

Ottoman Wonder Tales

Translated and edited by
Lucy M. J. Garnett



Illustrated in colour by
Charles Folkard

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Ottoman Wonder
Tales

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

EACH WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

CHARLES FOLKARD

**ÆSOP'S FABLES
THE ARABIAN NIGHTS**

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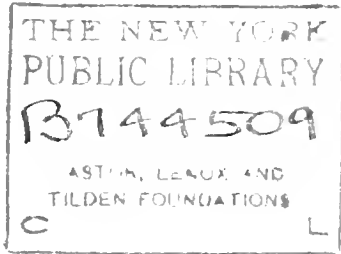
“ THE PRINCESSES TOOK EACH HER MELON, AND DESCENDED TO
THE GARDEN ”

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With illustrations in colour by
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Foreword



THE term 'Ottoman' being here used in the political sense given to it on the establishment in 1908 of a constitutional form of government in Turkey, this volume will be found to comprise Tales current not only among the Mohammedan subjects of the Sultan, but also among the various races professing other creeds who form so large an element in the population of the Ottoman Empire.

Of the first, the folk-tales of the Osmanlis—as the Turks prefer to designate themselves—are not only very numerous, but are also exceedingly varied in character. There are, for instance, religious and semi-religious legends connected with the Prophet

Mohammed and his family and with the holy men of Islam; mythical stories concerning the magical exploits of King David and King Solomon; wild romances concerning *Djins* or *Genii*, *Peris* and allied Supernals; fables with a moral; and comic and humorous stories innumerable. The various Tales in which Solomon figures are not, however, it would appear, reminiscences of the Israelitish King, but rather of the Chaldean 'King of the Gods,' the wise Ea, one of whose names—*Sallimannu*—was adopted by the Hebrew prince Jedidiah.¹ And in certain of these stories 'Solomon' is actually represented as a kind of demiurgos, the Lord of all Creation.

The Supernals of the Osmanlis fall, however, generally speaking, under the denomination either of *Djins* or *Peris*. For under the former term are comprised magical beings as a class, including the *Tellestim* which guard ancient buildings or buried treasures, together with other Supernals whose propensities resemble those of our mischievous goblins or good fairies. Some dwellings are believed to be frequented by Djins of the latter

¹ See Lenormant's *Chaldean Magic*, pp. 89, 203, and 514; Sayce, *Religion of the Ancient Babylonians*, pp. 57, 58; and 2 Samuel xii. 24, 25.

description, who are termed *Ev-Sahibi*—‘The House-masters,’—and bring all kinds of prosperity to their hosts. The former class, on the other hand, not only take a delight in destroying the property of their human co-dwellers, but also annoy them by making the most hideous nocturnal noises. Like most Supernals, the Djins also possess the power of assuming any shape they please, from that of a shadowy being of colossal proportions, or a beautiful youth or maiden, down to that of a cat or mouse, or even a pitcher or broom. Both the good Djins, who serve Allah, and the malevolent class, who obey Eblis, are held to have been created before mankind; the rebellion of Satan having consisted, according to Moslem belief, in his refusing to pay homage to Adam when commanded to do so by Allah.

Djins are popularly held to be of two sexes, and propagate their kind. Though exceedingly long-lived, they do not appear to be credited with immortality. For their former chief Ashmedai, or Asmodeus, whom King Solomon held in durance, is no more, and his son, Daniel by name, is now the ruler of the demon world.

The tales and legends current among the

Kurdish tribesmen are not less varied and interesting than those of their Osmanlis neighbours. Among them are many charming *märchen*, some of which closely resemble Greek or Teutonic favourites; and delightful fables or stories of animals, which seem to be but Oriental variants of those contained in the collections of Æsop La Fontaine, and other fabulists. There are also stories of buried treasure guarded by *Djins*, and touching love-stories, together with innumerable legends describing tribal exploits and feuds, deeds of violence, and reprisals equally ruthless. The mythical being termed *Dev*, who figures in Tale XIV., appears to be the Kurdish equivalent of the British 'Giant,' Scandinavian *Troll*, Indian *Rakhasa*, and Greek *Dhrakos*, a ferocious but simple-minded monster, who is usually out-witted by one of those favourite heroes of folk-tale—the youngest of three brothers, or a 'Widow's Son.'

The Albanian *Dev* or *Dif* is also, like the Kurdish Supernal of the former name, a being possessed of extraordinary physical strength. 'He is a regular *Dif*,' is said of an unusually strong man, as we say, 'He is another Samson.' According to the people of Elbassan, the *Dif* is an enormous giant

who lives underground, and whose business it is to keep the cauldrons boiling which supply the hot medicinal springs in the neighbourhood of that town. And among the other uncanny creatures which figure in Albanian folk-legend are the *Koutchédhra* and the *Liouvia*, the *Lougat* and the *Karakantsoli*. The first occurs frequently in folk-tale, and—in addition to her cannibalistic propensities—is credited with the power of drying up the springs and fountains at which she drinks, while the *Liouvia* is held to be extremely partial to the flesh of young children.

In the Albanian highlands also, as in other parts of Turkey, there is no ancient ruin to which is not attached some legend of hidden treasure, ‘guarded by word and by spell,’ by fire-breathing winged serpents, or under the safe keeping of a gigantic Negro or Djin. When such a treasure is guarded by a Negro, he, it is popularly believed, brings it out into the sunshine to prevent the tarnishing of the gold and gems comprised in it. Those who have thus concealed treasure for the benefit of their posterity have also fixed the time when it may be brought to light, leaving to their heirs the formula of the magic spell pronounced at the

time of its burial, with a note of the year, day and hour when it may alone be brought above ground. These formalities duly observed, the guardian of the treasure, be he Negro, *Djin*, or Serpent, will unflinchingly render up his charge.

In a country peopled by a dozen different races, it is not surprising to find that a considerable interchange of folk-tales has taken place, these having, in the majority of cases, been adapted to suit the ideas and customs of the borrowers. In addition, however, to such Supernals as the various Christian races of the country may have thus introduced into their own popular legends and stories, there are many others which have remained the peculiar property of each respectively. I have already, in the *Foreword* to my translations of *Greek Wonder Tales*, dealt at some length with the mythical personages who figure in the folklore of the modern Hellenes,—the classical Fates, Nereids, Lamias, Syrens, *Stoichéia* and others, many of whom may be looked upon as but personifications of the powers of nature. Of the same character also are the *Vilas* and *Samodivas* of the Slavonic communities. The former seem to approach most nearly to the fairies of the West,

though, like the Nereids of the Greeks, they, together with the Samodivas, are of the full stature of mortals—‘Little People’ being unknown in Eastern lands. In common with fairies, too, they resent being mentioned by name, and are generally referred to by some such euphemism as ‘*Those without*,’ ‘*The Happy Ones*,’ ‘*The Brides of May*,’ etc. As a rule both *Vilas* and *Samodivas* are harmless, and amuse themselves by playing only elfish tricks on mortals; but they take it very ill when the latter disturb them in their sylvan haunts. Sometimes also, like the Nereids and Lamias, they form matrimonial alliances with mortal men, and have families. With their children, however, they may possibly fly away some fine day, leaving the unhappy husband and father disconsolate.

L. M. J. G.

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IN COLOUR

BY CHARLES FOLKARD

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OTTOMAN WONDER TALES

I

THE PERIS' GOD-DAUGHTER

ONCE upon a time, and in a certain country of the East, there reigned a rich and powerful King who had three daughters. All were grown up, but their father was so fond of his children that he could not bear to part with any of them ; and when Kings and Princes came from other lands to ask the Princesses in marriage, the King refused to listen to their proposals, and sent them away one after another. The royal maidens were, however, by no means content thus to remain unwed year after year ; and one day when three handsome Princes who had come a-wooing had just been sent away like the rest, they became desperate, and sent for their Tutor to take counsel with him.

Said the Tutor, when he had listened to their

complaint, 'Wait a moment, my Princesses, and I will advise you what to do.'

He went down to the garden, and presently returned, bearing three water-melons. Giving one to each, he said,

'The King is now sitting alone in the kiosk, and has ordered a water-melon to be brought to him. Do you carry these to him, one at a time, and I doubt not that your mother-wit will instruct you how to improve the occasion.'

The Princesses took each her melon, and descended to the garden. The eldest first came to the King in the kiosk, saying,

'Dear father mine, I have brought your melon to-day.' She laid it before him, but as he took up the knife to cut it, he exclaimed,

'What is this thou bringest me, my girl? Seest not this melon is yellow and shrivelled and fit for nothing!'

'Shrivelled and yellow am I also becoming, my father, and I not yet wedded!'

'Out upon thee, shameless girl!' cried the King, as he threw the melon out of the kiosk window. 'Bid them bring me a melon I can eat!'

The Princess left the kiosk, and sent in her

younger sister. The melon she brought was still green outside, but when the King had cut out a slice he found it juiceless and insipid.

‘This, too, is over-ripe!’ cried he, angrily. ‘Why bring ye me such worthless melons?’ And he flung it likewise out of the window.

‘It is but fitting, my father, for I too am getting over-ripe, and it is high time I was married.’

‘Off with you, minx, and send me a melon I can eat, if there is one left in the garden!’

The youngest maiden then came in with her water-melon in her hand, while her sisters waited in the doorway to see what would happen. She laid the fruit on a dish, cut out a slice, and placed it before her father. The flesh was pink and juicy, and he ate it with relish.

‘Ah!’ then cried the King, ‘this is a proper melon at last, just in prime condition!’

‘And I, my father, am now just in my prime, and I ought to be married.’

The King first frowned and then he laughed.

‘You are a parcel of hussies! Very well, you shall all be married without more ado, and—what is more—you shall choose your own husbands. Bid them send the heralds here to me!’

The heralds came, and the King commanded them to announce through all the highways and byways of the land that the Princesses would be given in marriage to those whom they might choose, be these rich or poor, gentle or simple. And the heralds departed to do the King's bidding.

A few days afterwards a crowd of suitors of every degree filled the palace square, and the three Princesses came out, each with a golden ball in her hand. The eldest threw hers at the son of the Grand Vizier, and so chose him for her husband; the second aimed hers at the son of the Lord Chamberlain whom she had long loved in secret; and the third Princess, after running her bright eyes over the ranks of suitors, caught sight of a handsome but poorly clad youth sitting on the doorstep of the public baths opposite, and threw her ball at him.

‘But this is madness!’ cried the King; ‘she must throw again!’

So another ball was handed to the maiden, but she again threw it at the bath-boy.

‘Such a son-in-law will I never accept!’ protested the poor King in desperation. ‘Come,

my daughter, this is foolishness, make thou a more fitting choice. Here is another ball.'

Well, this time the Princess threw the ball in another direction certainly; but in the meantime the bath-boy had wandered to the other side of the palace square, and again the ball struck him. Her father was now furiously angry, and refused to allow her to marry such a miserable wretch.

'Very well, I shall then marry him without your Majesty's permission,' replied the obstinate maiden. 'You gave me leave to choose my husband, and I have chosen him.' And she went away to her own chamber.

The double wedding of the two elder Princesses was then celebrated with great pomp, and the festivities attending the ceremony lasted forty days. When they had come to an end, our youngest Princess put all her money and jewels into a bag, and went by night to the door of the baths.

Knocking loudly — *rat-tat-tat!* — she cried, 'Open the door!'

'Who is there?'

'Open the door!'

'What do you want?'

‘I want a bath!’

‘Folks don’t take baths at this time o’ night.’

She knocked more loudly—*Rat-tat-tat! Rat-tat-tat!*—‘Open to me!’

‘Who art thou?’

‘The King’s youngest daughter, thy betrothed!’

The door was then opened, and the Princess found herself face to face with the bath-boy.

‘Wilt thou marry me?’ she asked.

‘With all my heart, Princess, for I have long loved thee madly!’

‘Come away with me then; we will cross the border, and get married.’

So the two lovers set off for a neighbouring country where they were not known, and there they were wedded. When some months had passed they again returned; the Princess gave her husband money to buy the baths, and the couple took up their abode in the bath-keeper’s house.

Months passed, and the time came for the young Princess’s baby to be born. But as the King was still very angry with his headstrong daughter, her sisters, who had always been jealous of her greater beauty, easily persuaded him to

issue a decree forbidding any of the nurses of the country to attend the mistress of the baths, on pain of imprisonment. Her husband sought far and wide for an *Ebé*,¹ but all feared to disobey the King's command.

Then said the Princess to herself, 'Since mortal help is refused me, I will call the good Peris to my aid.' So she had her mattress carried to the inner chamber of the baths, where were the hot springs, and spread on the round marble slab in the centre on which the bathers were accustomed to sit.

At midnight she was awakened by a slight noise, and saw the wall opening like a door; and into the chamber, which now seemed full of soft, yellow light, there stepped three Peris, beautiful as the dawn.

'We have come to be your nurses, dear Princess,' said they. 'Sleep again, and fear nothing.'

The next night the Princess's baby was born, and it was a sweet little girl-child. In the morning the Peris said to the mother,

'This girl-baby of yours is also ours, and we will bestow upon her our most precious gifts.'

¹ The Turkish Mrs Gamp is thus termed.

So the first Peri hung round the infant's neck a powerful talisman which had the power to preserve her from every ailment.

Said the second nymph, 'This shall be my gift—every time she smiles an unfading rose shall blossom on her cheek.'

'And mine,' added the third, 'that every tear she sheds shall become a fine pearl.'

'That is not enough,' cried the second,—'the grass on which she treads shall become beds of fragrant flowers.'

'And the water which laves her head shall change into liquid gold,' added the third; and the Peris then disappeared.

Well, the child grew strong and tall, and every one praised her beauty and sweet disposition. Thanks to her daughter's magical gifts, the Princess soon found herself richer than the King, and she became discontented with the bath-house. So one night she took her daughter and went to sleep again in the inner chamber of the baths. At midnight the Peris came, and, finding them so delighted with their god-daughter, she begged them to give her a more fitting abode than the baths. They promised that she should

be satisfied, and disappeared. And when the Princess went forth at sunrise next morning, there, sure enough, a little way from the baths, stood a new and splendid palace! She called her husband, and the young couple with their child went at once and took possession of this wonderful new home.

