'd.

Now, if a mortal's humble prayer
Might find admission to your ear,
Your slave his anxious wife may greet,
His children clasp with kisses sweet ;
Their fears allay, their wants relieve :—
For me as dead e'en now they grieve,
While I——” with that, sure sign of grace,
A tear ran trickling down his face.

Moved at the sight, they nod assent :—
“ If pleasure cannot bring content ;
If unmix'd sweets the senses cloy,
That sicken with excess of joy ;
Return :—yet something we'll bestow ;
Be thy desires or high, or low,
’Tis ours to grant : fear no offence,
Pronounce thy wish, and hie thee hence.”

Grown more assured, he, in reply,
Had but one wish to gratify,
That made him almost die with shame,—
A wish, in short, he scarce could name,

Since nothing but the mystic bowl
Would satisfy his ardent soul,
Shrill laughter shook their tiny sides,
And each his idle fear derides :
“ And is this all,” they cry, “ is this
The mighty boon you dread to miss?
The loss, forsooth, would make us poor !—
O, little skill'd in fairy lore !
A twinkling would before us set
Ten thousand bowls more precious yet.
Yet treat not lightly, gentle friend,
What fate, propitious, deigns to lend ;
But guard it with thy tend'rest care—
'Tis precious, yet 'tis brittle ware !
One caution more—take special heed
To use it only in thy need.”

The man with joy was nearly dumb—
“ 'Twixt him and bliss no chance should come :
So rare a treasure 'twere but right
To keep for ever in his sight.

Each thought, each motion of his soul,
Was bent to guard that sacred bowl."

Thus saying, he received the gift,
And, though all rapture, made a shift
To reach his home ; nor sign betray'd
Of loss of wit, or fortune made.

Caress'd his wife, his children fed,
And went, when some folks dine, to bed :
Paid all his debts without debate,
Not aiming yet to ape the great ;
Gave alms on Pity's tender hint,
Nor look'd to see his name in print :
In short, discretion, bless the while !
On all his actions seem'd to smile.

Wisdom and want we often pair ;
But wise and fortunate, how rare !
Chance had on our poor friend bestow'd
Far more than he to wisdom owed ;
For he was one, in life's past scenes,
Whose wishes still outran his means,

Yet care his heart had little pain'd,
And light the traces that remain'd.
Where misery once usurps control
She ever reigns.— Still, still, my soul
(Though fortune long her brow hath smooth'd,
And cheering hope my sorrows sooth'd)
Looks from her secret chamber out,
And views mankind with fear and doubt.
Should pleasure in my path be found,
Awed, I approach the enchanted ground ;
Suspect, beneath each flower, a snare,
And tread, with trembling caution, there.
Not so our friend ; he'd rarely miss
To quaff the full-crown'd cup of bliss.—
His money burnt, and now he found
His hut scarce peep'd above the ground.
Grown rich, so many friends he told,
A palace only would them hold :
He builds, the city entertains,
With wonder every eyeball strains ;

The talismanic bowl displays,
And pours its wealth a thousand ways.
Though various passions fill'd each breast,
Contentment smiled in every guest ;
The pamper'd here refine their taste,—
Rich wines of Shiraz crown'd the feast,
That from a thousand fountains flow'd,
And dreams of happiness bestow'd.
On rosy beds recline the fair,
Sweet musky odours scent the air,
Soft music in each bosom trill'd,
And every pain, save love, was still'd.

This idle show, this vain parade
Of wealth, most ill bestow'd, display'd ;
Elate with pride, inflamed with wine,
Our host himself resolved to shine :
In points and angles set each limb,
Prepared in mazy dance to swim.
Vain of his skill, poor silly soul !
He balanced on his arm the bowl,

Which, as he turn'd him round and round,
He struck; and, to the vibrant sound,
“ O, soul-delighting bowl!” he cried,
“ Source of my wealth, my joy, my pride;
Spring of my state, my envy'd show,
And every blessing known below;
This dazzling pomp proceeds from thee,
Thou author of my jubilee!
’Tis thou hast raised me from the dust,
O glorious goblet! sacred trust!
O light that leads to every joy!
Fountain of sweets, that never cloy!”
Thus, as his praise redundant flows,
His flaming eyes he upward throws:
And like a fakcer most devout,
Rolls them with pious zeal about;
Capers like one to reason lost,
His body with'd, his members tost,
Till, by one slip, ah, woe the day!
The bowl in glittering fragments lay.

That instant vanish'd all his state,
His costly robes, his massy plate,
His gilded rooms, his palace fair,
All, like a dream, dissolved in air.
The splendid banquet of delight
To mourning turn'd that luckless night:
And he, who gaily danced and sung,
His bosom beat, his fingers wrung;
Even he, so late all noise and mirth,
Now cursed the hour of his sad birth.

Thus oft is wealth, too lightly earn'd,
By folly to destruction turn'd.
Heedless of all the blessings given,
To make on earth a present heaven,
He in a brawl, or midnight revel,
Reels brainless, hopeless, to the devil.

TALE III.

THE MAN AND THE GENIE.

THE MAN AND THE GENIE.

SINCE marriages are made above,
And little owe to choice, or love,
The man is, surely, to be pitied,
That with a cross-grain'd toad is fitted ;
You cannot blame his taste, but he
May curse his cruel destiny :
Even so against his stars would rail
The hero of my present tale,
Whose wife—without, as plain as sin,
Was yet far more deform'd within.

Her blood-shot eyes, with fury drunk,
Her dugs, with withering malice shrunk.
The frightened Loves a bosom fled
To every soft emotion dead.
Passions she had both fierce and strong,
But, warm'd with rage, they ran to tongue :
Abusive, wicked, unrelenting—
Your own is hardly more tormenting.
He often wished, as many do,
Who put a smiling face on't too,
Wish'd her—what? where? do you enquire?—
Even dead, and with the devil her sire!
Who thought the good man's kind concern
Deserved of him as kind return ;
And therefore help'd him to the notion
Of drowning Dearest in the ocean.
“ Come, love,” said he, one day, “ come, spousy,
Our linen looks a little frowzy ;
We'll amble where the stream, my sweet,
And ocean's waves so loving meet ;

There, side by side, our garments lave,
Cool'd by the breeze, and rippling wave."

So up he takes his filthy pack,
And trudges with it on his back :
Arrived—their dirty toil began ;
He seeks a blessing on his plan ;
For mortals do not nicely weigh
The odd events for which they pray ;
Encouraged by success, no doubt,
As in this instance it fell out.

His wife, poor soul—for of the fair
Still may I speak with tenderest care—
Stooping, a truant rag to gain,
He tumbled headlong in the main.
The business done, the man was bound
Safety to seek on other ground.

As light of heart he tripp'd along,
Drowning the nightingale's sweet song ;
One morn there rose before his eyes
A Genie of enormous size ;

Whose head, while firm on earth he stood,
The clouds encompass'd like a hood,
With fearful grasp he seiz'd our friend,
And swore his wicked life to end :
Yet mercy temper'd still his breath—
The wretch might choose the kind of death.
“ Say, shall I tear thy entrails out ?
Or strew thy mangled limbs about ?
Here batter on the rocks thy brain ?
Or hurl thee headlong in the main ?”
“ And will my lord,” the man replied,
“ His errors from his servant hide ?—
For into errors, doom'd to all,
Thy slave, most frail, must doubtless fall—
But suffer me, dread sir, to swear,
To me unknown, as yet, they are.”
“ Unknown !” the Genie cried, “ unknown !
Was not that hag, that shrivell'd crone,
That with her carcass curs'd the sea,
Speak ! was she not flung there by thee ?

Wretch ! did she not from our loved waves,
Our coral groves, and pearly caves,
Me and my tribe to flight constrain,
By clamour that outroar'd the main ?”
Hah ! thought the man, upon my life
He means that wrinkled witch, my wife.
“ What ! you have fled ?—and is it just
To punish my poor mortal dust,
For quitting that infernal fair,
Whose tongue not you, even you, could bear ?”
The Genie answer'd “ Right in sooth,”
(For man alone is deaf to truth,)
“ Thou’rt right : I’ll henceforth be thy friend,
Thy fortune and thy steps attend.”

On evils past now either smiled,
And social chat the way beguiled.
At length a city they descry,
Whose turrets proudly pierce the sky ;
O’er which, so bounteous Heaven ordain’d,
A prince in peace and wisdom reign’d.

Enter'd the gates—a busy crew
Their anxious daily toil pursue :
A different pang each bosom rends,
A faithless wife, insidious friends,
Disease, and meagre want, and strife—
Yet each still fondly clings to life :
On the new day their hopes they cast,
More big with sorrow than the last.—
So hope to me delight hath grown,
Who little else but care have known.
Of thee, my first-born joy, bereft,
Hope fills the void thy absence left ;
Hope breathes the gale must waft thee home,
And boasts a bliss—that ne'er may come !
But soft, my heart, affection rein ;
My tale demands a gayer strain.
“ Now rest awhile, and lend an ear—
Suppose I make thee vizier here,”
The Genie said.—“ A vizier ? me !”
Replied the man, “ it cannot be !”

“ What, doubt my power !—Ere gloomy night
The sun shall ravish from our sight,
Thou shalt be vizier : I have said,
So listen to the plan I’ve laid.
A serpent, fearful to behold,
The royal maiden I’ll enfold ;
With double head, spout baleful breath,
A double sting shall threaten death,
Four eyes in lightning glare around,
The weak appal, the strong confound ;
And should the nation join’d, assay
To tear from me my trembling prey,
’Twere vain :—when now, with terror chill,
The Sultan shall proclaim his will,
‘ Who wrests her from the spiral snare,
‘ In wedlock shall enjoy the fair.’
The palace then, my friend, draw near,
And, robed, a reverend sheik appear :
Engage the monster thence to chase,
And snatch her from the loath’d embrace.

At thy approach, with feign'd dismay,
Like melted snow, I'll glide away."

Each strange event in order past,
Just as the Genie had forecast.

The crier proclaims :—" The princess' life
Who saves, shall press a royal wife."

The man, disguised, a sheik appears,
The Haram enters:—bathed in tears

A beauteous maiden he beholds,

Within a serpent's deadly folds ;

Who seeing him, pretends dismay,

And glides, like melted snow, away.

O blest, such beauty born to save !

As from the bosom of the grave,

The Princess, pale and trembling rose,

And mutter'd prayers her terrors close.

At night the festive torches glare,

And Hymen's couch receives the fair.

Next morn, behold, before him stands

His giant friend—he kiss'd his hands.

“ A favour now 'tis mine to sue”—

“ Good,” said the Man, “ and were it two!”—

“ Know then, within this passing hour,

By Love impell'd, almighty power!

Who racks a Genie's heart with pains,

Or rages in a mortal's veins;

Know, 'tis my purpose to entwine

The vizier's daughter—maid divine!

Presume not thou relief to lend,

Or forfeit both thy life and friend.”

“ I lend relief!” the Man replied—

“ Go, and good fortune be your guide!”

Loud tumult rose; fear fills each breast,

And shrieks announce the serpent blest.

The tidings reach the Sultan's ear—

“ Patience,” he cried, “ and nothing fear;

My son, the sheik, hath power, we know,

To chase from hence this hateful foe.

Seek him in haste:”—in haste they ran,

And quickly found the gifted man;

The Sultan's will declare, who pray'd
He'd straight release the snake-bound maid.

“ Release ! you sure might understand

I've other matters now in hand—

I dare not, cannot, will not go ;

This is my wedding-morn, you know :

Besides, good folks, I've lost the skill,

And with it, somehow, lost the will.

Must I serve ever at a pinch ?

No, hang me, if I stir an inch !”

Again the royal suitor prest ;

The Man still waved the high behest.

The Sultan now, with anger fired,

In terms less mild, his aid required :

“ This instant go, my son,” he said,

“ Or hold thy will, and lose thy head.

Can nought beneath a princess prove

Thou hast a heart distress may move ?”

“ Good, very good, and aptly done !

This 'tis to be a Sultan's son !

More curst (with reverence to my state)
I was not in my former mate.
Yet something must be done, and pat—
But what, my friend, ah, Selim, what ?
If to the maiden aid I lend,
I perish by my monster friend :
No better fortune waits my stay,
For then I fall the Sultan's prey.”
Some moments still in thought he spent,
Then to the vizier's palace went ;
The maid's apartments enter'd, where,
On each pale face, sat mute despair.
That slender waste a serpent wound,
Which princely arms with joy had bound.
The Genie, when the Man he view'd,
Thus mutter'd in a voice subdued :
“ Ah, wretch ! retract thy base design,
Hold sacred, friendship such as mine.”
“ Hist !” said the Man, in voice as low,
“ Think not I enter here a foe ;

'Tis with the kindest views in life—
Hark you—that Termagant, my wife,
Whom, for her clamorous rage, I drown'd,
And you, sir, fled the abyss profound,
Has left her haunts ; our wandering traced,
And hither tends with frantic haste.
Adieu ! your supernatural might,
Her claws, nay more, her tongue may slight ;
To me, her fury is no jest ;—
Let my lord do as seemeth best.”
The serpent's skin, on this, was seen
To turn from bright to sickly green ;
When, in a voice that weaker grew,
He whisper'd—“ 'Sdeath ! and is it true ?
Where is she ? ”—“ Close at hand : I fear
Another moment brings her here.”
“ Another moment ! friend, I yield,
With Furies I contest no field :
'Tis true, this fair one I adore,
But, oh ! I hate thy monster more.”

Then, with unfeign'd alarm and dread,
He from the maiden slipp'd, and fled.—
While glorying in the sleight, his friend
Saw all to his advancement tend;
In peace enjoy'd a royal bride,
And lived a prince, a prophet died!

TALE IV.

THE SEVEN LOVERS.

THE SEVEN LOVERS.



FOUR friends, good Musselmen, 'tis said,
As e'er to Alla bow'd the head,
For sins not lightly to be told,
But doubtless great and manifold,
To Mecca steer'd their pious course,
Ere matters should become yet worse.
The first, a Carver skill'd; the second,
Of Jewellers the prime was reckon'd;
The third, a Derwish; and the last,
A Tailor—of no common cast.

The story adds, they were, beside,
In friendship still so close allied,
That whether at the fountain sweet
They slaked their thirst, or sat at meat,
At rest, or on adventure bound,
Together they were ever found.
Was one alarm'd ? each swelling breast
Alike a stranger seem'd to rest ;
One soul inspired them, and yet more,
One purse contain'd their worldly store.

"Twas evening, in a desert wild,
Where never nature bounteous smiled,
Where monsters, foes to human kind,
At midnight glared astride the wind.—
Around them stretch'd a heathy sod,
By foot of mortal seldom trod,
Save some lone wanderer, fall'n astray,
Or robber, prowling wide for prey :
When Prudence, ever at their side,
By night their shield, by day their guide,

Thus pour'd her dictates in each ear :
“ Keep watch by turns, and nothing fear.”
'Twas first the Carver's lot, we find,
To guard his friends, to sleep resign'd ;
Who, lest the same seductive god
Should stretch o'er him his opiate rod,
Drew forth his implements of art,
And, from the remnant of a cart,
Axle, or beam, no matter which,
What cannot taste with skill enrich !
A female carved, of form so rare,—
Such graces wanton'd in her air,
Such undulating beauty flow'd
Through every limb that lived, that glow'd !
So soft her bosom seem'd to rise,
All pausing to the ravish'd eyes,
That art had here, it might be thought,
Far more than ever nature wrought,
Had —— ne'er to man been given,
To shew what beauty brightens heaven.

The Jeweller, fast lock'd in sleep,
Was roused, the second watch to keep.
His cautious eye he glanced around,
And, unadorn'd, upon the ground,
Saw all that naked charms could boast :
But naked charms are—charms at most.
Much he admired the Carver's art ;
And, emulous to bear a part,
“ Since,” he observed, “ my dexterous friend
Can to a log such beauty lend,
'Tis fitting I my comrades treat,
And render what is fair, complete.”
So saying, from his precious store
He drew his bulse, his glittering ore ;
And to each arm's enchanting round
A sparkling band of rubies bound :
Her neck with gems of various size
Illumin'd, like the starry skies,
Exhausted every precious stone,
Till one bright blaze of light she shone !

Of dreary night two portions spent,
The Derwish his protection lent ;
But first to prayer himself address'd,
A pious duty after rest.
His eyes to heaven about to raise,
Were charm'd to earth—compelled to gaze,
With chasten'd rapture, on a form
That one e'en more devout might warm.
With zeal now burning to prepare
For paradise a thing so fair,
In supplication low he pray'd,
It then might breathe a living maid,
Endow'd with every winning grace
Befitting such a shape and face.
His fervent prayer was heard above—
And first, her tongue began to move,
Her eyes then roll'd, her warm heart beat,
And, lastly, reason took its seat.