When the King arose that same morning and looked out of his chamber window, you may imagine how he started with surprise at seeing opposite his own this new palace which had sprung up in a single night. At first he thought he must be still dreaming. But it was no dream; so he put on his spectacles, looked again, and then, calling his servants, he bade them go forth and summon to his presence the owner of this wonderful dwelling, who must, he thought, be a magician.

‘Who art thou, who seemest so rich and powerful?’ he demanded when the Princess’s husband appeared.

‘Sire, do you not know me? I am your son-in-law, the husband of your youngest daughter.’

‘Thou!—then how didst build such a palace as that?’

‘The Peris who saw thy grand-daughter born were its architects and builders, my King.’

‘If that be so, I did ill to scorn thee as a son-in-law, and to flout my daughter. From this day thou art my Vizier, and when I die thou shalt be King after me.’

But the two elder Princesses and their husbands were, as you may well suppose, far from being pleased with the favour now shown to their sister and the former bath-boy, but were unable to do them any injury. After a time, when the eldest Princess was about to become a mother, she made up her mind that her child should also be born in the baths in order that she might be likewise dowered by the Peris. So she, too, had her bed spread on the great marble slab in the inner chamber, and waited for midnight.

But when the wall opened, no beautiful women came forth as before, but in their stead three black-avized Peris of forbidding appearance.

‘Who art thou, and what doest thou here?’ asked, in angry tones, the first.

‘I am the King’s eldest daughter, and I desire you, gracious ladies, to preside over the birth of my child.’

‘Darest thou, who wast so hard and cruel to thy young sister, ask our help?—Hast thou no shame?’

But the Princess begged their help with such earnestness that the Peris, after consulting together, remained. The baby was born; but no lovely little angel was it like the child of the youngest Princess.

‘Shall we leave without dowering this ugly girl-child?’ asked the Peris of each other.

‘As for me,’ replied one, ‘I will that the earth on which she treads become barren.’

‘And I,’ said the second, ‘that her tears become poison.’

‘And I, that every time she smiles the ears of a mule appear on her forehead!’ added the third; and with this the dusky nymphs departed the way they had come, leaving the Princess beside herself with disappointment and anger.

Well, years passed, and in course of time the old King died, and, as he had willed it, the former bath-boy reigned in his stead. His daughter, who as a baby had been so richly endowed by the Peris, was now a lovely maiden of fifteen; and the fame of her beauty and her magical

gifts being spread abroad, the son of a neighbouring King wished to make her his wife, and asked his father's permission to go and woo this peerless Princess.

'My son,' replied the King, 'before I permit thee to woo this maiden, thou must bring me one of the unfading roses which, folks say, bloom on her cheeks when she smiles.'

'I will bring it, my father,' agreed the Prince.

So the Prince put on the garb of a dancing dervish, and in this disguise set out for the country where the maiden lived. After a long journey he at length reached her father's capital, and loitered about the gates of the palace seeking an occasion for bringing himself to the notice of the lovely Princess; and as luck would have it, he met her the very next morning as she was going in a carriage, accompanied by an old nurse, to the *Mekteb*.¹ The pretended dervish took off his tall dervish's hat, spun it up into the air, kicked it up again as it fell, and then caught it on his head. The Princess laughed heartily at the trick, and immediately a rose of

¹ The Turkish elementary school in which children of both sexes are taught by the parish priest.

extraordinary beauty appeared on the fair cheek of the Peris' favourite. The youth crossed his arms respectfully, and approaching the carriage, timidly begged the nurse to give him the rose as his guerdon.

'No,' replied the nurse, 'I have but this one, and I cannot give it away.'

The dervish then performed another clever trick which again made the maiden laugh, and at once a rose bloomed on her other cheek. When the youth asked for this, she said,

'Take it, it is yours, father dervish.'

With the rose hidden in his breast the Prince then departed from that city, full of joy, and in due time returned safely to his father's palace.

'Welcome, my son,' cried the King, when he appeared. 'Hast thou brought me one of those marvellous roses?'

'Yea, my father, that I have; look at it and tell me whether any rose thou hast ever seen can compare with this which I myself caused to blossom on the cheek of the fairest Princess in the world!'

'Indeed,' cried the King, amazed, 'I have never

seen any flower to equal it! Now, my son, we will send our ambassadors to sue for the hand of this most wonderful Princess.'

Well, the ambassadors departed; the maiden's father accepted their proposals; and it was agreed that the Princess should depart without delay for the kingdom of her betrothed husband. As it was contrary to the custom of that country for the mother of a royal bride to accompany her daughter on such an occasion, the maiden's eldest aunt went in charge of the maiden, taking also her very uncomely and unlucky daughter. The King loaded forty camels with the bride's plenishing and with gifts for the Prince and his court; and attended by a numerous retinue of attendants and guards, the party set out.

When they were nearing their journey's end, and had stopped as usual to rest for the night, the elder Princess took her niece into her own tent, and forbade her servants to come near their young mistress. When supper was served, she refused to let the poor girl have anything to eat; and when she, being hungry, begged for a piece of dry bread at least, the wicked Princess replied,

‘Well, that I will give thee in return for thy talisman.’

‘Take what you will, but give me bread,’ cried the starving Princess; and the charm was forthwith hung round the neck of her cousin.

The following evening when the bride again asked for bread, her aunt replied,

‘Let me first take out thy right eye, and thou shalt have it.’

The poor girl again consented, and the next day her left eye was exchanged for food. The heartless woman placed them in her jewelled snuff-box¹ which she hid carefully in the folds of her silken girdle; and at the next halting place she led the poor blinded maiden by night to a desolate place, and there abandoned her to her fate. The caravan pursued its way on the morrow, and before it arrived at the city the elder Princess thus counselled her daughter:

‘My child, now that we are coming to the city, do thou set a guard on thyself, and see that thou laugh not nor weep, nor even go forth to walk in the palace gardens, or thou art doomed.’

¹ Jewelled snuff-boxes were formerly carried by Orientals of rank of both sexes.

And, of course, the young Princess promised that she would do none of these things.

But when the Prince met the maiden who had come to be his bride, what was his dismay at seeing, instead of the lovely maiden he expected, such an ill-favoured creature! He, however, held his peace, and said no word, good or bad, until the King and he were left alone together. Then cried he, angrily,

‘My father, this is not the Princess, my betrothed, whom I love, but another whom they have sent in her stead. I cannot and will not wed this hideous creature!’

Well, the King did not know what to think, or what to say. The maiden’s father was a much more powerful King than he, and he feared that were he to refuse to marry her to his son now that they were betrothed, her father would make war upon him and perhaps take away his kingdom from him. So he persuaded the poor Prince, who at last consented, though much against his will; the preparations for the wedding went on, and in due time the Prince married the false Princess.

But let us now return to the poor blinded

Princess, abandoned in the desert without food or shelter. It so happened that a shepherd who kept his flocks in the neighbouring valley had had some of his sheep carried off by a wolf, and, while searching for the thief, came that way. Seeing something move among the bushes, he at first deemed it the beast he sought. But as he was in the act of raising his long gun to his shoulder he heard cries of distress, which told him that it was no wolf but a creature in human form.

‘What art thou?’ he cried, a little afraid, ‘a djin, or an evil demon?’

‘I am neither,’ came the reply. ‘I am an unhappy, deserted maiden, left a prey to the wild beasts of this desert place.’

The shepherd then approached, and, touched with pity for the poor sightless girl, he took her by the hand, led her to his hut by the sheepfolds, gave her food and milk, and spread for her a couch of leaves.

The next morning the Princess said to her benefactor,

‘If you would be rich, take a sack and hasten to the spot where you found me; for there you

will find the pearls formed by the many tears I have shed.'

The shepherd did so, and found pearls in thousands. He filled his sack and returned bending under the weight of his precious burden, and from that day the once poor peasant found himself rich. Still the good man grieved for the fate of the maiden whom he had rescued from the wolves and who had in return brought him such wealth. One day, however, when he had carried home to her a bunch of sweet-smelling wild herbs, she smiled with pleasure as she breathed in their fragrance, and a red rose at once blossomed on her cheek. She smiled again, and a second rose appeared. Holding them out to the shepherd, she said,

'You give me thyme, and I give you roses! But I pray you carry these now to the city, to the King's palace, and offer them, one at a time, to the aunt of the Prince's bride. Take no money for them, but give them only in exchange for the two eyes which she has in her snuff-box.'

The good man set out, and in time arrived at the city, and at once he went before the palace and began to cry like a pedler,

‘A rose to sell! A wonderful rose! An unfading rose! Who’ll buy my rose?’

The cruel Princess, hearing this, sent her servants to bring in the pedler man. She offered him twenty sequins for the flower, fifty, a hundred; but as he still shook his head, she at last asked, ‘What then is thy price, man?—a thousand?’

‘No, my lady,’ he replied, ‘it is not to be had for money. I will only take in exchange for it the eyes which the Princess keeps in her snuff-box.’

The Princess, being very anxious to have in her possession some unfading roses to show to the Prince, agreed to the bargain; and the shepherd then returned home with the two precious eyes in the jewelled snuff-box. Hastily the maiden put back her recovered eyes in their sockets, not perceiving, however, that she had put the right eye in the place of the left. But what mattered it?—for she was, if possible, more beautiful than ever!

‘My good friend,’ then said she to the shepherd, ‘will you bring me a cauldron full of water?’

It was brought, and the Princess dipped her head in it, when the water at once turned to pure gold.

‘This is my parting gift to you, for I am about to set out for the city, and I beg of you to guide me thither.’

‘Willingly, my Princess.’ So they went on together till they came to the city gates, when the shepherd took leave of her with tears, and the maiden went and stood in the square before the palace of the King, and, extending her arms, cried,

‘Peris, my godmothers! Change me into a cypress!’

And, behold! to the astonishment of the whole city, a tall and slender cypress shot up at the palace gate and grew taller and taller every day.

In the meantime the false Princess had offered her husband the two unfading roses; but he refused to believe that they had grown on her swarthy cheeks; and when after a time his father died and he became King in his turn, he sent for the most learned men of the land, and said to them,

‘This woman who is now my Queen was forced upon me by the will of my father; but I cannot believe that it is she to whom I was



"PERIS MY GODMOTHERS! CHANGE ME INTO A CYPRESS!"

betrotted. If she and her mother have deceived me, what shall be their reward ?'

'If it should be so, the woman is no longer the wife of the King, who may justly destroy both her and her mother,' replied the judges.

But the King could obtain no proof of what he suspected, so the two women remained in the palace; and when the cruel aunt saw the cypress, she guessed that it was her niece who had been thus transformed by the Peris. Said she then to her daughter:

'Do thou now go to thy bed and feign to be ill. I will send for the physician and instruct him what to say.'

So when the King asked the court physician—who had been bribed with a purse of gold—what the Queen ailed, he replied that she was sick of a fever, and in order to cure her it was necessary to cut down and make for her a tisane from the cypress which grew before the palace. The tree was therefore cut down, chopped up small, and boiled in a huge cauldron for the Queen's medicine. A piece of the stump happening to be left lying on the ground, a poor old woman who chanced to pass by picked

it up and took it home to boil her pot with when it should be dry enough to burn.

The next day the old woman went out as usual to work; and when she came back in the evening she found her hut swept and dusted, the table laid and a nice little supper simmering over the fire.

‘It must be the neighbour’s kind daughters who have done this,’ thought the old dame. But the next day the same thing happened, and the third and the fourth days likewise. So the beldam resolved that instead of going out on the morrow as usual she would hide behind the door and so discover who her mysterious visitor might be.

Well, so she did, and what was her amazement when she saw a maiden, as beautiful as a Peri, come out of the corner where she had thrown the log of cypress-wood and begin to sweep the floor! Showing herself, she cried,

‘Ah! my beautiful child, don’t run away!—stay with me always and be my daughter.’

The maiden remained, and from that day forward there was always plenty in the old dame’s cottage. Said the girl one day,

‘Good mother, won’t you go to the King for

me and ask him for the lean, lame mule that is in the palace stables? Say you want it to carry your grain to the mill.'

Well, the old woman went to the palace, and they lent her the poor beast. Then every day the Princess led him round about the cottage and let him feed on the flowery herbage which sprang up wherever she walked. On this fare he soon grew so sleek and strong and so spirited that none of the other mules in the King's stable could compare with him.

'Now,' said the maiden one morning to the old dame, 'you may go to the palace and ask them to take the mule home again.'

The grooms came; but when they saw what a beauty the mule had grown, they were amazed, and could hardly believe it to be the same animal. They tried to catch it to lead it away, but in vain. So at last they went to tell the King of the marvel, and he came himself to the old woman's cottage.

'Ah! what a magnificent creature!' he cried. 'Tell me, good woman, how did you thus transform the old, lame beast?'

Then the old dame led the King within and

told him all the story of the maiden as we know it.

‘It is my betrothed and no other!’ cried the King when she had finished. ‘Quick, good woman, bring me to the Princess!’

The maiden was not far away, as you may suppose, and when they had embraced and kissed each other the King said to her,

‘Come with me to the palace, my beauteous one, and when I have dealt with your cruel and treacherous aunt and cousin according to their deserts, we will celebrate our wedding.’

As soon as they were come to the palace the young King hastened to hang again round the Princess’s neck the talisman which he had taken from his wife and hidden away. And lucky it was for her that she was thus protected. For otherwise her wicked relatives, on beholding her no longer sightless but as lovely as ever, would have fallen upon her and torn her in pieces before the King had time to bid his guards seize and bind them.

Said the King, when the young Queen and her mother were brought before him to be judged,

‘Choose now, cruel women, whether you will be slain by forty swords, or torn asunder by forty mules?’

They chose the forty mules.

‘So be it. Now, my guards, take forty unbroken mule colts, fasten them together with a long rope, tie these women to the two ends, and let the mules loose on the mountains.’

The guards obeyed, and the two ill-starred Princesses, dragged over hill and dale, were soon dashed into as many pieces as there were rocks on the mountains and stones in the valleys.

Then the palace people at once began to prepare for the King's second wedding. The whole city feasted for forty days and nights; the sky rained honey and the streams ran wine, and didn't the good folk just enjoy themselves, your Honours!

II

THE KING'S SON AND THE DERVISH'S DAUGHTER

ONCE upon a time there was a sea Captain who built a fine ship, manned her with many good sailors, and sailed in her from the White¹ to the Black Sea. But it so happened that the weather became stormy, and before they reached the haven for which they were bound their water fell short. So the Captain bade his men steer for the nearest shore, and presently they spied a little town and cast anchor before it. Lowering their boat, they placed some water-kegs in it, and rowed ashore. On the quay a number of boys were playing. Calling one of them to him, the Captain showed him a piastre, and said,

‘Here, my lad, lead us to the fountain, and this coin is thine.’

‘Now, this boy was baldheaded; but as he seemed bright and clever, the Captain took a fancy to him, and when his men had got their

¹The Ægean Sea.

supply of water from a fountain which was hard by, he offered to take the lad to sea with him as an apprentice.

‘I should be glad to go to sea,’ replied the boy, ‘but I have a mother, and my father is dead.’

‘Then let us go and ask thy mother’s leave,’ said the Captain.

They went to his home, and the widow was willing enough to let him go, as he was now old enough to learn a trade, and she had other sons. He gave her money, took the boy on board the ship, and they sailed away. In a few days’ time they arrived at the haven for which they were bound. The Baldhead afterwards made many voyages with this Captain, and in course of time learned how to sail a ship himself.

Over one of the countries to which they came, after a time, reigned a King who had an only son; and it chanced that one day when this Prince was out walking in the city, he met a Dervish who was offering for sale the portrait of a very lovely maiden. The Prince bought the picture, and then asked the maiden’s

name and place of abode, but the Dervish steadfastly refused to answer him. The Prince, however, had fallen so desperately in love with the pictured maiden that he was determined to have her for his wife. But first it was necessary to find her. So he had the picture fastened on the wall over the fountain that was in the marketplace of the city, in the hope that, of all the many folk from near and far who came there for water in the course of a year, one might some day come and recognise the portrait; and he called the Captain of the Guard and gave him orders to station two of his men near the portrait by day and by night.

Well, in course of time our Captain came to that port bringing with him the Baldpate; and some of the men passing by the fountain, when on shore, saw the picture and spoke of it to their fellows when they returned to the ship. These then came ashore in their turn to see the picture, and with them came the Baldpate, who, immediately his eyes fell upon it, called out, laughing,

‘Why, it is the Dervish’s daughter! How on earth came her picture here?’



THE PRINCE BOUGHT THE PICTURE

Then when the guards the Prince had placed there heard these words they seized the youth, who was terribly frightened, for he thought they were going to throw him into prison. But they only led him to the palace and brought him before the King, who—when the guards had repeated his words on seeing the picture—asked of him,

‘Is it true that thou art acquainted with this maiden?’

‘Yes, sire, I know her well, for she is my foster-sister. My mother nursed her, and we were brought up together.’

‘Canst thou then bring her hither?—the Prince my son has fallen madly in love with her and would wed her.’

‘If your Majesty will place at my orders a galliot covered with gold pieces, and put on board of her twenty good sailors and twenty boy-singers and musicians, and allow the Prince to accompany me, I can bring her. But on one condition only—*that no man question my actions or commands.*’

Well, the King willingly furnished all that the Baldpate asked for, and strictly charged

the crew to obey him in all things; and as soon as the vessel was provisioned they set sail for the land where the maiden dwelt. Then they sailed and sailed for many days and nights, and at last they came at early dawn to the port where was the home of the Dervish; and, as the Baldpate bade them, the sailors moored the galliot to the quay opposite the Dervish's house, which was but a stone's throw distant.

Says the Baldpate now to the Prince and the crew, 'Do you all go below and keep out of sight, and I alone will remain on deck. But when my sister and I shall have come down into the cabin, loose the cables and set sail immediately.'

When it was day the Dervish's daughter rose from her bed, and opening the shutter of her window, she beheld the coin-bedecked vessel moored just opposite, and her foster-brother walking alone on the poop. Greatly surprised, she called to him,

'Brother mine, welcome back again! But what seekest thou here?'

'I have come to see thee and my mother, for

it is now a long time that I have been sailing the seas. How fares my good mother, and is thy father the Dervish at home?’

‘Thy mother is well. As for my father, knowest thou not that he worked long at my portrait and has lately gone abroad to sell the picture?’

‘I knew it not. But busk thee, fair sister, and come quickly on board to me that I may learn all the news, for I may not leave the ship.’

When the Dervish's daughter had donned her gayest gown, she ran downstairs, crossed the quay and then the plank, and her foster brother, the Baldpate, led her below to the cabin as soon as she was come on board. There they sat them down and drank coffee, and talked of many things, for it was long since they had seen each other; the musicians and singing-boys made sweet music for them, and the time passed quickly. After a while, however, the maiden rose, saying,

‘Now, brother, it is time for me to go home.’ And she left the cabin and mounted the companion-way, followed by the Baldpate. But when she was come on deck, what was her dismay at

finding the ship with all her sails set, and already far from the shore!

‘Ah, my brother, what hast thou done to me, and where art thou taking me?’ she cried. ‘My father will return and find his home desolate! I will throw myself into the sea!’

‘Hush thee, my sister, do not be foolish. What I have done is all for thy profit and that of thy family. Here on board with me is a Prince, a King’s son, to whom thy father sold thy portrait; and this Prince loves thee so madly that he has sailed the Seven Seas to find thee, and now thou shalt be his Queen. Come down again into the cabin, and I will bring him to thee.’

Then he led her below again. When the Prince saw the Dervish’s daughter he found her even more beautiful than her portrait; and he was so handsome and so courteous, and conversed so sweetly and pleasantly, that the maiden soon ceased to weep, and let herself be consoled. Presently a table was spread for them with fruits and choice dishes of every kind. The Prince led her to it, and they sat them down and ate and drank and listened to the sweet music which the musicians and singing-boys made. And

this they did every day while the voyage lasted ; and the Dervish's daughter soon began to love the Prince as dearly as he loved her. But the Baldpate, having charge of the ship, remained always above at his post.

One morning, as he was pacing alone at dawn on the deck of the galliot, two seabirds came and perched on the rigging near him, and then a third joined them. Cried the first two to the third,

‘ O Bird, O Bird, what news bringest thou ? ’

‘ The Dervish's daughter eats and drinks every day with the King's son ; little do they know what is to befall them ! ’

‘ What is to befall them, O Bird ? ’ asked the others.

‘ When the galliot arrives in port, a pinnace will come to bring them on shore. The pinnace will capsize, and the young couple will be drowned. And whoever hears my words and repeats them will be turned to marble up to his knees. ’

As the birds flew away the Baldpate said to himself, ‘ I will allow no boats to approach the galliot. ’

The next morning at dawn the birds came again,

and the two asked of the third, 'O Bird, O Bird, what are thy tidings?' and he replied as before—'The King's son and the Dervish's daughter eat and drink together and know not what will befall them. They may escape the first peril, but when they have come to land and are passing through the courtyard gateway the arch will fall and will crush them; and whoever hears and tells this will be turned to marble up to his waist.'

As the birds flew away, the Baldpate said to himself, 'I will have the archway pulled down.'

On the third day at dawn, two birds again came and alighted on the rigging, and when a third joined them, they asked as before, 'Bird, O Bird, what is thy message?'

'The Dervish's daughter eats and drinks below every day with the King's son, nor know they the evil that is to befall them. They may escape the peril of the sea and the falling archway, but from the third evil they may not escape. On their wedding night a seven-headed dragon will come forth from his lair, and will devour them both; and whoever hears and reveals this will be turned to marble from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head.'

Said the Baldpate to himself as he watched the birds fly away, 'I will deliver my sister and the Prince.'

Well, days passed, and the galliot at length shortened sail in the harbour for which they were bound. As soon as those watching on shore saw her, they immediately put off in a pinnace to meet the Prince. Then the Baldpate cried to them,

'Put back! Stand off! I want no boats!' and, taking the helm, he steered the galliot straight for the shore. As they watched the vessel come nearer and nearer every man said to his neighbour,

'Why will he wreck the good galliot? Is he mad?'

But the King remembered his compact with the youth, and said to them,

'Let him be, even if he wreck the galliot.' Then the vessel struck the shore, and went to pieces, but all came safely to land. And the King with his son and the maiden wended them towards the gateway of the courtyard. The Baldpate was walking behind, but as they came near the gate, he ran past them, and cried,

'Pull down the arch! None must pass under it!'

‘But why?’ asked the King.

‘My King, when I set out on this quest of the maiden, what was our compact?’

Then the King remembered, and bade his people obey the orders of the youth. The arch was pulled down, and they all passed over the stones into the palace.

Preparations were at once set on foot for the royal wedding, and, as soon as everything was ready, the young couple were made man and wife. But the Baldpate felt a worm gnawing at his heart, for he knew what a terrible task lay before him that night. When the wedding-feast was over, and the Prince was going to his chamber, the Baldpate followed him, saying,

‘I must not leave you this night. Where you and the bride sleep, there will I also sleep.’

‘What sayest thou?’ cried the King. ‘No one may enter the nuptial chamber.’

‘My King, what was our contract?’ asked the youth.

‘Thou knowest!—do then what seems good to thee.’

Then, none hindering him, the Baldpate took his sword and laid him down behind the leather

curtain which covered the door of the bridal chamber.

So when the Prince and his bride had gone to their couch on the dais in the great alcove at the far end of the room, the youth laid him down in the doorway, on a mattress which he bade the servant spread there, with the door on one side of him and the leather *purdeh*¹ on the other. He lay there till midnight was past listening to every sound from without; but all was still in the palace. Then, all of a sudden, there was a noise which seemed to come from the great open chimney of the chamber, where no fire now burned, as it was summer; and snatching up his sword, the Baldpate leapt to his feet just as a fearful seven-headed Dragon descended on the hearthstone. Holding his good blade in both hands, he cut off, one after another, the seven heads of the monster, thrust his dead body back behind the fireboard, and hid the seven hideous heads under his mattress.

But the noise had by this time awoken the young Prince, who rose and hastened across the chamber to learn what it was all about. By

¹ Curtain.

the moon's light he saw the Baldpate with a drawn sword in his hands, and fearing that the youth was about to slay him and his bride, he began to call for help. The King, awoke by his son's cries, then rushed in, and the pair of them seized the Baldpate, bound his arms, and thrust him into a closet. When day came the King sent for him, and asked,

‘Why wouldst thou have slain my son?—thou who hast for his sake sailed the seas and brought for him thy sister, the maiden he so desired, why now dost arise to slay them?’

But the Baldpate only sighed and said, ‘I can tell the King nothing. I have done that which was laid upon me to do.’ Then, as he would say no more in his own defence, the King bade his guards lead away the youth to be hanged.

As he went, he thought to himself, ‘If I must die in any case, let me die with honour, and not the traitor's death to which they are now leading me.’ Then, turning to his guards, he said, ‘Lead me, I pray you, again before the King. I have that to say to him which he will gladly hear.’

When the King saw him re-enter the presence

chamber he was angry, and cried to the guards, 'Why have ye brought again before me this condemned man?'

'My King,' they replied, 'he said he had that to tell which the King would be glad to hear.'

'Tell it then, quickly.'

'My King, as I walked the deck one morning at dawn, there flew over the sea to the galliot two birds, and they perched among the rigging. To them then came a third, and the twain asked of him, "O Bird, what tidings bringest thou?" and he replied, "The King's son and the daughter of the Dervish eat and drink together, and know not the evil that will befall them. When they arrive in port the pinnace that will come to meet them will be upset, and they will be drowned. And whoever hears this and repeats it will be turned to marble up to his knees." I alone heard, O King, and it was for this that I drove the ship ashore.'

The Baldpate had no sooner said these words than his legs turned to marble. And the King, seeing this, cried,

'For God's sake, my boy, tell no more! Thou hast a mother!'

‘Yea, my King, tell it I must. For I am now doomed to death, and I would fain die with a white face, and not by the hangman’s cord.

‘The next morning the birds came again, and the twain again questioned the third. Said he, “The Prince and the Dervish’s daughter eat, drink, and make merry, for they know not the evil that is to befall them. They may escape drowning, but as they pass under the arch of the palace gateway, it will fall and crush them. And whoever hears and tells this thing will become marble up to his waist.” I alone heard, O King, and it was for this that I bade them pull down the gateway.’

As soon as the Baldpate had spoken, he became marble up to his waist. But still he went on—

‘And the third time came the birds, and the third said, as before, “The King’s son and the Dervish’s daughter eat, drink, and make merry, and know not the evil that awaits them. They may escape the sea and the falling arch; but after they are married a seven-headed Dragon will enter their chamber and devour them. And whoever hears and tells this will become marble

from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." I alone heard them, O King, and it was for this that I would lie at the door of the bridal chamber. When the Dragon came forth, I slew him. His heads I placed beneath my couch, and his body lies on the cold hearth. The Prince awoke, and, seeing the sword in my hand, feared I would slay him; and I could not tell.' And as he spake these words the Baldpate became marble even to his head.

When they had laid the hero in a splendid tomb of alabaster, and mourned for him forty days and forty nights, the Prince said to his wife, 'Thou knowest what thy foster-brother has done for me and thee. I will arise and seek a charm that will unmarble him, even if I have to journey for seven years through the wide world.'

So the Prince set out. He wandered far and wide, and spoke with many a Magician of renown and many a Wise Man; but no one of them all knew of a charm powerful enough to unmarble his friend. At length, after journeying for a year and a day, he came one evening to a Turbeh¹ which enshrined the remains of a saintly Dervish.

¹ The tomb of a Dervish Saint is so called.

The two monks who were the guardians of the shrine received the traveller hospitably, as is their wont, and gave him food and shelter—*for the love of Allah*. The Prince, according to custom, visited the tomb-chamber on arriving, and there recited a prayer.¹ He then ate what the good monks set before him, and lay down to rest.

As he slept, he dreamed. And in his dream he saw the Saint, garbed in his Dervish's habit, standing by the side of his tomb, and holding in his hand his leaning-crutch with which he pointed to a loose stone at the foot of the grave. And the holy man spake to him, and said,

‘Take from hence three handfuls of earth, and sprinkle them over the marble body of thy friend. He will then again become flesh and blood.’