At the fourth watch, reluctant rose
The Tailor, from his loved repose ;

And seeing one divinely fair
Before him stand, all gold and glare,
“ O heavens !” he cried, “ with solemn sneer,
What incongruities are here !—
A maiden, as an Houri fair,
Hung round with gems—yet bare, quite bare !
Ah ! why do thus the human race,
Reason, that gift of heaven, debase,
And still prefer, with strange abuse,
Vain ornaments, to things of use ?
Shall I, with power to save, sit by,
And see her draw the vulgar eye
With what (I speak with honest pride)
My art, and mine alone, can hide ?
Forbid it, heaven !”—and forth he drew
His needle, thimble, silk to sew,
And form'd a robe of woof most rare,
That lightly wanton'd in the air ;
Each flowing fold an ambuscade,
Where little laughing Cupids play'd.

Now in the east resplendent shone,
Chasing night's lingering mists, the sun ;
And every blade its gilded crest
In homage raised, and morn confess'd.
But friendship, that, till this mad hour,
Had strew'd the way with many a flower,
To sharp contention quickly turn'd ;
And each swoll'n breast with anger burn'd.
Beauty had wove the cruel snare
With ringlets of her flowing hair,
With nods and glances, potent wiles,
Dissembled frowns, and dimpled smiles !

Ardent for conquest and a wife,
All four unbar the gates of strife.
“ Behold,” the Carver cries, “ behold,
A prize above the reach of gold !
A worthless log it lately lay,
Bare to the sun's all-scorching ray,
Wither'd by every wind that blows—
A lure for dogs, a perch for crows,

Till wrought to this by skill divine ;
And need I boast, that skill was mine !”

“ This,” cried the Jeweller, “ thy claim ?—
Undeck her, and behold the dame !
Without the stars, the desert skies
Attract no gazers, charm no eyes ;
Without the casket’s shining train,
A log, in worth, she might remain.”

“ Thus,” cried the Derwish, “ men ingrate
The choicest gifts of heaven still rate !
Set wealth and skill, dreams of an hour,
In balance with almighty power !
What is her form, her precious store,
The rakings of Golconda’s shore,
Compared with life, and thought more rare,
Blessings I humbly sought in prayer ?”

The Tailor fiercely cock’d his chin,
And with shrill treble join’d the din :
“ And shall a carver’s paltry taste,
Or thy more tawdry, paltry paste—

“ Shall Superstition’s whining cant,
A crazy Derwish’ idle rant,
Absurdly rank with art sublime,
Derived to me from earliest time?
Art, without which the fairest maid
May waste her sweetness in the shade,
While bones, and parchment, well attired,
Stream haughty by, to be admired !”

Much time in fruitless wrangle spent,
They one and all at length consent,
That he who first, perchance, pass’d by,
The merits of their claims should try.
Not long in wild suspense they stay,
A sturdy Ethiop cross’d their way ;
To whom each told his tale, each sure
A partial verdict to procure.
The crisp-hair’d judge beheld the prize
With beating heart, and ravish’d eyes ;
And, stretching forth the arm of lust,
“ O blessed Alla ! Heaven is just !”

He cried, and seized the trembling fair ;
“ Behold my wife !—By what dark snare,
What foul deception ye possess
My best beloved, ye’ll soon confess !
Full many a tedious moon hath waned,
Since tidings of my love I gain’d :
Full many an anxious hour I stray’d :—
How wert thou, dearest, thus betray’d ?
But to the Vizier quick, away—
Their crimes with torments he’ll repay ;
Torments proportion’d to the wrong
I’ve born so heavily, so long !”
To the tribunal driven amain,
The Ethiop told his tale again.

There are, O grief to think ! who find
Justice not always quite so blind :
For truth and falsehood poised may seem,
When passion mounts, and turns the beam.
Beauty unveil’d, the Vizier views
That his weak virtue soon subdues ;

Her living bloom, and mingled white,
Promised sweet draughts of rich delight ;
While his fond soul suspended hung
Her flowing tresses dark among,
The voice of woe he artful raised :—
“ O, wonder not I seem amazed,
A brother's widow who behold,
He slain, his jewels gone, his gold ;
And she, who worship might inspire,
A prey to lawless, rank desire !—
But for the loss I sadly moan,
Your forfeit lives shall soon atone.”
This said, he quits the judgment seat ;
The wretched culprits, threaten'd, beat,
Are to the Sultan hurried, pale,
Who hears the accuser's monstrous tale.

The monarch, proof to wily art,
Unguarded left his easy heart,
Which, through his eyes, soon felt a wound
Whose balm in love is only found.

Love, ever fertile in device,
And, so he gain his end, not nice.
The thought conceived, he sternly cried,
“Ye fiends of fraud, in guilt allied!
Base lurking slaves, with mischief fraught!
Long your dark haunts I’ve vainly sought.
This fair one, whom amazed I view,
Her life’s-breath in the palace drew;
By sacred ties together bound,
A paradise in her I found;
But jealous, as I then believed,
She fled my haram, unperceived;
And with her took a countless store
Of sparkling gems, and golden ore.
Yet fortune hath my slave restored:—
Ungrateful, still, alas! adored:
But ye, who bore my wealth away,
With bondage shall the loss repay.”

Fame soon proclaim’d aloud the event,
And forth the long-ear’d rabble went:

Both eyes and mouths now open wide
Their floodgates, to receive the tide.
'The tale was strange, and new the strife;—
Seven candidates for one poor wife!—
Nor were they less amazed to find
The claimants of such different kind.
Yet each a plausible story framed,
'That seeming equal credit claim'd,
And left the curious idle rout,
Just at the point they first sat out.

At length a Pir,* all hoar with age,
And deeply read in wisdom's page,
First bowing to the royal will,
His sage advice did thus instil :
“ The contests which our minds divide,
Man, all too weak, can ne'er decide ;
For having appetites that bend
Our judgments to their partial end,
Wild fancy mounts to urge the steeds,
And drives where lust, or rapine leads.

* A magician, a prophet, one endowed with supernatural powers.

A short day's journey east, there grows
A tree, whose old and mystic boughs,
Far in the clouds of Heaven conceal'd,
To mortal eye are ne'er reveal'd ;
Its seed-root strikes the depths profound ;
Its fibres clasp this mighty round :
What wisdom baffles, power defies,
There truth shall solve before your eyes.

Thus saying, instant all assent ;—
Towards the tree their steps they bent ;
Attended by the passive dame,
Whose beauty fann'd their raging flame.
There each his story artful weaves,
And prints it on the listening leaves ;
Each bows his forehead in the dust,
And supplicates a sentence just.
That instant waken'd all their fears—
Terrific sounds assail their ears ;
Through the thick gloom quick lightnings dart,
The trembling earth appals each heart ;

When, from the inmost pith, the trunk
(A sight from which scared nature shrunk)
With dreadful rent now yawning wide,
Received, then closed upon, the bride !
While, from the mouths of million leaves,
A voice of sense the throng bereaves ;
A fearful voice, as thunder loud
That issues from the bursting cloud :
“ In-crooked paths no longer tread,
By truth eternal be ye led ;
And, O, this awful lesson learn,
TO THEIR FIRST STATE ALL THINGS RETURN !”
With anguish and with shame oppress’d,
Each claimant smote his guilty breast ;
In silent sorrow homeward trod,
Confess’d Heaven just, and kiss’d the rod.

TALE V.

THE COWKEEPER AND THE
BARBER'S WIFE.

THE COWKEEPER AND THE
BARBER'S WIFE.

THE wit of man scarce knows a bound :
It penetrates the depths profound ;
Now ranges through the starry sky,
And contemplates the Deity.
'Gainst Satan's wiles he stands prepared,
Escaping oft, though oft ensnared ;
But set a woman on him loose,
Sir Wisdom is an arrant goose.
You doubt it, friend ? O hard of faith !
List, then, to what my story saith.

The sun declined in ocean's bed,
All shorn his beams, his shadows fled ;
Sad twilight o'er the silent dale,
Now slowly drew her misty veil ;
When he, of whom my tale relates,
By prudence moved, or by the Fates,
(A man who from the profits few
Of six lean cows his comforts drew,)
With strange misgivings homeward stole
From his associates of the bowl.
The hour drew near when all that lurks
In night's dark shroud, securely works ;
When Lewdness, and her restless crew,
Eager their various schemes pursue.—
His spouse was young, and fair withal,
And flesh and blood, he knew, might fall ;
Yet stoutly she'd defend her honour,
While he could keep—an eye upon her :
And though one to a saint were tied,
Suspicion was the safer side.

The way beguiled with dreams like these,
His curling smoke he dimly sees ;
Now hears the matrons scolding round,
And now the anvil's fainter sound :
Arrived, he finds his loving wife
(New food for matrimonial strife)
In secret plotting with a shrew,
Whose virtuous calling well he knew ;
So giving his fierce passions rein,
And curbing those that cried—refrain !
He—not with words, for at that sport,
Experience whisper'd, he fell short,
But with such toys as came to hand,
Laid on amain, while he could stand :
Then bound her fast, and sought in bed
A solace for his aching head.

The Bawd repell'd, but not dismay'd,
Resents the insult on her trade,
At midnight, silent, she returns,
And whispers of a youth that burns

With fiercest passion for the dame :—
“ If cruel ; O, how much to blame !
’Tis perilous, you’ll say : why, true,
But he would hazard all for you,
Go, soothe his sorrows.—Ods my life !
Now shame upon so fond a wife !
No more, but hence ; return with speed—
I’ll take your station in this need,
And wile away the passing hour
In dreams of friendship, and its power.
Yet, ere you go, that piece of gold,
Of which so often you have told ;
Some token I would fain possess—
A gift I to my lips may press,
And think on you.—Enough, away—
Thus for your pleasures ever pay,
Be fickle as yon moon, and range,
I’ll food provide for every change.
But softly—should the cuckold wake !
Now, heaven forbid !—with fear I quake :

In a fine noose I've thrust my head—
Would I were with my brute abed,
Or set, the crows and choughs to scare,
Or any where, alas, but here!
He stirs! O guard me from mishap!"—
Even so—the man had ta'en his nap,
And now would fain enjoy his jest:—
"In a fond wife, I'm surely blest;
While other cuckold's snoring dream
Of constancy, an idle theme,
Their truant dames securely stray,
And make, by moonshine, pretty hay.
Thou wouldst not for the world do so,
Wouldst thou, my dearest?—Dumb there? ho!
Oons! has she then given up the ghost,
Or is she sleeping on her post,
And dreaming of those kisses sweet?—
Ah, beast! to spoil so rare a treat."
With that, no answer being made,
He changed his note:—"You sullen jade!

Why, what has tied that flippant tongue,
With which, this morn, the village rung?
That dog, and rogue, dealt out so loud,
As deafen'd all the gaping crowd?
Still silent!"—Here he made a show
To wave his knife, and feign'd a blow,
That fell, (such ill from feigning grows,)
As fate would have it, on her nose.
He fear'd the worst, but then 'twas dark,
"Take that," he said, "the strumpet's mark!
Howl on, nor spare your cries, my dear,
'Tis music that delights my ear;
A plaintive note that lulls to rest,
And woos me sweetly to my nest."
His tongue here failing, loud and deep
He snored, and settled fast to sleep.

The wife returning, ask'd the news.—
"Henceforth your fortune ne'er accuse,"
The Bawd replied; "read here a tale,
That well, indeed, may turn you pale."

'Twas done—regrets could ne'er replace
The luckless gristle on the face :
So setting compliments aside,
The dame resumed her post, fast tied ;
Her friend pick'd up her nose, and stole
In anguish to her filthy hole.

This virtuous thing a barber bless'd,
(Now scratch'd, and now, worse fate, caress'd,)
Who in each feature claim'd a share,
That graced, or ought to grace, his fair :
She lack'd a nose, and he had eyes—
Some monstrous tale she must devise.
Would but the devil now stand her friend,
Things might not yet so crossly end !
He did not fail her :—Roused from sleep,
Ere yet the dawn began to peep,
Those instruments the artist sought,
Without whose aid his skill was nought.
“ Here,” said his turtle, “ how you stand !”
And slipt a razor in his hand ;

He tried it, curs'd it, threw it by—
Another—worse! his rage grew high :
A third, yet worse!—away it flew—
The fair-one now had got her cue,
And bellowed “ Murder, ho !” so loud,
The frightened village round her crowd :
“ O, bloody, unprovoked assault !
O, wanton rage!—without a fault,
Without a motive to disclose,
The rogue hath reft me of my nose !”
What could the staring Shaver say
Against a fact as clear as day?
To judgment hurried, sentenced, beat—
Thus pass'd, on one poor dupe, the cheat !

Meantime the Cowkeeper runs o'er
The business of the night once more :
Views seriously his barbarous joke ;
A face despoil'd at one fell stroke ;
That face he gazed on with delight,
A desert now, a beastly sight !

Sure nothing but his own disgrace,
Plain as the nose once on her face,
Could justify such frantic ire,
Or such dread punishment require.
Kind words were an emollient plaster,
Might heal, he thought, the worst disaster ;
So quick a honied store he plies,
And pumps with pain his garlic sighs ;
When, much to his amazement, lo !
He hears, instead of plaints of woe,
A voice exulting in a pitch
That oft had made his fingers itch.
“ Is it not said, that heaven and earth,
Sun, moon, and stars, even from our birth,
And morn, and eve, all rightly read
Our secret thought, our darkest deed ?
Then bring my innocence to trial,
That rests not on a mere denial.
Ye hovering angels, O, descend !
Your aid to suffering virtue lend,

Nor longer chastity expose,
Without her ensign fair—the nose!”
Then wriggling round the post, she cried,
“ Thy guilty head, in shame, O, hide !
The jealous fool, with scorn, man eyes,
And woe awaits him when he dies.
My prayers are heard—who heaven adores,
Not vainly present help implores :
See thy chaste wife, in virtue bright !”—
The cozen'd cuckold brought a light,
And soon beheld all fair and sound,
A wanton face, pert, plump, and round.
O, how shall I his wonder paint ?
He bless'd himself in such a saint ;
With deep contrition hung his head,
And took his virtuous spouse to bed !

TALE VI.

THE PRINCESS AND THE
MUSICIAN.

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IN fam'd Benares lived, renown'd
For wealth, for wisdom, too, profound,
A Raja, who a son deplored,
Mis-shapen, rude, and little stored
With learning's ever-shining light,
From which he, wilful, turn'd his sight:
Yet had he aptness to admit
The voice of sense, or light of wit;
For nature, not with step-dame thrift,
His mind had form'd; each lib'ral gift

Was his, with unripe seeds of skill,
That to mature but wanted will.—
To sickness we relief afford,
To sight the blind are oft restored ;
The clay-cold dead to life may rise,
But who e'er made the stubborn wise ?

One method still remain'd untried—
He might be moulded by a bride.
A princess soon was found, content
To wed what wayward fortune sent ;
And seldom is the maiden found
Averse, where riches most abound.
Grant her but wealth—all earthly bliss,
Pride, pomp, and power 's contained in this !
All pleasures here must taste of vice—
The pure are bless'd in paradise.

Yet fate might sure have found a prize
Less precious for a sacrifice.
Her beauty, wit, her winning grace,
Shed lustre on her royal race ;

In all that could the heart engage,
She shone the phoenix of the age ;
And Philomel, with envy stung,
Sat mute and sad, whene'er she sung.
Touch'd by her fingers fair, the lyre
Now seem'd to breathe, now soft expire,
While the fond chords the heart around,
All sweetly vibrate to the sound.

Gray evening came in modest suit :
All, save the nightingale, was mute ;
The winds in hollow grottos crept,
In their cool bowers the zephyrs slept ;
Slow rose the moon in radiance bright,
And shed her soft, her silver light :
One milder beam stole on the fair,
Whose sighs with fragrance fed the air ;
Sighs, to her breast, till late, unknown,
Nursed by despair, in hatred sown ;
For wealth had fail'd the bliss to shower
She vaunted in an idle hour.

As lost in thought, her eyes she threw
Wide o'er the expanse of heavenly blue,
And, pensive, gazed on every star
That studded Cynthia's pearly ear,
Sudden such notes arrest her ear
As spirits bless'd might stoop to hear :
Tuneful and sweet the measure flows,
Like southern breezes o'er the rose,
Lending a charm to things around ;
And all the air, and all the ground,
A sacred silence still maintains,
As if enamour'd of the strains.
Unbounded rapture swells her heart :—
Waked to new life the senses start ;
Tumultuous in her bosom throng,
And eager drink the witching song.
“ O, had my prince,” she said, “ what bliss !
Been blest with such a voice as this !—
Could he celestial sounds control,
And thus imparadise the soul,

The sum of joy I had attain'd—
Not so, alas! hath Heaven ordain'd ;
The poppy's drowsy lulling grain
Sheds deadly poison o'er his brain,
And lurking vice and folly sway
A mind fast verging to decay.

“ But, hist ! yes, yes, Love's wanton wings
Now flutter on the yielding strings.
How quicker would my pulses beat,
How ardent glow this kindling heat,
Were he within these trembling arms,
Who thus my soul to rapture charms !
Sure all the beauty Heaven could lend
On one, so favour'd, would descend ;
For, ah ! where dwells a voice so sweet,
The Graces, dress'd in smiles, must meet.
What lustre in his eye will shine,
What freshness in his face divine ;
And, O ! what melting grace pervade
A form for love and pleasure made !