In the morning the Prince remembered his dream and greatly rejoiced. The good monks gave him the three handfuls of earth he asked for; and after vowing a rich gift to the shrine should the Baldpate be restored to life by its means, he returned with all speed to his

¹The *Fatiha*, or first chapter of the Koran, which constitutes the Moslem *Paternoster*, is used on such occasions.

own country. On arriving, he, before saluting father, mother, or wife, hastened to the alabaster coffin of his friend, opened it, strewed the earth over the cold marble, and immediately it turned again to flesh and blood. The Baldpate sat up and smiled at the Prince. Then he remembered everything; and, looking at the Prince and seeing him so worn 'with grief and soiled with travel, he cried,

'My lord, is it indeed thou who has brought me to life again?'

'Didst thou not give thy life for me and for thy sister, and I did but journey a year and a day for thee,' replied the Prince. 'Henceforth thou art my brother; and my father shall make thee his Vizier.'

This is the end of the story of the King's son and the Dervish's daughter.

III

THE STORY OF THE SOOTHSAYER

ONCE upon a time there was a goodwife whose son was a Soothsayer and a player on the fiddle; and one day he was sent for to go to a wedding to entertain the company. He was at first unwilling to go; but his mother urged him to set out; for, as she told him, he might get from the wedding folk a good many silver pieces, which would be useful to buy flour with.

Well, after a time, he said he would go if his mother would bake for him seven bread-cakes to carry in his wallet. The goodwife thought seven too many, and said,

‘Seven cakes must I bake thee, my son?’

‘Yea, mother mine, seven cakes, neither more nor less,’ he replied.

Well, the goodwife made the cakes, and her son then saddled his donkey, put the cakes in the saddle-bags, took his fiddle, and set off to the village where the wedding was being held.

As he jogged along, he presently began to feel hungry, and ate one of the cakes; when he had gone a little farther, he ate another, and so on; and when he found that he had only one cake left, he said to himself, 'I'll see if the village is in sight, and if it is, I'll eat the last.' He shaded his eyes with his hands, and fancied he saw a village in the distance. So he threw himself off his donkey, sat himself down cross-legged on the grass by the roadside, and ate the remaining cake. Then he remounted in very leisurely fashion.

Riding along, he presently came to a cross-roads, took the wrong turning and, instead of arriving at the village, he by-and-by came to a desert place where was the cave of a great Dhrako. Having dismounted, he entered the cave. Within he found a sofa and a table covered with a cloth; but there was nothing on the cloth.

'Now I have found my ease,' said the Soothsayer, as he sat him down. 'If I had only something to eat, how well off I should be!'

Well, there he sat till the night was falling, when he was startled by hearing outside a noise like the roar of a wild beast.

‘Holy Mary! What mischief is this?’ exclaimed the Soothsayer; and he crept under the table.

When the Dhrako came in he was dead-beat, and threw himself on the sofa to rest. After he had sat awhile, he went to a hole in the wall of the cave, took out a silver Cup, and said to it,

‘My Cup, my silver Cup, bring me fifty kinds of food to eat, for I am sorely hungry!’

The Cup brought forth dainty dishes, and its master ate.

‘Now bring me water!’ he cried, and the Cup was filled with clear, cold water, and he who was thirsty drank. When the Dhrako had well drunk, he put the Cup back in its place, and lay down again, went to sleep, and slept till morning. At dawn he arose, went forth, and was lost in the distance. Then the Soothsayer, who had not slept all night from fright, came out from under the table and seized the Cup.

‘This is a good business,’ said he, and ordered the Cup to produce food to eat. When he had eaten and was satisfied, he asked for water. ‘I’ll go back home now,’ then said the Soothsayer, ‘for my fortune is made.’

Presently, as he went along the road, the Soothsayer overtook a Dervish, and hailed him. 'Sit down with me, Father Dervish,' said he, 'and let us eat what Allah will let fall.'

The Dervish sat down cross-legged, and the Soothsayer took out the Cup from his bosom and cried, 'My Cup, my silver Cup, bring food that I may eat with my friend the Dervish!'

The Cup then brought forth food, and the Soothsayer and the Dervish ate. When they had eaten, he asked for water, and the Cup was filled with water, and they drank.

'That's a fine thing,' said the Dervish to himself, and he proposed to the Soothsayer to swop it against his Jack-knife.

'And what good will your Jack-knife be to me?' asked the Soothsayer of the Dervish.

'Whenever you bid it, it goes and kills,' said the Dervish. 'If you like, I'll try it on that herd in the field there.'

'Let us see,' said the Soothsayer.

Then the Dervish said, 'Jack-knife mine, kill all that herd which I see.'

The Jack-knife immediately, with one stroke up and one down, killed all the herd. The

Soothsayer took a fancy to have the Knife, and swopping with the Dervish, gave him his Cup. When they had gone some distance along the road together, the Soothsayer again got hungry, and he said to the Dervish,

‘Give us some food with your Cup!’

‘What do I owe thee?’ asked the Dervish. ‘If thou wantest food, give me back my Jack-knife, and I will give thee to eat.’

‘Dost thou then owe me nought?’ cried the Soothsayer angrily; and he bade his Jack-knife slay the Dervish. The Jack-knife immediately slew the Dervish, and the Soothsayer seized his Cup, and went off.

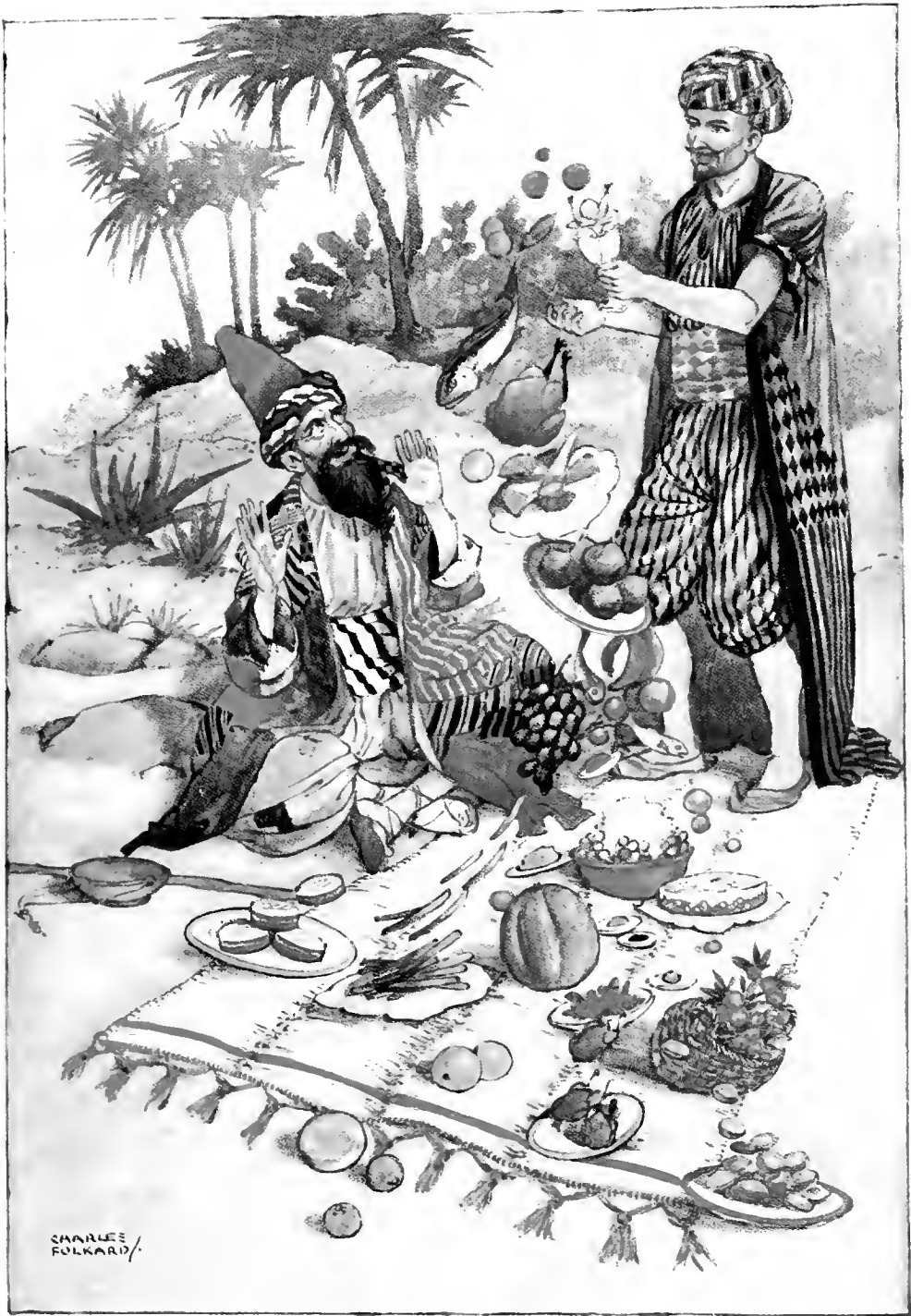
On the road, as he went, he overtook another Dervish, and him too he greeted with a ‘Good-day, Father Dervish.’

‘Welcome, my friend,’ replied the Dervish; ‘have you a bit of bread to give me?’

‘Sit down, Father Dervish, for Allah has that and more for thee.’

The Dervish sat down, and the Soothsayer, getting off his donkey, took the Cup out of his bosom and cried,

‘Cup, silver Cup of mine, bring forth fifty kinds



“ SILVER CUP OF MINE ! ” SAID HE. “ BRING FORTH THIRTY KINDS OF FOOD FOR ME TO EAT WITH MY FRIEND THE DERVISH ! ”

of food, that I may eat with my friend the Dervish!' and the Cup again brought forth food. When they had well eaten, they asked for water; and the Cup brought forth clear water, and they drank.

'That's a fine thing,' said the Dervish to himself, and he proposed to the Soothsayer to exchange it for a Turban which he took from his wallet.

'And of what use is your Turban to me?' asked the Soothsayer.

'Whosoever wears it becomes invisible,' said the Dervish; and putting it on his head he disappeared immediately. The Soothsayer took a fancy to have the Turban, and he swopped with the Dervish and gave the Cup.

When they had gone some distance, the Soothsayer again became hungry. 'Won't you tell your Cup to bring forth food for us to eat?' said he then to the Dervish.

'What do I owe thee?' asked the Dervish. 'If thou wantest food, give me back the Turban, and I will give thee to eat.'

'Owest thou me nothing?' cried the Soothsayer angrily, and with that he took out the Jack-knife.

‘Jack-knife mine, Jack-knife mine, slay me this knave of a Dervish!’

The Jack-knife immediately, with one stroke up and one down, killed the Dervish, and the Soothsayer took up the Cup and went on his way.

After going a little farther he overtook a third Dervish.

‘Good-day, Father Dervish,’ said he.

‘Welcome, my friend,’ replied the Dervish; ‘have you a bit of bread to give me *for the love of Allah?*’¹

‘Sit down, Father Dervish,’ said the Soothsayer, ‘for Allah has that and more for thee.’

The Dervish sat down cross-legged, and the Soothsayer took out the Cup from his bosom.

‘Cup, silver Cup of mine!’ said he, ‘bring forth thirty kinds of food for me to eat with my friend the Dervish!’

The Cup once again brought forth food, and they ate. When they had eaten, the Soothsayer asked for water, and when the Cup had brought it forth likewise they drank.

‘That’s a fine thing indeed!’ said the Dervish

¹ The formula used by the mendicant Orders of Dervishes.

to himself, and he proposed to the Soothsayer to exchange it against his Reed-flute.

‘And of what use is your Reed-flute to me?’ asked the Soothsayer.

‘When it is played the dead come to life,’ said the Dervish, ‘and, if you like, we will make proof of it on the donkey.’

The Soothsayer slew the donkey with the Jack-knife, the Dervish played on the Flute, and the ass came to life again. Then the Soothsayer took a fancy to have the Flute also, and he swopped his cup for it. When the pair had gone some little way along the road together, the Soothsayer once more got hungry, and said to his friend, ‘Won’t you tell your Cup to bring forth food that we may eat?’

‘And what do I owe thee?’ asked the Dervish. ‘Give me back my Flute, and then I will give thee to eat.’

‘Owest thou me nought?’ replied the Soothsayer angrily, and took out his Jack-knife. ‘Jack-knife mine, Jack-knife mine, kill this Dervish!’ cried he, and the Dervish became immediately a headless body; the Jack-knife had killed him. The Soothsayer then seized the Cup and made off with it.

Not to make a long story of it, the Soothsayer reached home soon after sunset. When his mother saw him dismount from his donkey in the yard, she cried, 'Welcome, my son! Hast thou taken a little money at the wedding?'

'I did not go to the wedding,' replied the Soothsayer.

'Thou lazy loon! Then to-night we must go supperless to bed!'

'Have no anxiety about that,' says he, 'for our supper is ready.'

His mother was astonished to hear him talk thus, and feared that her son had lost his wits. But when the Soothsayer had rested a little after his journey, he called his mother, placed her by his side at the table, took out the Cup from his bosom and said to it, 'Cup, silver Cup of mine, bring forth fifty kinds of food, that I may eat with my good mother!'

The Cup did as it was bidden, and they ate and drank. This happened every day, and the old woman at last had ease and was free from care.

But the tongue, as we know, is an unruly member. The woman could not forbear speaking

to her neighbours of the wonderful Cup her Soothsayer son had brought, and the fame of it presently came to the ears of the King of that country, who commanded the Soothsayer to come to his palace. When his mother heard of it, she forbade him to take the Cup with him. ‘They will take it from thee,’ she said, ‘and we shall lose our living!’

He, however, heeded her not, but took the Cup with him. The King received the Soothsayer well, and asked him about the Cup. He did not deny that he had such a thing, but showed it. Then the King commanded the servants to spread a table, and set the Soothsayer down to eat and drink. The wine was sweet and strong, and after he had eaten and drunk, our Soothsayer grew tipsy; and when the King saw this, he said to him,

‘Let us now make an exchange. I will give thee my golden mug out of which I drink, and take thy silver Cup instead.’