If it be doom'd I once shall lose
Bright honour's gem—fair faith abuse—
The cause is here—Love hails the choice,
And woos me with no earthly voice.
I loath the life which now I share,
Must I then languish in despair,
Still tamely yield to adverse fate,
When Love lends wings to fly from hate?"

What Reason will not stoop to hear,
Passion devours with greedy ear.
Her casket stored—a precious stealth—
And blind to all but love and wealth,
She, trembling, by a cord descends—
On her new choice her eye she bends,
Sees (hear and pity, ye who range
From bad to worse, and weep the change)
Sees one, far more deform'd and low
Than him, the cause of all her woe.
With wonder either each survey'd,
To him she seem'd some heaven-born maid ;

The fair more marvell'd that a strain
So sweet should rise from such a swain ;
Yet she essay'd his breast to calm,
And in it pour'd affection's balm :
“ Dear youth!—and dost thou tremble still ?”
“ Speak, fair one, for I hear but ill.”
“ O, Alla ! and that other sun,
Why closed ?”—“ Alas, I have but one !”
No matter, 'twas forbidden fare,
And stolen pleasures sweetest are ;
Besides, she had resolved on flight,
And, once resolved, to thought good night !
“ O, chorister of heaven !” she cried,
“ How dearly are our souls allied !
How blest if thou delight in me,
As I, loved youth, now joy in thee !
Yet I the pains of wedlock prove
With one not melody can move ;
In Sorrow's haram, captive chain'd,
Bound e'en to him my soul disdain'd.

The art he wants, O youth, supply,
And teach me how the base to fly ;
For that I pant, he cannot give :—
With thee 'twere bliss in wilds to live,
With thee, rough rocks were beds of down.
Fearless—too gentle thou to frown.”

Why need I all the sighs rehearse,
The plighted vow, th' avenging curse ?
The wanton dame, and melting maid,
This hour betraying, next betray'd,
In every guileful art grown old,
Would deem the sacred pledges cold :
Enough, eternal faith they swear,
And onward bend, a loving pair.

Alas ! that in so fair a breast
Foul thoughts should ever find a nest !
And is there no perfection found ?
Ah ! no—with thorns the rose can wound,
The serpent lurks where flowrets spring,
The toad pollutes the crystal spring ;

In beauteous buds the worm finds rest,
And poisonous weeds the balm infest.

In dalliance time they may not waste :—
A rapid river stays their haste.

Th' enchanting minstrel here observed,
“ Nature with strength my arm hath nerved,
Hath bless'd me too with skill to brave
The mighty waters' whelming wave.
I'll first the trackless way explore,
Then swift return to bear you o'er.”

His upper garment thrown aside,
The precious casket—safely tied,
The fair-one left on love to dream,
He plunges in the yielding stream.

Midway, his passion 'gan to cool,
And thus he reason'd :—“ Be no fool !
Am I not poor, and lowly born ?—
Soon shall I prove, alas ! her scorn,
Soon passion sated, yield to pride,
And she resume the royal bride.

Why should I madly ruin meet,
When fortune points a safe retreat?
Fair Virtue's path now left to tread,
She'll seek again her slighted bed ;
If not, can I in one find truth,
Who flies the partner of her youth ?”
He thought these reasons safe and strong,
'Twas folly to debate them long :
'Gainst virtue he had nought to say,
If interest look'd not t'other way ;
Nay, could upon a pinch be just,
When honour led—to wealth and trust !

Now to her Abyssinian bed
Night softly stole, and rosy red,
The winged Hours through twilight haste,
And ope the portals of the east.
Day's dazzling sultan rose sublime,
Beheld the wanderer wail her crime ;
When, hark ! the sound on which she doats,
In every gale around her floats ;

Inthrals her soul, and puts to flight
The short repentance of the night.
With the soft song her love returns,
(For *will* no useful lesson learns.)
Wild, to the minstrel's haunt she makes,
Through devious paths, through tangled brakes,
And sees at length—but doubts her eyes
Have forged the vision for surprise ;—
Again she looks—too true her sight,
She listens—farewell all delight ;
O, curst mischance ! O, bitter treat !
It is her lord that sings so sweet ;
Her prince, whom lawless love has fir'd,
And with celestial song inspir'd.

Nor wealth, nor state, nor all the stores
That Heaven on thankless mortals pours,
Can pleasure o'er a mind diffuse,
Unskill'd the blessing well to use.
Her lawful lord espoused in hate,
To one she scorn'd fast link'd by fate,

What wonder if the impious deed
Obtain'd of wilful vice the meed?
Ah! had her eyes, so prompt to find
The falls and shallows of his mind,
Traced to its source the hidden spring,
Through all its wild meandering,
Some crystal drops had cheer'd the soil,
And recompens'd her virtuous toil!

He mark'd her dark, averted eye,
Saw her his love, his converse fly,
And while, with injured pride, he burn'd,
Her unendear'd embraces spurn'd.
His soul depress'd, but not subdued,
He nursed a proud, a vengeful mood;
Yet wisdom's seed (if right I spell)
Left not to perish as it fell,
But fed with science' kindly dew,
The immortal plant, till fair it grew.
His mind, in secret, richly died,
With arts to indolence denied;

And music, plaintive maid, he woo'd,
In her loved haunts, sweet solitude :
But scorning pleasure to impart
To one who shook him from her heart,
He hid from all his wondrous skill,
And seem'd the same dull statue still.

Ah ! not FROM ALL : one tender maid,
Sequester'd in the forest's shade,
Was conscious of his matchless strains ;
And well her love repaid his pains.
Here frequent, when the queen of night
Hung forth in heaven her crescent bright,
He from his joyless palace stole,
And pour'd in melody his soul ;
While she, the fair for whom he sung,
Enraptured, on his bosom hung.

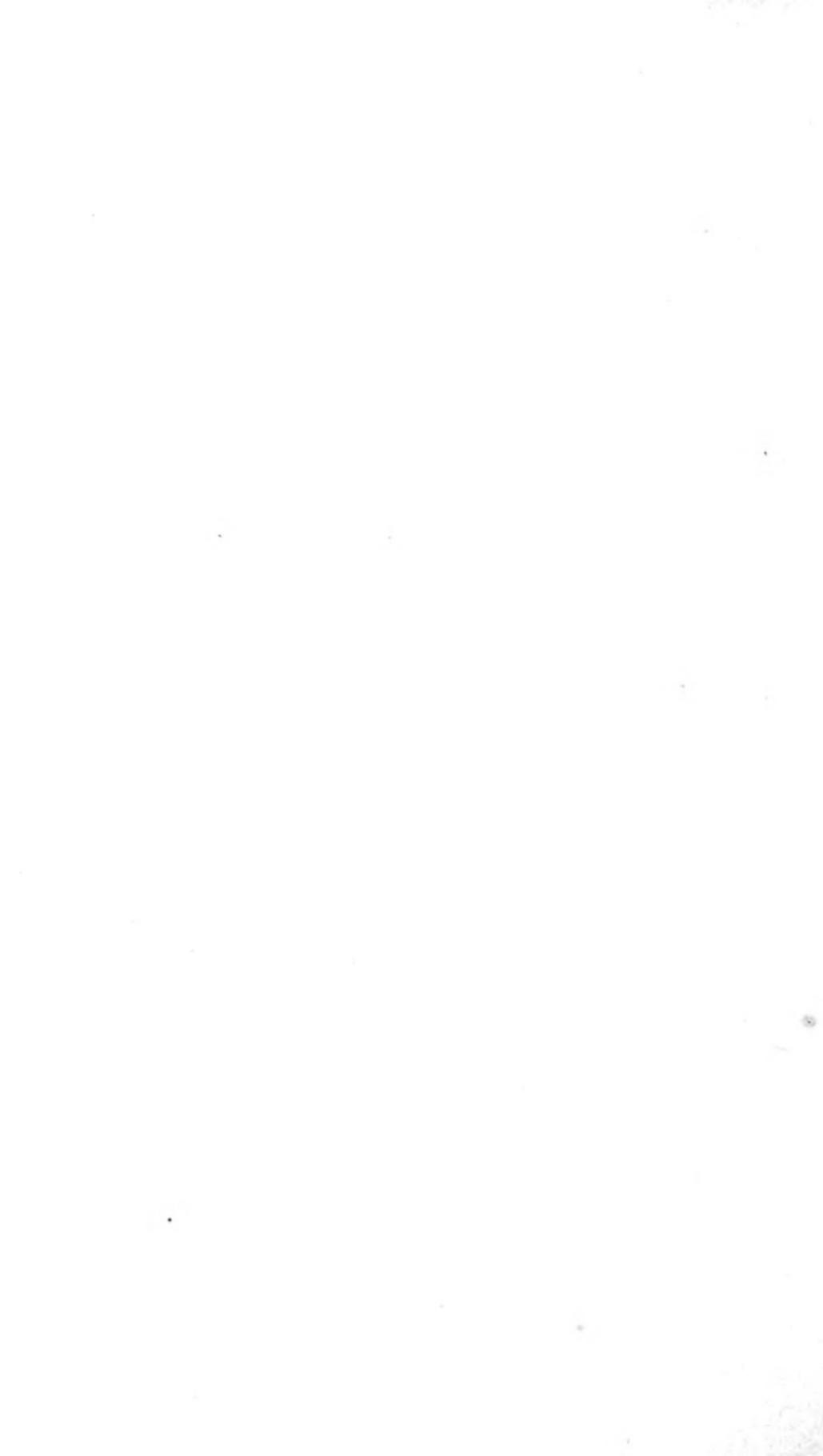
Remorse and jealousy by turns
Torment her breast, that throbs, that burns :
She cannot chide him, though untrue ;
And pride forbids her now to sue,

To disappointment left a prey,
She casts all thoughts of life away;
Seeks in the waves her guilt to hide,
Those waves so late with terror eyed.
A shegal * here the dame beheld,
Whose mouth a savoury morsel fill'd.—
A fish was, by a playful bound,
Left gasping on the sunny ground;
The glutton cast his wealth away,
And ran to seize the glittering prey,
That, by another spring, was hurl'd
Back to its native watery world.
Quick to regain, the shegal tried,
What late he spurn'd, but fate denied;
A beast more swift beheld the bone,
And made the slighted good his own.

And now she sees the waves divide,
And thickening clouds roll o'er the tide:
When, from the midst, uprose in air
A Genie, and address'd the fair.

* A beast of prey.

“ Daughter of sorrow, guilt unblest
Pollutes each mind, steels every breast;
Yet things forgotten, once most dear,
Lost even to hope, again appear.
What in the shegal calls for blame,
Paints the sad story of thy shame.
Content with that heaven made thy own,
Nor girding thee with pleasure’s zone,
Thou hadst not fallen from joy’s excess,
To drink this cup of bitterness.
But go, all evil thoughts dismiss,
REPENTANCE YET MAY LEAD TO BLISS.”



TALE VII.

THE THREE BEGGARS OF
BAGDAT.

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BAGDAT.

THREE beggars, patterns of their kind,
Stout, joyous, careless rogues, and blind,
Left Bagdat, in a merry mood,
To forage in the neighbourhood.
With sturdy step they press'd the ground,
And prickt their ears at every sound.
Each had a cup, and, shut from day,
A stick each held, to shape his way.

A merchant who the vagrants eyed,
Struck with their steady, rapid stride.

Address'd himself:—" In my poor mind,
For men, to all appearance blind,
'Those fellows handle well their feet,
Their blindness may be all a cheat ;
But I, thank heaven, can clearly see,
And 'twill be hard to cozen me."

With this he hastes the men to greet,
Who hearing sound of horse's feet,
Begin to range themselves arow.

" For Alla's sake, a mite bestow ;
Let not the sun, declining, set
Upon our fast, not broken yet,
But to the blind some pity lend,
So may our prophet be your friend !"

Distress, in such a moving tone,
Might surely melt a heart of stone.
The merchant stops, and feigns to grant
An alms above their daily want :
" This way, your hand, you seem to me
Fit objects, friends, for charity ;

Here's a bezant ; hold fast—nay hold :

Good !—honestly divide the gold ;

But make of plenty no abuse,

My bounty then may be of use."

" May heaven your precious eyesight guard,

And your munificence reward !"

None doubt a moment of the prize,

(Safe in the merchant's purse it lies,)

For each was sure his friend possess'd

The wealth with which they thought them bless'd ;

They therefore held their wonted chase,

But slacken'd somewhat in their pace ;

While the pleased merchant lagg'd behind,

To mark what whim was in the wind.

The rogues now lend a listening ear,

All's hush'd as death—no stranger near ;

The leader halts—the little band,

Attentive to his bidding, stand.

" Well comrades," he begins, " to-day

We've fallen upon a noble prey !

Some pilfering knave, some murderous Turk,
By bribes would his salvation work.
Ah, rogue ! yet we may reap the sweets
Of pleasure from his pious cheats.
To beg, when we may eat and drink,
Is most heterodox, I think ;
And clear against our faith, my friends,
That still to fate devoutly bends.
What say you, shall we trudge in pain,
Or seek the city walls again,
And drink amendment to the sinner,
Whose qualms have purchased us a dinner ?—
'Tis long since we caroused—too long ;
When did we hear an amorous song ?
We've all forgot a savoury dish,
And hardly know the taste of fish :
Then to a khan, boys, let us haste,
Nor longer precious moments waste."

The way to pleasure is so broad,
That e'en the blind can find the road.

Already they're within the gates,
Where garlic steam desire creates,
And tempting sounds assail the ear,
Of " Enter, ye who love good cheer !
Here beggars like bashaws may dine ;
Here's fish, and" (in a whisper) " wine !"
Such moving calls as these might win
A fasting anchorite to sin,
Far more a band who scorn'd pretence,
With all their means, to abstinence ;
So following the grateful scent,
They stopt, struck hands—and in they went.
Scarce enter'd, they begin to swear,
Like men accustomed to good fare ;
Who've wherewithal to pay, besides,
For e'en the best the house provides.
Aloud they call with thundering stick,
Demand to be well served, and quick :
But with a caution, not to weigh
Their means against their poor array.

Magid (for so was nam'd the host)
Stood not in idle wonder lost :
Such guests oft came, and lavish'd more
Than many bless'd with greater store.
Officious now he play'd his part,
And bow'd from instinct, more than art ;
His best-appointed room threw wide,
And was himself the obsequious guide.
“ Be seated, sirs ; be seated, pray,
The best is yours without delay :
Your calling, and your poor dark eyes
(With which my feelings sympathise)
Have crying claims upon my skill,
And I were curst to want the will.
You're right good souls when chance decrees,
And gives the means your taste to please.”
At this, wife, master, maid, and man
Bestir themselves—for fish one ran,
Another draws the wine—a third,
Half kills, and singing, plucks the bird.

At length five ample, smoaking dishes
Crown to the height their eager wishes ;
Pleased, they throng round the rich repast,
That vanish'd from the board as fast,
“ As though increase of appetite
Had grown from” the defect of sight.
Now bumpers to the fair they quaff,
And bless their stars, and roar, and laugh.
“ Is Fortune blind ? why so are we,
Then where's the wonder, friends, that she,
An idle, toying jade, should mark
For favour, wights who love the dark !
The curious world, e'en let it see,
To drink and sing 's enough for me !”
With clumsy jokes their mirth increast,
Jokes on the dupe that found the feast
Who in a corner snugly lay,
Impatient for the time to pay ;
When he might hope to laugh in turn,
And they a useful lesson learn.

Their bliss till midnight lengthen'd out,
The yawning rogues for couches shout ;
On these (their limbs so softly lain)
They dream their drunken joys again.

The sun arose all dusky red,
A mournful cloud half veil'd his head ;
And burning atoms round him swarm,
Portentous of the coming storm ;
When, lo ! our host impatient still
To see their backs, and take his bill,
Ascends to drown their deafening snore,
In thunder at the chamber door.
Their tatter'd trappings claim'd and tied,
Hung loose, in many a window wide ;
Yet from their skill received due aid,
Sad, drooping ensigns of their trade !

Now groping they descend, and hear
Their debt—just fifteen drachmas clear.
“ Tis well,” said one, “ a modest charge—
Your bill is small, our feeding large ;

But we have that will quit the score,
And leave us something yet in store.
Take it—when changed, we'll make our way.—
Magid holds out his hand for pay,
But neither stirs—he sues again—
“ Who is it that the gift hath ta'en ? ”
“ 'Twas honest Caled, without doubt. ”—
“ Ha ! cunning Hadgi !—there you're out. ”—
“ Why, then 'twas Basem. ”—“ Think you so ? ”—
“ 'Twas Salom, sure. ”—“ By Alla, no ! ”
Mine host yet deigns to ask once more,
“ It is not I ! ” in turn they roar.
His cholera now began to rise—
“ So, gentle vagrants ! yet be wise !
And make not me your game, your mark
To shoot your arrows in the dark.—
Whoe'er, before I'm righted, goes,
Takes, for each bit, a score of blows.
Yes, pay the coin, or, by my soul,
The stoutest heart shall loudest howl !