But tipsy though he was, the Soothsayer had still wit enough left to reply, ‘No, King, I will not exchange with thee.’

Presently, however, sleep came upon him there where he sat at table; and the King then bade his servants take the Cup from his girdle, put

a similar one in its place, and then bear the fellow home on a mule.

When the Soothsayer awoke in the morning he was still a little muddle-headed, but, feeling thirsty, he took the cup from his girdle—for he was still dressed—and cried, ‘Cup, silver Cup of mine, bring me a glass of lemonade, for I am thirsty!’

But the cup did nothing whatever. And, hearing his voice, his mother came in and scolded him for coming home tipsy.

‘My Cup, my silver Cup, bring coffee for my good mother!’ he cried.

But still the cup did nothing whatever. And his mother, guessing what had happened, began to weep and to say, ‘Did I not tell thee to leave thy magic Cup with me or the King would take it from thee? Alack! he has taken it, and we have lost our living!’

‘Never mind, mother, don’t fret thyself,’ said her son, ‘for I will soon get it back again.’ And with this he arose and set out for the King’s palace.

But when he came to the courtyard gate, and would have passed through, the guards drove him away. Taking out his Jack-knife, he whispered to it,

‘Jack-knife mine, Jack-knife mine, slay all these guards!’ And the Knife, with one stroke up and another down, slew the guards in a twinkling.

He then mounted the steps of the palace and would have entered; but again the doorkeepers would not let him pass to the King; and again the Jack-knife, at his command, slew them all, and he passed on to the door of the King’s chamber. There stood two chamberlains who also refused him entrance, and—not to make a long story of it—the Jack-knife slew them too, and he came before the King, and cried,

‘O King, I have slain thy guards and thy doorkeepers! Give me now back my Cup, my magic Cup, which thou hast stolen from me, or I will slay thee likewise!’

Hearing this, the King was too terrified to speak; but he pointed with his finger to a cupboard in the wall, and the Soothsayer, not to be tricked again, bade it be filled with a sherbet of pomegranates. The Cup at once brimmed with a delicious cool drink; and when the Soothsayer had quenched his thirst, he turned again to the King and asked, ‘What will the

King give me if I bring to life again all these guards and doorkeepers of his whom I have slain?’

‘Ah, my boy,’ cried the King, ‘if thou canst and wilt do this thing, I will give thee a thousand gold reals!’

The Soothsayer took out his magic Flute, put it to his lips, and played soft music in the ears of the two chamberlains, who immediately arose whole and sound from where they lay at the door of the chamber. Then said he,

‘Let the King give me the money he has promised, and I will likewise raise all the rest!’

‘Ah, my lad,’ cried the King when he saw this, ‘what wantest thou with money?—thou who canst do such marvels! I will give thee my daughter to wife, and thou shalt be son-in-law to the King!’

Well, our Soothsayer was nothing loth, as you may suppose. So the young folks were betrothed; and soon afterwards the King made a marriage feast which lasted forty days and forty nights.

And there I left them, and came hither to tell your Honours the story.

IV

THE QUEST OF WORLD'S DESIRE

THERE was once a wealthy flockmaster who owned wide pasturelands on which grazed tens of thousands of sheep and goats and horned cattle; and it happened that a son was born to him on the same day on which the King of that country, who was on a journey, came to his house to ask for bed and board. For it was in a lonely mountain land, and there was no inn or other dwelling near. The farmer made the King and his people welcome, and set before them the best he had. When morning came, the King said to the flockmaster,

‘If it please thee, I will be thy son’s godfather. We will send for a priest, and christen him.’

So the priest came, the christening was held, and the baby became the King’s godson. On its breast he hung a golden cross with a golden chain, and said to the father,

‘Let this boy, who is thine and mine, be well taught, and when he is fifteen years old, send him to me in the City.’ And the King and his people set off again on their journey.

Well, time passed, and as soon as the boy was old enough the flockmaster sent him to school; and, being clever and diligent, he quickly learnt all that his schoolmasters could teach him. On his fifteenth birthday his father gave him the cross, and when he had read the inscription it bore—‘*I am the King thy godfather, come to me in the city*’—he cried,

‘See what the King my godfather has written for me!—I must now go to him.’

So the flockmaster gave his son a young servant to accompany him, and look after his horse, and they set off. As they went, the boy, being hungry, took the provisions his mother had given him and descended a ravine at the bottom of which was a spring of water, so that he might drink with his food. When he had finished eating, he looked round for his servant to bid him eat too, when he saw him standing above him on a high rock with a great boulder at his feet.

‘Take off thy fine clothes, young master,’ he shouted, ‘and give them and the cross to me in exchange for mine, and swear that thou wilt never reveal to mortal man what has passed between us. If thou refuse, I will roll down this boulder on thy head and crush thee!’

Then the boy pronounced the oath, but added — ‘*Until I die and come to life again.*’ And when they had exchanged clothes, the servant mounted the horse, leaving his master to trudge afoot; and thus they came to the King’s palace.

The King, on seeing the cross, took the youth who wore it on his breast to be his godson, and, giving him his hand, led him to an upper chamber, while the farmer’s son remained below with the servants. There were among them men of various races, but the farmer’s son could speak to each of them in his own language, and was courteous to all.

The impostor, fearing that he might be found out, soon cast about in his mind how best to get rid of his young master. So presently he pretended to be ill; and when the King went to visit him and asked what ailed him, and what they could do for him, he replied,

‘I should soon be well if I could only eat of the cabbages which are guarded by the Liouvia.’

‘Ah, my boy, what are you asking for?’ exclaimed the King? ‘So many valiant Princes and Champions have gone to fetch one of these cabbages, but have never succeeded in getting one.’

‘Well, my King, if I cannot get one of these cabbages, I shall die. Let the King command the youth who came with me from my father’s house to go on this errand ; and if he will not go, threaten to kill him.’

Then the King sent for the farmer’s son and said to him, ‘Willy nilly, my lad, thou must go to the garden of the famous Liouvia and bring back a cabbage for my godson, or he will die. To-morrow at dawn must thou set out.’

Well, all the rest of that day the unlucky youth wandered alone in the fields outside the city cudgelling his brains to discover how he might fulfil the task the King had set him. Towards sunset, as he was about to return to the palace, he came upon a poor Horse tethered by one foot to a stake in a spot where was no herbage, but only stones. The farmer’s son, in spite of his own trouble, took pity on the poor beast, and, loosening

the cord, he led him a little beyond to a place where there was grass in plenty, and tethered him there.

Then the old Horse looked at the farmer's son, and spoke, and said,

‘What is thy trouble, young master?’

When the lad had told him, the Horse said, ‘As thou hast helped me, so will I help thee. Return to the city and say to the King that thou canst bring the cabbages if he will give thee forty mule-loads of honey, and forty of milk; and then see that thou arrive at the den of the Liouvia about noon, for at that hour she is out hunting.’

So the youth returned and asked the King for these provisions, with the mules to carry them, and set out again on his quest. On the road as he went he presently came upon the same old Horse, and went up to pat and stroke him. Said the Horse, ‘Good luck go with you, my young master, but, when you arrive where you are going, be sure to sweep out the den of the Liouvia; then mix together the honey and the milk, and hide thee close by. When the Liouvia comes home she will enter her den, devour half the honey and milk, and then, coming forth, will cry,

“Let him to whom I owe this kindness show himself, for I would fain see him!” Then come out from thy hiding-place and say, “Here I am!” She will then ask how she can reward thee. Tell her that thou wouldst have a cabbage, and she will give thee leave to choose as many as thou wilt. But take three only, three of the finest, and eat two of them thyself, for they are very wholesome.’

The boy did precisely as the Horse advised him ; and in the afternoon, about two hours before sunset, the Liouvia returned from the chase, making known her approach by the noisy lashings of her tail against the bushes. She entered her den, drank half the honey and milk, and then came forth crying, ‘Let him who has done me this kindness show himself!’ The youth then came forward, and it all fell out as the Horse had foretold. They conversed awhile, and became acquainted ; and when he was preparing to depart, the Liouvia said, as she gave him the three cabbages he asked for, ‘I like thee, my lad, so come here as often as thou wilt, and fear naught.’

Then he tied the cabbages in his handkerchief

and took leave of her ; but he ate two of them on the way back as the Horse had counselled him.

The King's pretended godson was much disappointed and surprised when his young master returned with the cabbage, for he had made sure that the Liouvia would devour him as she had devoured so many others who had entered her garden. But he put a good face on it, ate the cabbage, and next morning declared himself cured. After a few days, however, the impostor again feigned illness, and when the King asked what ailed him, and would have sent for a physician, he cried,

‘No, my King, I want no physician nor physic. But I have heard tell of a woman who is fair beyond compare ; and unless I can have her for my wife, I must die. World's Desire is her name, and she lives in a magic castle far from here, guarded by lions and eagles. He who could bring a cabbage from the Liouvia's garden may perchance be valiant enough to enter the castle of World's Desire. Let the King then bid him go and bring her to me.’

‘Ah, my son!’ cried the King, in great dismay, so many valiant Princes and Champions of

renown have gone on this quest, and none has ever returned again; and thou would have me send this young lad?’

‘Is this serving lad then dearer to the King than his own godson? If I am aught to the King, and he would save my life, let him bid the youth go and bring this maiden. If he refuse to do the King’s bidding, threaten to hang him. Between the rope and the quest he will not be long in choosing.’

Thus he prevailed with the King, and the serving lad was bidden set out on the morrow at day dawn.

Well, the farmer’s son betook himself once more to the fields, hoping to find again the old Horse which had helped him in his former quest. But he was not to be seen anywhere; and it was not until the shadows were growing long, and he was about to return in despair to the city, that on passing by a little wood there suddenly trotted out in front of him from among the trees the same old Horse. Coming up to him, it rubbed its nose on his shoulder, and said in his ear,

‘How now, young master, what ails thee? Tell me thy trouble.’

When the lad had told him, the old Horse said,



"SHE CALLED THE LIONS AND ASKED THEM 'WHY DID YOU LET THIS MAN IN?'"

‘Listen to me, young master. Thou must ask of the King twenty rams and as many lambs, a hundred mule-loads of wheat, as many of honey, and a dozen brooms. Around the Castle are gardens within a high wall. The gate of the gardens is guarded by Eagles, and the palace gate by Lions. Come to the Castle at the hour of noon, for then all the guardian Beasts will be sleeping, and thou mayst enter. Slay the lambs, and as thou passest the garden gate, leave their flesh for the Eagles, the corn for the Ants, and for the Bees, the jars of honey. Then hie thee with the rams to the Castle gate, and when thou hast slain them, hide thyself near. All these Creatures, after having eaten, will ask what recompense they can give their benefactor. Of the Lions do thou ask a hair, and of the Eagles, the Bees, and the Ants, a feather each. Then enter without fear; but see that when passing through the chambers thou forget not to sweep the walls, or they will fall and crush thee; and when thou art come to the door of the Beauty’s bower, sweep that too.’

The farmer’s son carefully followed the Horse’s advice, and the King, pitying his youth, gave him all

he asked for. The next morning at sunrise he drove the mules, the rams and the lambs out of the city, and took the forest road which led to the outlands. All fell out as the old Horse had said ; and when, after eating, the guardian Animals cried, ‘ Show thyself, O our benefactor, for we would thank thee ! ’ he came out to them ; and they gave him, as he asked, the Lions a hair each, and the other Animals a feather, saying, ‘ Whenever thou mayst require our help, burn a feather or a hair, and we will be with thee.’

Armed with the hairs and the feathers, the youth, after having carefully swept the walls and doors, then entered the great hall of the Castle. It was empty ; but presently he heard a stir behind a curtain at the farther end, and forth came World’s Desire, covered with a veil, and eleven maidens in her train. On seeing the intruder, the lady demanded angrily,

‘ Who art thou, and what seekest thou here ? ’

‘ Beautiful lady, I am a youth, as you may see, and I have come to carry you away with me.’

‘ Oh,’ she cried, laughing, ‘ many valiant Princes and Champions of renown have already come to carry me off, but here I am still.’ Then going

to the doorway, she called the Lions and asked them,

‘Why did you let this man in?’

‘Because,’ they replied, ‘we get from you only tough meat, and very little of that, while he has given us a whole ram each.’

World’s Desire then asked the Eagles, ‘And why did *you* let this man enter?’

‘Because,’ they answered, ‘he gave to each of us a lamb, while you left us to find our own food!’

The Beauty then asked the same question of the Bees and the Ants, and the former said, ‘You gave us but wax, and he has given us honey!’ and the latter, ‘You gave us only crumbs of mouldy bread, and he has given us corn!’

She then asked the walls and doors, ‘Why did you let him come in?’ and they replied, ‘Because thou hast never swept us,¹ while he has made us clean.’

Then said World’s Desire to the flock-master’s son, ‘Now I will set thee three tasks, and if thou accomplish them, lead me where thou wilt.’

‘Agreed,’ said the youth.

¹The class of magical beings to which World’s Desire evidently belongs are popularly held to be incapable of such housewifely duties as sweeping, cooking, and sewing.

‘This is the first: I will heap up together a mound of wheat, barley, rye and oats, and thou must separate them in the space of one night.’

‘I will separate them, my lady.’

‘This is the second task: thou must go to the mountain which opens and shuts, and bring me thence a gourdful of the Water of Life.’

‘I will bring it.’

‘Here is the third task: I will cover myself with a veil; these eleven maidens will do the same; and thou must say which among us is the one thou seekest.’

‘I will discover her,’ replied our hero.

He went to the chamber they gave him for the night, where they had put the heap of grain, and when he was alone he burnt the tiny feather which the Ants had given him. In a moment they swarmed in by the window.

‘Can you, my friends,’ he asked, ‘separate all these different kinds of grain before the morning?’

‘Easily, master.’

So the youth lay down and slept. He awoke very early in the morning, but, seeing all the grain in separate heaps, he had another nap, from which he was awoke by the Beauty, who had just risen.

‘Let me sleep, lady mine!’ he complained. ‘I haven’t closed my eyes all night, as you may well believe, seeing that I have accomplished my task.’