I'll have your ears, your skins, ye scum !
To frighten crows, or vamp a drum :
Would nothing serve but fish and wine,
Ye kennel-raking, hungry swine !”
Trembling, once more they question round—
In vain they ask—no money 's found.
Suspicion lies with each in turn ;
They grudge the fraud, and inward burn ;
Revile, accuse, storm, threaten, swear,
Their rags demolish, rend their hair,
Their greasy beards in turn fast hold,
And, fearless, search each jaw for gold ;
When Magid calls for sticks, to play
His promised part, and join the fray.

This scene the Merchant, where he hides,
With laughter views, and aching sides ;
Yet fearful what in farce begun,
To doleful tragedy may run,
With feign'd surprise he stays their blows,
And asks, whence all this tumult rose.

Cries Magid, " Sir, these scurvy knaves,
With noisy throats, and thundering staves,
Came yesterday, ere Sol went down,
And threaten'd famine to the town.
The flesh, for which I Bagdat scower'd,
Like hungry jackalls they devour'd ;
The wine the vagrants sat to swill,
Believe me, would have turn'd a mill ;
Yet, now I ask them for my due,
The rogues refuse, and mock me too :
But, by great Alla ——"—" Hear, my lord,"
The leader cries, " and heaven record
This gracious act ; the poor and blind
From greatness ever pity find ;
In meaner souls—but I'll forbear,
And, thus protected, truth declare.
For nature's cravings to provide,
With providence our steps to guide,
We issued forth ; our daily task,
An alms, in charity, to ask.

But first our sightless eyes we raise,
Dark to the sun's meridian blaze,
And seek our prophet's aid in prayer—
(O let the faithful ne'er despair !)
Our suit he heard—and for the rest,
Touch'd with remorse a sinner's breast ;
A wretch who heaven was loth to miss,
If gold might smooth the way to bliss.
He gave us a bezant, a dole
That argued sure a sinful soul.
But not to tire your patient ear,
With this bezant we enter'd here,
And boasted of our skill to pay—
With what discretion I'll not say.
A wretched khan's no holy place,
Nor have their keepers always grace ;
And there are rogues who watch will keep,
While simple souls are fast asleep ;
And what is more, sir, ——”——“ Nay, forbear,
Did I not hear you, caitiffs, swear,

In secret where I stood awhile,
You took no gold, ye cozeners vile !
And would you now of theft accuse
The man you've cheated of his dues !
Go, graceless gluttons, hie you hence,
Ingratitude's your least offence ;
Yet he was, sure, more fool than knave,
Who to such rogues so largely gave.
But go ——" Cries Magid, " No retreat,
Disburse, or give me back my meat,
My wine, ye poor, ye ——"—" Softly, pray,"
The Merchant cries, " I think you say
These men are poor ; their regal dress,
All loop'd and fringed, declares no less.
And is it not enough, alas !
That here, in sorrow, life they pass,
But you with Satan must combine,
And tempt the feeble flesh with wine ?
You fable, sure—it cannot be—
What, bring their souls in jeopardy !

Before the Cadi swear it, friend,
He to your oath may credit lend.”
Magid refused; a guilty cause
Could gain no succour from the laws:
He liked the Cadi not for judge,
So growl'd, and bade the beggars trudge.
While the pleased Merchant gain'd his end—
The host would learn his ways to mend,
The vagrants gratitude be taught,
And all experience, cheaply bought.

TALE VIII.

THE PHYSICIAN OF DELHI.



THE PHYSICIAN OF DELHI.

WHERE interest joins discordant hands,
And maidens wed—a house and lands,
There Hymen's torch sheds baleful light,
Proud is the day, but sad the night.

Look round, this truth will soon appear,
And this my story, too, makes clear.

In golden times, of less turmoil,
When man with prudence, and some toil,
Could earn enough to deck his board,
And nurse, besides, his little board;

A careful hind so shaped his ends,
As raised the envy of his friends :
His busy plough upturn'd the field ;
The tilths their golden tribute yield,
Bless him with more than humble fare,
And single, he was free from care.
'Tis something when life's troubles press,
To have insured one plague the less :
To have insured ! O, vain intent !
While malice, still on mischief bent,
Assumes some form, (all forms she can,)
And overturns the wisest plan.
The mask of friendship now she wore,
So oft, alas ! disgraced before ;
And deems too calm his toilsome life,
Without that trying thing—a wife ;
By no one care in this world vex,
What must he not endure the next !—
Alarm'd, the man her aid bespoke,
And vow'd obedience to the yoke.

Not distant far from vagrant gaze,
Conceal'd 'mid sweets, a tangled maze
Where spreading palms their branches wreath,
And playful sun-beans dance beneath,
A merchant dwelt, a child of care,
To many a sigh of pity heir.
One blooming flow'ret fortune spared,
Who all his hopes, his sorrows shared ;
A maid, on whom the Houris smiled,
While innocence the day beguiled.
Yet had her cheek still blush'd in vain—
Man, sordid man ! intent on gain,
Unpluck'd leaves beauty's fairest flower,
And woos a monster with a dower.
This nymph, the pride of all the vale,
Our hind's too busy friends assail ;
An offering fit they deem the maid,
On Hymen's altar to be laid.
Too poor to choose, to fate resign'd,
The merchant seems not ill inclined ;

While she, to mild obedience train'd,
Views him with eyes that ne'er disdain'd :—
Yet love, though blind, resists command,
She yields an ice-cold, trembling hand.
No sweet alarm her bosom fills,
No soft caress her throbbing stills.
Love lights no torch the way to cheer,
Through wedlock's thorny paths, so drear.

One little month within the noose,
And jealousy the boor pursues :
“ What imp of Seeva* form'd the scheme,
Of tethering me in such a team ?
Together tied, yet not united,
We cannot choose but be delighted !
Will no kind friend, say cuckold, say,
Make the lone hour glide sweet away ?
For woman finds no man amiss ;
Nor e'er in one can fancy bliss.
Through verdant vales so heifers wind,
And rove, new pasture still to find.

* The destroying power of the Hindoos.

I'll paint the sin, alarm her fears ;—
Yet passion hath nor eyes, nor ears ;
Wisdom herself may preach and fail,
And still the slightest switch prevail :
E'en so ; in tears all day, poor fool,
Her longings will have time to cool :
The morning's smart, I'd fain believe,
I have a charm will cure at eve."

Possess'd with this, at dinner hour
He eats and growls :—the rice is sour,
The porridge cold, and for the meat,
Not fit for famish'd wolves to eat !
Alas ! on evil madly bent,
He seeks in her distress content ;
But, left in tears, she fairer seems,
Her blue eyes languish milder beams :
So droops the rose, celestial flower !
In morn's ambrosial, dewy shower.

Night came, and not in vain were used
Those arts in wedlock oft abused ;

Yet how her wounded pride was heal'd,
From eyes unwedded rests conceal'd.
Through flowery paths we pass to pain,
And sunshine gathers clouds and rain ;
So happiness, in married life,
Is but the prelude to new strife.—
Proud of his hopeful scheme, the boor,
Next morn, on mercy shut the door ;
Secured her virtue for the day,
And light of heart, e'en went his way.
Wrong'd fair ! thy tears, unjustly shed,
Shall fall upon his guilty head ;
Yes, vengeance shall o'ertake him yet :
A wife but seldom dies in debt.

One morn she graced her threshold side,
Where many a flower in beauty vied :
Deep were her sighs, and sweeter far
Than gales perfumed with nagasar ;*
Her tears fast flow'd, while o'er her fate
She mourn'd, as yet afraid to hate.

* A delicious Indian perfume.

When, flush'd with speed, two heralds came,
And hail'd her in the Sultan's name;
Demand, but yet with courteous air,
Something faint nature to repair.

What her scant store affords, with haste
Before her guests she smiling plac'd:

Then modestly besought to know

How far they purpos'd still to go:

“ On this good fortune must decide,

For fortune only is our guide.

One deeply skill'd we seek,” they said,

“ Whose art might almost raise the dead.

One ——, but no matter for his name,

We merely hunt him by his fame.

Ah! why did heaven vile fish ordain,

Why with sharp bones their frame sustain?

Or why were maidens not endu'd

With patience slow to chew their food?