‘Thou hast performed the first task, it is true; now let us see about the others,’ said she, and left him.

Then he burned the feather given him by the Eagles, who immediately appeared. Said he, ‘I would go to bring water from the Fountain of Life that is in the mountain which opens and shuts. But we must arrive there by noon, for it is then only that the mountain remains open for half an hour.’

He slung his gourd bottle round his neck, and they set off to the mountain. Arrived there, the Eagles took the youth up on their wings and carried him through the opening. He found the fountain, filled his bottle with the precious water, and they returned at sunset to the palace of World’s Desire.

‘Well,’ said she, as he presented the flask to her, ‘thou hast performed two of my tasks, let us now see if thou art able to accomplish the third. To-morrow morning I will send for thee.’

So the next morning, when bidden to come to the Beauty’s chamber, he burnt the feather the

Bees had given him, and a swarm immediately flew in at the window, led by the Queen-bee.

‘What does our benefactor require of us?’ she asked.

‘I want you to help me to recognise the Beauty when she stands in the midst of her maidens, all the twelve covered with similar veils.’

‘Let them be veiled,’ replied the Queen-bee, ‘I shall all the same know World’s Desire from her maidens, and I will alight on her head. But thou must seize and hold her fast, for if once thou let her go, even I could not find her again.’

So when the twelve veiled maidens entered, holding each other’s hands and dancing in a ring, the youth watched the Queen-bee, and seized the one on whose head she poised; and though the maiden struggled to get away from him, he did not let her escape. Then he set out with World’s Desire and her eleven maidens for the King’s palace; and the King betrothed her to his pretended godson. But he really cared nothing at all for the Beauty, and was only disappointed that his master’s son had not perished in his quest for her.

So very early next morning, he stole softly

downstairs to the place where the brave youth slept, and slew him with his own dagger. But when the Beauty heard that the young hero was dead, she found out from the servants where his body was lying, and had him carried to her own chamber. Taking the bottle of water which he had brought her from the Fountain of Life, she laved his wound with it, poured some of the liquid into his mouth, and he began to breathe again; poured in more, and he opened his eyes and sat up.

Having thus *died and come to life again*, the youth was absolved from his oath, and he related to the King all that had happened. Then, by the King's command, and in his presence, they led the treacherous servant outside the city to a place where grew four trees. Bending a branch from each, they bound his hands and feet to them. The branches were then let go, and he was torn into four quarters.

The King now betrothed World's Desire to his real godson, and soon afterwards a grand wedding was held, with music and drums and feastings during a whole week. The fountains ran wine, and rich and poor rejoiced together throughout the city.

Well, after a little time had passed, the King's godson wished to go and visit his father and mother and relate to them all his strange adventures. Before setting out, he gave into the keeping of the Queen the dress World's Desire had worn when she left her own castle, and begged her to keep it most carefully and on no account to let his wife even see it. And his godmother locked it away in a coffer. While he was absent, a great feast day came round, and the young women of the palace, wishing to dance on the greensward, as their custom was, asked World's Desire to dance with them; but she said that she could not dance unless she wore the dress of her own country. So the Queen's maidens went to her and begged her to let them have the dress; but the Queen would not, and that morning there was no dancing in the palace. But while the Queen was taking her noontide nap, the youngest of her maidens, a cunning little lass, managed to find the key, opened the coffer, and gave to World's Desire her outlander's dress. No sooner had she donned it, however, than she said to the maidens who were waiting for her to lead the dance for them,

‘Fare ye well, dear maidens all, and tell my

husband when he returns that he will not find me again until he has worn out an iron staff and three pairs of iron shoes. I go to mine own people!' This said, she sprang up into the air, twirling round and round; her eleven maidens followed her; and a whirlwind bore them all out of sight.

I leave you to imagine the grief and dismay of the King and Queen and their people, for the Beauty's husband was expected back on the morrow, and what should they say to him? When, however, the youth returned and heard his wife's message, he lost no time, but at once bought an iron staff and three pairs of iron shoes, and set out alone in search of her.

Well, he travelled from one country to another, but could hear no news of World's Desire; and first one pair of shoes was worn out, and then another, and then the third; and on the spot where the last pair had failed him, he caused a Khan to be built, where wayfarers were lodged without payment. And there he himself abode and questioned every traveller who came to sojourn as to the marvels he had seen on his travels. Time passed, and he had listened to many wondrous tales, but they availed him naught. At last there came one

who, when the host asked him of his adventures, replied,

‘Well, my master, one of the strangest of my adventures befell me not many days’ journey distant. As I was riding my mule along a narrow path on the brink of a deep ravine at the bottom of which was a rushing torrent, my water-cask somehow got loose, and falling, rolled down the steep brae. Leaving the mule there, I climbed down to get my cask, and not far from where I found it, I spied twelve Water-maidens bathing in a pool among the rocks, and glad enough was I to escape without their seeing me!’

‘Come with me, man!’ cried his hearer, leaping to his feet. ‘Show me the spot, and thou shalt have a rich reward!’

So the two set off, and, travelling with what speed they might, came at length to the place where the traveller’s water-cask had fallen. The Beauty’s husband climbed down, and, to his joy, saw the twelve Water-maidens again there. They had lighted a fire, washed their magic dresses, and spread them on the rocks to dry in the sun, and were now disporting themselves in a wide pool of clear water through which the torrent flowed.

Approaching stealthily, he seized the dress which he knew to be that of his wife and threw it on the fire, which quickly burnt it to ashes. Presently the bathers came out of the pool, and sought their dresses. The eleven donned theirs, and sped away. But the Beauty, having lost her magic dress, had lost with it all her magical powers. And as she could therefore never again rejoin her kindred, she made the best of it, returned home with her husband, and lived with him happily ever after. And this is the end of the story of the Quest of World's Desire.

V

THE STORY OF THE SEVEN CHAMPIONS

THIS is the beginning of the story. I make my salaams to all the worshipful company before me !

There was once upon a time, and in a certain country, a King and Queen who had three daughters, all three so beautiful that Princes came from near and far to ask them in marriage. These Princesses were, however, so fond of each other, and loved their parents so dearly, that they had no wish to marry, as they must then be separated.

Well, time went on, and one day the King of the Djins, who also had heard the fame of their beauty, took a fancy to marry the eldest Princess. So by the aid of magic he changed himself into the semblance of a handsome young Prince, fitted out a ship which he loaded with precious stones and costly goods of all kinds, and, sailing swiftly across the seas, he presently cast anchor in the harbour of this King's city. Followed by a train of servants

bearing his gifts, the pretended Prince disembarked, and was conducted with much respect to the presence of the King.

‘Your Majesty,’ said he, ‘I am the son of such and such a King whose country, as you know, is across many seas and mountains; but even to our land the fame of your eldest daughter’s beauty has spread. I have not, however, come to woo her, but only to behold her, because so many other Princes more handsome and more wealthy than I have sued in vain for her hand.’

Then the King sent servants to bid his daughter come to him that the newly arrived Prince might make her acquaintance. When she heard her father’s command the Princess was much disturbed, but what could she do but obey? So with her mother by her side she appeared in the audience chamber. But as soon as the crafty Djin saw her, he knelt down before the King, crying :

‘O King, I will never leave thy palace without thy daughter, and if she will not have me for her husband, let her slay me!’ Then the King and Queen persuaded the Princess to consent to take this handsome and devoted Prince for her husband, for they were weary of seeing suitors coming and

going. So, willy willy, she at last consented. The wedding was celebrated with great splendour; there were music and drumming and great rejoicings, and the feasts and ceremonies lasted from one Sunday to another.

Soon afterwards it was arranged that the Prince should take his bride to visit his parents. He would not, however, take all her plenishings. For, said he, 'I am now only going to take my wife to make the acquaintance of my family. We will return to you before long, and afterwards we will take home the gear.'

On the day of departure, the bridegroom prepared a great feast on board his ship, to which the Royal Family and the chief officers of the court were invited; and then the bride bade a sorrowful farewell to her parents and sisters, and the ship set sail.

Well, they sailed, and sailed, until at last they arrived at a lonely land where the ship ran on a rock, and sank, and the crew disappeared. The Princess and her husband, however, came safely on shore, and when they had walked a little way they found two mules tethered. Mounting them, they rode, and rode, until at evening they arrived

at the mouth of a great cave among rocks and precipices. Said the Princess,

‘Why are we stopping here?’

‘Oh, since our ship is wrecked, we had best go into this cave to sleep. In the morning we will return to the shore, and perhaps a ship may pass which will convey us to my country.’

But as soon as the poor Princess had entered the mouth of the cave, she heard a dreadful din going on in its inner recesses, for a legion of Djins were collected there awaiting the arrival of their King.

‘Oh, what is that? what is that?’ she cried trembling with terror.

But the Prince only laughed, shook himself three times, and immediately was transformed into a frightful Djin of gigantic size.

‘Eh, thou must bide here now,’ said he, in a terrible voice; ‘I am the King of the Djins and you are their Queen!’

Then he clapped his hands, and hundreds of Djins—dreadful looking creatures!—ran in and surrounded them. Said one,

‘To-day, O King, I blinded a man, because we were in a whirlwind, and he threw away the stone

of an olive which he was eating, and it hit me on the nose, and I gave him a blow and blinded him.'

Then the others were beginning to relate their doings, but their King stopped them, saying,

'To-day I have got married, and am merry. She whom you see is my Queen, so pay her homage, and then go all of you and amuse yourselves till to-morrow.'

Then all the Djins saluted her, wished her joy, and went away. When they were left alone, he took the Princess into another chamber of the cave, where he showed her a woman hanging up with her breast cut open, and said,

'She too was a Princess; but when I gave her a human heart to eat, and she did not eat it, I killed her and hung her up. Now, if thou wilt eat *her* heart, I will make thee my Queen; but if thou also refuse to eat this, I will do the same to thee.'

Half dead with fear and horror, she replied, 'Give it to me, and I will eat it.'

Then he took out the woman's heart, gave it to her, and said,

'I am going out hunting, and you must have eaten it by the time I return.'

'Very good,' said she. But when he was gone

she dug with her nails a hole under a stone, and hid it. When he came back, he asked,

‘Hast thou eaten the heart?’

‘Yea, I have eaten it.’

Then he took down a sword which hung on the wall, laid it across his knees, and cried, ‘My little heart, my little heart, where art thou now?’

‘My lady has hidden me under a stone.’

He lost no time, but seized the poor Princess, tore her open, and hung her up by the side of the other. After some days he arose, shook himself and became a handsome youth, took ship, and returned to his father-in-law. When he appeared there were great rejoicings.

‘The bridegroom has returned! The bridegroom is here!’ cried the Queen and the Princesses to one another, and ran to embrace him.

‘But where is my daughter?—Why have you not brought her with you?’

‘Eh, what shall I tell you? The Princess is already so much beloved by all my family that they couldn’t part with her. So I have come back to fetch one of her sisters to pay us a visit, and in a little while we will all return together.’

The two maidens looked at one another, and then the youngest Princess said to her parents,

‘Let my sister go, and I will stay with you.’

Said the other, ‘But then you will be lonely without me.’

‘Well, well,’ said the Queen, ‘one of you must go, so do thou go who art the elder.’

So they got the second sister ready for the journey, and she sailed away with her brother-in-law. They arrived at the same spot as before, came on shore, mounted the mules, and rode, and rode, till they came to the rocks.

Said the Princess, ‘But where are you taking me? This place is a desert! The palace cannot be here!’

‘Yea, it is here; thou wilt soon see it,’ he replied. ‘The road is certainly bad, but it leads to a splendid palace.’

When they were come up to the mountain, and the Prince led her into the cave, she was afraid, and cried, ‘But what is this? Oh, what is this?—I will not enter!’ Then the handsome Prince shook himself three times and took again the form of the Djinn he was. And the sight of him so terrified the unfortunate Princess that she screamed and wept.

‘Hush thee!’ commanded the Djin, frowning angrily, ‘thy cries and tears are vain, for I shall serve thee as I served thy sister!’

‘My sister, my dear sister?—Oh, where is she?’

‘There,’ he replied, pointing to an inner chamber of the cave. The Princess hurried forward, only to find the dead and mutilated body of her beloved sister. Weepingly she kissed her poor, cold face and hands, and then, overcome by grief, fainted away.

When she came to herself again, the Djin had taken out her sister’s heart, and, holding it towards her, he said,

‘Mine thou art now, so do thou obey me, or I shall do likewise to thee. There, eat this, and when thou hast eaten it, I will make thee Queen and bring thee birds’ milk to drink.’ And he placed the heart in her hands, and rose, and went out hunting, followed by a troop of Djins.

Left alone, the unhappy Princess sobbed and cried, and looked this way and that; but there was none to hear or help her. At last she made up her mind what to do. She took her dear sister’s heart, cut it up into small pieces, and hid them in the holes

that were in the walls of the cave. After a while the Djin returned from hunting, and asked her :

‘Hast thou eaten the heart, as I bade thee?’

‘Yea, I have eaten it,’ she replied.

Then, as before, he took down his sword, laid it across his knees, and cried, ‘My little heart, my little heart, where art thou?’

‘I am in the holes of the rock.’

The Djin lost no time, but immediately tore the Princess open, and hung her up by the side of her sister. After some days he again arose, shook himself, and became a handsome youth. He rode down to the sea, took ship, and returned to her parents. And again he was joyfully greeted.

‘But why have you returned again alone?’ asked the King and Queen, as before.

‘Why indeed—you may well ask,’ he replied. ‘The women have driven me—they gave me no peace. Every hour it was, “Go and bring our little sister! We want our little sister!” So, if it please you, let her come, and I will bring back all three together.’

But the Queen found her youngest daughter most unwilling to accompany her brother-in-law. ‘No! I won’t go, I won’t leave my father and

mother,' she cried with tears, when her mother told her of the Prince's errand.

'But, my daughter,' expostulated the Queen, 'this is shameful of you—when the bridegroom has made this long journey to fetch you, to refuse to go with him!'

'Well, mother mine,' she replied, 'if you insist on my going, go I must, I suppose; but at least you will let me take my kitten and my pet pigeon with me?'

'Eh, very well, take them an thou wilt; but hide them in thy wallet, for it would be a shame for the bridegroom to see them, grown maiden as thou art.'

So when everything had been made ready, she put the kitten in one pocket of the wallet and the pigeon in the other, and set out with her brother-in-law. And once more the ship stranded and sank, and they found mules awaiting them, and rode to the cave, and everything happened as on the two previous occasions.

But when the King of the Djins had given her the heart of her sister to eat, and had gone out hunting, she, after a while, bethought her of the kitten which was still hidden in her wallet. With

many tears, she cut up the heart and gave it to the kitten to eat. Then taking pen and paper from her wallet, she wrote on a small piece of the paper a letter to her parents, telling them of the fate of her sisters, and that he who had carried them off was no Prince, but a wicked Djin. The paper she then folded tightly and tied under the pigeon's wing, kissed the bird and bade it fly high and swiftly; and the kitten she placed on her lap, hidden under her apron.

Presently the Djin returned from his hunting, and immediately asked whether she had eaten the heart.

‘It is eaten,’ she replied.

Then he placed his sword across his knee, saying, ‘Now we shall see whether thou hast eaten it or not,’ and cried, ‘My little heart, my little heart, where art thou?’

A voice replied, ‘My lady has put me in a nice, warm little stomach.’

‘Thou art the wife for me!’ then cried the Djin, as he embraced her. ‘Now all thy commands shall be obeyed.’

For three days the poor Princess now waited for her deliverance, weeping day and night,

and not daring to sleep. But let us now leave her and the Djin, and return to the castle of her parents.

The pigeon, when let go, had flown high and swiftly, and presently came to the dovecote on the roof of the palace. The servants, seeing it, cried, 'Our little lady's pigeon! Our Princess's pigeon!' and, hastening to the terrace to feed it, observed the packet tied beneath its wing. They untied it, and what did they find?—a letter, which was at once carried to the Queen.

The Queen read it, shrieked, and fainted away. The King picked up the letter, and when he also had read it, he hid his face in his hands and sobbed and moaned, 'My daughters! My unhappy daughters!'

Every one in the palace soon learnt the terrible news, and there was such weeping and wailing within its walls that a widow woman who lived at a distance heard the sound and came to the gate to ask what had happened. When the porter had told her the terrible tidings, she said to him, 'I pray you, let me go to speak to the Queen; for I can be of service in this trouble.'

'Oh, good dame,' cried the Queen, when the

woman was brought to her, 'what can you do to rescue my child from the hands of this Demon?'

'My Queen,' she replied, 'I have seven grown sons, who support me. What callings they follow, I know not for certain, but I fancy that they are all Magicians. If your Majesty will give me a rose-coloured kerchief of fine silk, and some silk and gold thread to embroider it with, I shall be able to find out what are their callings, and then they shall help you to find the Princess.'

Well, the Queen at once gave the woman what she asked for, and she returned home, sat down on the threshold and began to embroider. After a while her eldest son came up and greeted her with a 'Good even, mother mine.'

'Welcome, my son,' she replied.

'What wilt thou do with this kerchief thou art broidering?'

'I shall give it to the one among my sons who is the most worthy.'

'And is any among us more worthy than I?'

'But do I know what is thy calling, my son?'

'My calling, mother?—Oh, I put my ear to the ground, and hear everything that happens in the habitable earth.'

‘Oh, thine is a fine trade indeed!’

The second came home—

‘Good evening, mother mine!’

‘Welcome, my son!’

‘What art thou broidering there?’

‘A golden kerchief.’

‘And to whom wilt thou give it?’

‘To my most worthy son.’

‘And hast thou a son more worthy than I?’

‘Do I know? What trade dost thou follow, my son?’

‘What trade?—Oh, I can make storms like the clouds, and run like a chariot.’

‘Oh, thine is the good trade, my son!’

Presently there came the third—

‘Good evening, mother mine!’

‘Welcome, my son!’

‘What art thou broidering there?’

She answered as before, and then asked:

‘What trade dost thou follow?’

‘I can go to the den of the Demon King, and throw his one shoe to the far West, and the other to the far East.’

Not to make a long story of it, the fourth said, ‘I can take a child from its mother’s breast without

her knowledge.' The fifth—'I can strike my staff on the ground, and mountains and cliffs arise which not even the Demon King can pass over.' The sixth—'When I wave my wand a crystal tower will spring up with all of us on the top of it.' And the seventh—'I can shoot and strike the eagle and take the partridge out of his claws.'

'Well, my brave sons all, take my blessing, and come with me to the palace. For the Demon King has carried off our three Princesses, and two he has killed, but one he keeps alive; so now let us go and try to save her.'

So they went with their mother to the King, and she told him that each of her sons could do such and such business. Said the King,

'Bring them in to me.'

When she had brought the seven into the palace, the King and Queen said to them, 'My sons, if you rescue the Princess, you may ask of us what you will.'

The King then gave them money, and they set off immediately, for there was no time to spare. But first they took an oath that they would either come back with the Princess, or not at all. Then they went out of the city, and beyond it some way,

and when they were come into the open fields, one said,

‘Where art thou, O Brother Ear of the Earth?’

‘Here I am,’ said he.

‘Put down thine ear, and let us find out in what direction is the voice of the Djin.’

He put down his ear, and said, ‘Towards the north I hear a roaring, and there must be his cavern.’

‘Where art thou, O Brother Blower and Flier?’

‘Here I am.’ He spread himself on the ground, and all the others stood upon him, and they flew to the place whence the sound came. When they were arrived near the spot, the six cried: ‘Where art thou, O Brother Ear of the Earth? Lead us now to the cave of the Djin.’

‘Here it is, brothers, close by; but we must tread very softly, and catch the Demon asleep.’

Then said, to his fourth brother, he who could throw to the far East and the far West, ‘Thou and I will go in, and see if he is sleeping, and I will then throw his shoes away, so that he cannot walk.’

He entered the cave. As luck would have it, the Djin was fast asleep; but the Princess lay

awake, weeping. The two Champions whispered to her not to be afraid, as they had come to rescue her; the one took her in his arms; the other seized the Djin's shoes, and they crept forth. As soon as they were outside he threw away the shoes, the one to the East and the other to the West. The Blower and Flier then spread himself out on the ground, and all the seven stood on him and were carried swiftly away. After a while they stopped to rest, and the eldest said,

‘Brother Ear of the Earth, put thine ear down to the ground and listen whether perchance thou hear a sound.’

‘I hear the roaring of the Djin, who has now found his shoes, and is after us. Where art thou, O Brother of the Staff? Strike now!’

He struck three times on the earth with his magic staff, and mountains arose behind them with precipices and torrents, and they hurried on. Fearing that the Demon might again be gaining ground behind them, one looked back, and seeing a cloud of dust rapidly approaching, he cried to the Blower and Flier,

‘Brother, let us descend. And do thou, Brother of the Wand, bring up the tower!’ No sooner did

they stand on the firm ground than he of the Wand struck the ground with it, and straightway a tall tower of crystal sprang up under their feet. After putting the Princess for safety in the upper chamber, the Champions looked over the battlements, and there, sure enough, at the foot of the tower was the Demon, who cried to the Princess,

‘Oh, my Queen, do but show thyself to me at the little window, and when I have seen thee once more, I will go away.’

The Princess, hearing this, leant out to spit at him. He at once became an eagle, flew up to the window, and was about to seize her; but at that moment the seventh Champion let fly his arrow, which pierced the Djin to the heart, and he fell dead at the foot of the tower. Then the seven mounted again on the Blower and Flier, and presently arrived at the palace.

I leave you to imagine the joy there was when the Princess was again safe in her mother’s arms. After a while, the King said to the seven Champions, ‘Now, my lads, you must name your reward for the great service you have rendered me. What dost thou desire?’ he added, turning to Ear of the Earth, who was the eldest.

‘I, my King,’ he replied, ‘wish to marry the Princess, and become your son-in-law; for it was I who found out where the Princess was.’

‘But,’ cried the second, ‘if I had not flown like a chariot, how would you others have reached the cave?’

‘And I,’ said the third, ‘if I had not taken her out of the cave without the Djin being the wiser, how could you have carried her away?’

Said the fourth, ‘And if I had not thrown his shoes, the one to the far East and the other to the far West, how should we have escaped with the Princess?’

‘That is all very well,’ objected the fifth, ‘but if I had not with my staff raised mountains between us and the Demon, he would soon have overtaken us!’

‘And with all that,’ cried the sixth, ‘if I had not with my wand brought up the tower of crystal, again the Demon would have taken the Princess from us!’

‘Ah me!’ then cried the King, ‘in my grief I made a rash promise; but a King must keep his word. Cut my daughter then into seven pieces, and take each of you one, if you will not take half my treasure instead!’

But while his brothers were thus disputing, the youngest Champion had stood behind the rest with his eyes fixed on the Princess, who, clasped in her mother's arms, was still weeping for her sisters whose terrible fate she could never for a moment forget. And when the King had thus spoken, he came forward and said,

‘Hush, brothers, for shame! The King and Queen are mourning the cruel fate of their two daughters, and how can you ask them to part with their only remaining child? Our task is not finished; make your salaams and come with me, I have something to say to you!’

Somewhat abashed, the six Champions left the palace with their youngest brother, and the people followed them through the streets of the city, praising their prowess, and asking them questions. But as soon as they found themselves alone in the fields, the youngest stopped and said,

‘Brothers, you have all heard of the “Water of Life?”—Let us then go in search of that water, and when we have obtained it, we may be able to bring back to life the two murdered Princesses. Our fortunes will then indeed be made!’

‘Thou art a wise youth,’ replied the eldest; ‘we

will go seek this Water of Life. But knowest thou where it may be found?’

‘It is in the Land of Darkness which is surrounded by a Sea of Darkness, so our old Master told me. Let us take our mother’s blessing and go to him; perchance he may be able to put us in the right path.’

Well, they got their mother’s blessing, each slung a watergourd over his shoulder, the Blower and Flier spread himself, and they set off towards the East. Presently they arrived at the town where the old Magician lived. When he had welcomed his former pupils, he asked their errand, and was told the story as we know it. The Djin had been an old enemy of his; so he congratulated the youths on their exploit, and gave them directions for their journey to the Land of Darkness. When they had refreshed themselves, he sped them on their way.

Over hill and valley then flew the seven Champions until they came to the Sea of Darkness. There, on the shore, where a dim misty twilight reigned ever, they found a Negro with a boat; and, following the instructions of the old Magician, they greeted him with, ‘*Salaam aleikoum*—Peace



“ THE BIRD SHE BADE FLY HIGH AND SWIFTLY, AND THE KITTEN
SHE PLACED ON HER LAP ”

be to thee!—Our Master bids thee, in the Name of God and of the Fish, to row us across to the place where is the Water of Life!’

‘My head and my hands are his,’ replied the Negro, as he signed to them to enter the boat, which was soon swallowed up in the misty darkness. After a while, however, they felt the keel grate on a rocky beach, and the Seven disembarked.

‘You are lucky to have come in the hour when the water flows, or you might have waited long,’ said the boatman. ‘You can hear it falling from the rock hard by. But you must hasten, or you will not be able to fill your seven bottles before it again ceases. Take this ball of silk with you; the end is fastened to my wrist, and when your errand is done, it will lead you back to me through the darkness.’

Guided by the sound of the falling water, the brothers soon arrived at the fountain, filled their gourds, and by means of the silken thread, easily found their way back to the boat. The Negro again rowed them across the Sea of Darkness, the Blower and Flier spread himself, and the Seven flew across land and sea until they arrived at the cave of the Djins. When our Champions entered

they found it deserted. For the Djins, when their King did not return as usual, had, after a few days, gone out to seek him, and finding him dead on the plain, they were afraid, and left that part of the country for ever.

Then the Seven lost no time, but took down from the wall the three poor dead women and laid them on the ground. They searched for the pieces which were missing, found them all, and put them back where they had belonged—for what the kitten had eaten she had soon vomited again. From their gourds they poured all over the bodies the Water of Life, and the pieces grew together; the hearts soon began to beat, the lungs to breathe. They then gave them to drink of the Water, and presently the eyes of all three opened and they sat up and gazed in amazement at the seven youths.

‘Where is the Djinn? Who are you? Is it a dream?’ asked the eldest Princess as soon as she could speak.

‘Princesses,’ said the youngest brother, ‘fear nothing! The Djinn is dead, and we have come to carry you back to your parents. And you, noble lady,’ he added, turning to the third, ‘where is your home?’

‘In such and such a country,’ she replied, ‘where my father is the King’s Vizier. The Djin carried me off one day when I was walking in the garden alone, and my father and mother will be heart-broken.’

‘Well, noble ladies,’ said the eldest of the Seven, ‘my brothers and I will take you all three to the palace of our King. Once there, it will be easy enough to restore you, my lady the Vizier’s daughter, to your parents. But, if you will allow us, we will first blindfold you, or you might become giddy and fall from the swift chariot which will carry us thither.’

The Champions then bound the eyes of each with her silken kerchief and led them out of the cave. When the Blower and Flier had spread himself, they all stood on him, the maidens supported by the three youngest brothers, and before sunset the party alighted in the garden of the King’s palace. The Princesses hastened within to find their parents, taking with them the Vizier’s daughter, while the Champions remained where they were.

It was not long, however, before the King himself appeared in the garden, followed by the

grandees of the Court. Approaching the brothers, he grasped the hand of each, kissed him on the forehead, and then led them all into the palace and to the chamber of the Queen who sat on the divan, laughing and weeping for joy that her daughters were restored to her alive and well, and embracing each in turn. When the Seven came in and bent to kiss her hand, she gave to each a ring, and loaded them with thanks and praises. A table was spread in the banqueting hall for the Royal Family and the Seven Champions, and while they ate, the brothers related to the King and Queen all their adventures.

Then the King, turning to the three Princesses, said, 'All these troubles have come upon you as a result of your refusing to wed any of the nobles and princes who have sought you in marriage. These brave Heroes are now my sons, to whom I have promised half my royal treasure. Take you each an apple, and throw it to the youth of your choice.'

The three Princesses blushed, whispered together, glanced at the Seven Champions, and finally the eldest threw her apple to the eldest, while the second Princess threw hers to the second. But

the third glanced past the other four and her apple was caught by the youngest hero.