Had heaven so pleas'd, we should not here

Two breathless messengers appear;

The king to Alla would not fly,
His daughter would not choking lie ;
Nor swear, so may she die in pain,
If e'er she touches fish again !”
“ A faithful guide hath fortune proved,
By Haree * are ye hither moved,”
Replied the dame, “ here set your rest,
And think yourselves supremely blest.
Though poor these walls, though mean in size,
(What is not mean in courtiers eyes ?)
Yet they contain, nor think me bold,
What palaces might proudly hold ;
Yes, here resides Thanwantaree, †
Or one, at least, as skill'd as he.
Yet, strange, (for in this earthly round
Perfection is but seldom found,)
The man is of a whim possest,
(Your mission shields you from a jest,)
And neither fame nor fee endures :—
He will be beat before he cures !

* Providence.

† The Hindoo Esculapius.

Your eyes, I see, demand the sage,
The hoe, the spade, his hours engage.
Even now he turns, on yonder plain,
The crumbling glebe, or sows the grain :
But duty calls—O, may his ear
The imperious call submissive hear !—
Upon your steeds you'll thither hie,
Ere minutes pass, though swift they fly.
Yet once again ; stand not entreating,
But be provided with a beating."

Their panting coursers they bestride ;
And now he is by either spied,
Hard toiling like the meanest hind,
Exposed to sun, and sultry wind.
Low in the dust they bow profound ;
Th' imperial mandate then propound ;
Demand his aid, whose fame had spread
Where'er disease reclined her head.
With keen mistrust the pair he eyed,
And thus, half sportively, replied :

“ Troth, Fame hath made a brave report,
And wisely have ye left the court !
If the world’s master anxious seeks
One greatly skill’d in raising leeks,
Or lacks an arm in digging learn’d,
A hand to hoeing nicely turn’d,
His servants need no further look.”—

But pukes he neither gave nor took ;
And thought their beards it ill became,
To make of him their idle game.

“ She told us true,” they cried : “ We see
Thou art anxious, friend, to take thy fee.”

With that a storm of blows the knaves
Let fall from their official staves,
Till metamorphosed, lo ! the clown
Assumes, though loth, the doctor’s gown,
Mounts, in due state, his spavin’d mare ;
And forthwith all to court repair.

Restored to hope by their return,
The Sultan hastes their tale to learn ;

Delighted hears, his smiles to win,
His slaves a monstrous fable spin ;
What toils, what dangers they o'erpast,
Till fortune bless'd their search at last.
To crown the wonder, they disclose
The man's mysterious love for blows,
Which if bestow'd with niggard hand,
He'll kill nor cure, but sullen stand.
'Twas strange, the monarch thought, but then,
Could kings divine the ways of men ?
Subjects so willing to be pleas'd,
At least might have their longings eas'd.

His patient now the sufferer sees,
And, trembling, on his bended knees
Calls every saint to testify
How much he knows of pharmacy.
He'd heard of cupping, purging, bleeding,
But here was nearly all his reading:
Yes, this, in truth, he understood,
That hunger was allay'd by food.—

These things he knew, and many such,
And men less wise might know as much.

Patience, who seldom long remains
In palaces, and proud domains,
The royal breast here quite forsook ;
On two bildars he cast a look,
Who with renown their office fill'd ;
Broad rogues in bastinading skill'd.
Their supple sticks they promptly ply,
Unpitying hear him Mercy ! cry ;
Thrash all unwise resistance out,
Till, quite subdued, the smarting lout
Exclaims " For Alla's sake give o'er !
I'll cure the maid ; what would you more !

With choice in gilded state to roam
Or crawl a quivering jelly home,
He turns the matter round and round—
The evil was not so profound :
Would but the joyous goddess deign
To bless him with a merry vein,

Lend him her smile-provoking aid,
The thing were done as soon as said.
“ Into a mad convulsion thrown,
E’en now, methinks, I see the bone,
I see the royal maid relieved,
The king o’erjoy’d, myself reprieved !”

A face of wisdom now he wears,
And thrice he strokes his beard, and stares,
And thrice he hems,—when sudden fired,
Like one deranged, or one inspired,
He, pointing to the hearth, commands,
A blazing pile of crackling brands ;
By nods and signs his will is known,
To have the afflicted fair alone.
His turband now aside he laid,
And, heedless of the blushing maid,
Stretch’d at the fire he lies his length,
Exposed, and bare his hairy strength.
Now on a spit he seems to turn,
And roast, a monstrous joint, and burn ;

Pipes dolefully the scorching graces,
With apt contortions, puffs, grimaces :
The princess, maugre pride and pain,
No longer could herself contain,
But from her midriff laugh'd outright,
As any simple maiden might :
Propell'd the forked mischief came,
And gave another dance to fame!

All titles now were deem'd too poor
To grace such skill : so thought the boor ;
Who, though refused, demanded still
The simple boon, to tend his mill ;
In want of corn, in want of trim,
And most of all, in want of him.
But when, the signal being made,
The two bildars resumed their trade,
Few blows sufficed his sight to clear,
And mould him for his new career.

Stript o' his freedom, shorn and shaved,
In splendid robes he sits enslaved.

Too coarse his lungs for scented air,
He pants for home, and homely fare,
And meditates a sudden flight
From all his pomp some lucky night.
Meantime, those busy females, Fame
And Falsehood, wonders loud proclaim.
When all the rotten, far and near,
With ague, palsy, gout, appear ;
Entreat the Sovereign's awful nod
May move for them this healing god ;
Who, gracious, seeing no design,
His revenue to undermine,
Commends them with a father's care ;—
Stiff stands the boor, upright his hair :
“ Unless our holy prophet deigns
To find the physic and the brains,”
He said, “ their pains they must endure—
Why, here's an army, sire, to cure !”
The bildars catch the sign, and now,
Awed by their rods, and threatening brow,

He swears to make the ailing whole,
Down to the scullion, every soul.

Retired the Sultan and his train,
The sick alone with him remain.
With leaden eye upon the ground,
He seems immersed in thought profound ;
And all are with persuasion fill'd,
They see a sage most deeply skill'd.
He raises now a blazing pyre,
And still with billets feeds the fire.
His patients then, in circle wide,
Are ranged around, from side to side;
When, lo ! as from a trance awoke,
Their grave attention he bespoke.
“ How blest, could I this toil decline !—
No easy task, my friends, is mine,
Such crowds of patients to restore ;—
All, all, poor souls ! afflicted sore.
For science points one way alone,
And that a rough one, I must own.

"Tis this :—the most diseased—attend—
Amid the flames his pains must end :
This debt to human suffering paid,
His ashes, into powders made,
(For inward taken they are best,)
Must then be swallow'd by the rest.
The remedy is rough, most sure ;
No matter, if it work a cure :
The remedy is rough ; it is—
But what an envied lot is his,
Who blest! the worst of torments braves,
And scores of true believers saves !"
These healing words pronounced, they pry
In each one's case with anxious eye.
Asthma in wind, sees gout in haste,
Swollen dropsy tapers in the waste,
Health blushes in the hectic cheek,
Pale nausea ceases now to peak,
While atrophy, fresh vigour boasting,
One yet more sapless seeks for roasting.

The boor pursues his skilful plan—
“Thou’rt deadly pale, poor soul, and wan,”
(Addressing him who stood the first,)
“Thy feeble frame declares thee worst.
Thou seem’st, with thy remains of breath,
In any shape to welcome death.”
“Who, I? dear Doctor, you’re deceived—
I worst! thank heaven, I’m much relieved;
And never, in my life, I vow,
Felt half so full of health as now.”
“Of health? O Alla, patience grant!
Why make you this your idle haunt?
Of health! then let it quick appear,
And fly, impostor, fly from here!”
His pains forgotten, out he flings,
For fear had lent him both her wings.
Without, the courtiers seeing one
Who lately crawl’d, now nimbly run,
Demanded, “Art thou heal’d?”—“You guess.”
Another came, “And thou?”—“Yes, yes!”

And still, as through the doors they push'd,
Sciatica on palsy rush'd.

The halt, unprop'd, their haste betray,
E'en blindness, somehow, gropes her way ;
In fine, so hopeless none were found,
Not even those in wedlock bound,
But deem'd a life, diseased, unhallow'd,
Better than being in powders swallow'd.

The Sultan, fill'd with new surprise,
Thinks such a man for courts too wise :
And, gracious, drops the arm of power—
He might depart in peace that hour.
With honours crown'd, his partner fair
Perceives he has a courtly air :
While he, too rich for jealous taint,
Now finds his wife a perfect saint.
So heedless of each others ways,
Most lovingly they pass their days,
Till Death, that old suspicious knave,
Secured their quiet, in the grave.

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