‘That is well done, my children,’ cried the King, nodding to each. ‘The rest will soon find brides among our most noble maidens, and we will have a wedding that shall be talked of a generation hence.’

A courier, mounted on the swiftest horse in the King’s stables, had in the meantime set off to the city where lived the parents of the other rescued maiden, to bid the Vizier and his lady come and take home their daughter. As soon as they heard the good news they lost no time, as you may well suppose, but came with all speed, accompanied by a number of their friends and relations.

When the kissings and embracings and salutations were over, and the guests had rested themselves after their journey, the King came to the Vizier, and said,

‘These seven brave youths who have restored to us our dear children are now as sons to me. Three I have betrothed to the Princesses and three to the three daughters of my Vizier. If you are willing, let your daughter be the seventh bride.’

‘Certainly, my King, if she also is willing, as he rescued her from the Djin.’

So, as the Vizier’s daughter was nothing loth, they betrothed her to the sixth brother. The King then commanded his people to make preparations for the grandest wedding that had ever been seen in that country ; and when all was ready the Seven Champions were married to the daughters of the King and the two Viziers. For forty days the ceremonies lasted ; and every day there were tables laid for the poor, and shows and amusements of all kinds for the city folk of every degree.

And this is the end of the story of the Seven Champions who slew the King of the Djins.

VI

THE STOLEN PRINCE

THIS is the beginning of the story. Good evening to this worshipful company!

There was once upon a time a King, a good and just man, and every one loved him much. He had, however, one defect—far be it from the ears which hear it!—*he was a leper*; and of all the physicians who saw him, not one could do anything for his cure. One day, when his malady distressed him exceedingly, he called the Court Physician and said to him,

‘Either thou must cure me, or I shall hang thee; for I can no longer support this life!’

The Physician begged forty days’ grace in which to study his prescriptions and see if he could not find something to cure the King. Night and day the wise man sat and pondered what he should do—because for the disease which the King had there is no remedy. But at the end of the forty days he arose, and went to the King.

‘My King, my long-lived King!’ cried he, ‘I

have at length found a remedy ; but we must still wait three years for your cure.'

'Let me but be healed at last, and I will wait five!' replied the unhappy King. 'What then is the remedy?'

Said the Physician, 'The King must send out men to find and bring to him a Prince, a youth of royal blood. This youth must be fed on honey and pine-kernels in a chamber of the palace ; and at the end of three years we must bleed him to death, and your Majesty must bathe yourself in his blood.'

''Tis a harsh remedy,' replied the King, pensively, 'but, for the sake of my kingdom—as I have no son to succeed me—it must, nathless, be attempted.'

The King then called all his trusty Councillors, and asked which of them was valiant enough to kidnap a Prince for his sake. Seeing that the Councillors looked fearfully at each other, the Vizier, who was a travelled man, said,

'Set your mind at rest, my King, for I will go and do your errand ; only give me the command of a ship, and money.'

Then the King ordered his Treasurer to give the Vizier all that he might ask for ; and when every-

thing was made ready he embarked with his most trusted servants. Sailing from one shore to another, they landed one day at a place where he saw many people, and they were all hastening to one spot. He asked why all the crowd was going that way, and they told him that it was their Prince's birthday, and they were all going to the mosque to pray that he might live long. The Vizier went forward with the people and came to the place where the service was to be held. There he saw an immense crowd, some on foot, and others riding horses caparisoned with gold; and presently he saw the King arrive.

‘But where is the Prince?’ he asked of those standing near. ‘Does he not also go to the mosque?’

‘The Prince is young,’ they replied, ‘and he is in the palace with his mother, the Queen.’

The Vizier then loses no time. Observing what clothes the King's people wear, he goes on board the ship and dresses himself in the same livery; sees that the sails are ready; remembers to ask the Prince's name, and learns that it is Iskender; hies him quickly to the palace, and says:

‘The King—*may God grant him many years!*—

has sent me to fetch the Prince Iskender to pray to God with him. Tell the grooms to make ready a horse for the Prince.'

When he saw a handsome youth come out dressed all in gold-embroidered clothes, he saluted him respectfully after the manner of that country, led him down the steps to the courtyard, and helped him to mount the horse. But when they were come out into the street, the Vizier leapt up behind him and urged the horse to a gallop. Instead, however, of taking the road to the mosque, he took that leading to the port; and when the youth saw this, he began to cry out and to weep. But the Vizier quieted him, saying, 'Hush thee, my Prince, for it is here that the King thy father bade me bring thee.'

No sooner were they come on board than the cables were cast off, the sails set, and the ship sped away like a bird.

When the King returned from the mosque, he bade a servant go to the Queen's apartments and lead his son to him; and when the man came back saying that the Prince had been taken to the mosque by the palace attendant the King had sent for him, there was a great to-do. People ran

in all directions to look for their Prince ; the King and Queen wept and tore their hair ; and when, after many days, there was no news of the boy they hung the palace with black, and all the land was filled with mourning.

Well, let us leave these unhappy folk to weep and beat their breasts, and follow the Prince. Before the Vizier had set out, his King had charged him to hoist a white flag on the mainmast of the ship if he returned successful, but, if otherwise, to fly a black flag ; and he stationed men to watch for the return of the ship. As soon as the vessel was sighted, these looked anxiously to see what coloured flag she flew, and at once sent off a messenger to inform the King. Now this King had an only daughter, a lovely maiden, and she was named Sweet Blossom. When the messenger arrived she was with her father, who then bade the royal Tutor¹ conduct his daughter to her own apartments and return. Then the Vizier brought in the young Prince whom the King delivered over to the Tutor, bidding him shut up the boy in the chamber

¹ The *Lala*, a male attendant on the children of a Turkish family of rank. In former days the *Lala* was usually of slave origin, and frequently a Negro.

beneath that of the Princess, and feed him for three years on honey and pine-kernels.

Well, time passed, and the Princess learnt, who knows how?—for the King had charged the Vizier and his Councillors to keep the matter secret—that there was a strange Prince in the chamber beneath hers, and why he had been brought thither from his own country. Soon afterwards the Tutor saw her crying, and was much distressed; for he had had charge of her since her babyhood, and loved her as if she had been his own daughter.

‘What is the matter, my Blossom, that you weep?’ he asked.

‘I weep because I think of that poor Prince whom they are going to kill, and who they say is so handsome, and of how sad his parents must be now that they have lost him.’

‘Never mind, my Princess, perhaps in a year’s time he may be set at liberty,’ said the Tutor.

‘*Lala* mine, couldn’t you bring him up here to talk with me?’

‘Yes, yes, my lamb, be patient, and I will bring him, and you shall eat together,’ replied the Tutor, whose name was Ordani. And, to keep the matter secret, he made a trap-door in

the ceiling¹ under the bed, and put the Prince through it into her room.

The Princess was delighted with her new companion. She sent for flasks of rose-water for his bath, and brought shirts of silk for him to wear; and the two soon became so fond of each other and were so happy together that the Prince ceased to mourn for his parents. And so the three years passed.

But one day the Lala came into the room with tears in his eyes—for he was full of pity for the young folks, and feared that if Iskender were killed Sweet Blossom would die of grief. The Princess saw that he wept, but said nothing before the Prince. In the evening, however, when Iskender had gone down to his own room, she asked him,

‘Lala mine, what is the matter that you are so sad?—won’t you tell me?’

He did not wish to tell her anything about it, but her tears and caresses prevailed, and at last he said,

‘Must I tell you what is the matter with me? Well, alas, the time has come for Iskender to be killed!’

¹ The ceilings in Eastern houses are usually of wood, and frequently decorated with arabesques in relief, thus easily concealing such an opening.

‘O Lala mine!’ she cried, weeping bitterly, ‘if thou lovest me, take us and let us flee away together!’ and he, to console her, consented.

So, shortly before the day on which they had settled to kill the Prince, the Negro put much money in his purse, wrapped the children in cloaks, and withdrew with them by night to a desert place by the sea to wait for a ship to pass and take them to the country of the Prince’s father.

When the King rose on the following day, he ordered the Physician to slay the Prince Iskender and bleed him for his cure, and to have the Turkish bath made ready. When all was prepared, they went to fetch the boy from his chamber. But neither the little Prince, nor the Princess, nor the Negro did they find; and after a time it was discovered that the Negro had taken a horse by night and had fled. Then the King sent for the Court Magician, and asked him where the children and the Lala had gone; and when he had looked in his Magic he said that they were sailing on the sea.

Then the King cried, in his grief and anguish, ‘Ah, Sweet Blossom mine, what hast thou done to me! I would curse thee if my heart would let

me; but it will not, for I love thee too dearly! Yet one curse will I lay upon thee—*there where Iskender is gone, when his mother kisses him, may he forget thee!*'

Well, the three runaways soon found a ship, and the Negro gave the captain much money to take them to the land from which the Vizier had carried away Prince Iskender. They arrived safely, and when the vessel cast anchor, Sweet Blossom said to Ordani, 'Lala mine, look in thy Magic, and see what my dear father is doing?'—for the Lala also was a Magician. When he had looked, the Negro cried in dismay:

'How shall I tell you, my Princess?—Your father has laid on you the curse that *when the Prince's mother kisses him, he will forget you!*'

Said the Prince, 'So thankless do you deem me as to let my mother kiss me, and thus forget you who have saved my life at such sacrifices? But wait thou here, my Princess, in the ship, and I will go alone to my parents, and return with them to fetch thee as befits a King's daughter.'

So they remained in the ship, and the Prince went to the palace. He knocked at the great door; but it was fast shut and bolted, and the palace

was all hung with black. By and by a slave looked out at a window, and asked,

‘Who is knocking at the great door? That door does not open now. For all the doors are nailed up, and we go out by a little door at the back there, since the Prince was lost.’

Then cried to her the Prince Iskender, ‘Tell the doorkeepers that I will come in by this door only; say that I have news to give you of the Prince!’

He spoke so loudly that the Queen heard, and asked, ‘What is it, and who knocks at the great door?’

‘It is a youth,’ replied the slave, ‘and he will that the great door be opened for him to come in at, because he brings news of the Prince.’

Then said the Queen, ‘So be it. If he comes from the Prince, open the door and let him in.’

The great door was then opened, and they saw that it was no messenger, but Iskender himself. The Queen threw herself on his neck to kiss him; but he drew back and cried, ‘Don’t kiss me, mother mine, on your life, but send for music and drums; for I have brought the woman who saved my life to make her my Queen.’

‘Lie down and rest thee a little while, my child



' SHE FORGOT HIS CHARGE, TO HER, AND SHE BENT AND KISSED HIM ' "

while we make ready. They shall take off the black and put golden hangings on the palace ; and then we will go forth to bring hither the bride.'

When all this was done, his mother went to wake the youth. But as she raised the gold-embroidered veil she had spread over his face and saw him so handsome and rosy, his charge to her was forgotten, and she bent and kissed him. Then he awoke, and she said to him, 'Get up, my Iskender, and we will go and bring home the bride of whom you told us.'

'What bride?' asked the Prince, in surprise.

'Didst not say thou had brought a Princess who had saved thee, to make her thy wife?'

'No, mother mine, I have brought neither bride nor anyone else. Belike I was distracted with joy and knew not what I said. Let the people rejoice, if they will, at my return ; but I have brought no bride.'

When some hours had passed, and those on board the ship heard sounds of rejoicing in the city, but saw no signs of the Prince, Sweet Blossom's tears began to flow, and she said to the Negro, 'Look, Lala mine, why Iskender does not come.'

Then the Lala looked in his Magic, and cried, 'Alack, his mother has kissed him, and he has forgotten us! Bide thou here in the ship, and I will go out and see what can be done.'

Then Ordani went on shore, and seeing that opposite the King's palace was a small but beautiful little house, he sought to hire it.

Said the owners, 'We ask a very high rent for it, and that will probably not suit your mistress.'

'You tell me how much, and never mind about that.'

'We shall want fifty sequins a day.'

Said the Negro, 'Fifty?'

'Fifty.'

'Well then, here are two hundred sequins for four days, so give me the keys.'

Then he fetched the Princess from the ship, brought her to the house, and purchased everything that was needful for her.

The next day being a Friday, the people of the city went in crowds to the mosque to give God thanks because the King's son had returned, and there was a great ceremony. Then Sweet Blossom put on her veil and seated herself on the little balcony with her sleeves tucked up, so that if the Prince should see her

in passing he might recognise her by her bracelets and rings. Well, presently the Prince came out to go to the mosque to worship, and behind him walked the Vizier's son with the son of the *Kehaya*,¹ and this one, catching sight of Sweet Blossom, said to his companion,

‘Look what a beauty is on that balcony! I shall send word to her that if she will allow me, I will come and spend an evening with her.’

‘All right, find out if she is willing, and if so, we will tell the Prince, so that he, too, may go and amuse himself.’

When the ceremony in the mosque was over, and they had returned home, the youths sent for an old woman they knew and told her to go to the stranger lady, and say, ‘The *Kehaya*'s son has seen thy beauty and has lost his wits, and he would like to come this evening to visit thee.’

‘Certainly, let him come, and welcome,’ said the Princess to the old woman, when the message was brought to her, ‘but I shall require of him a present of a hundred sequins, and you must bring them to me now beforehand. And I have yet another condition—he must be at my door while

¹ The Lord High Steward, formerly an official of the Ottoman Court.

the Gypsies are playing on their instruments, neither sooner nor later will I receive him. And if he does not arrive and come in before they have finished playing, he must forfeit the sequins and bear me no grudge.'

So the old woman went and told this to the Kehaya's son, who at once tied up a hundred sequins in a gold-embroidered kerchief and gave it into her hands, saying, 'Tell the lady I will be at her door while the Gypsies are playing.'

When the Negro had received from the old woman the sequins and the message, he took ten gold pieces, and bribed the Gypsies who played the instruments to play an hour earlier than usual. In the afternoon the Kehaya's son went to the Turkish bath, and his eyes were still full of soap-suds when he heard the music. He looked at his watch, and as it seemed to be an hour slow, he threw it down on the floor and smashed it. Dressing as fast as he could, he hurried to the Beauty's door, and knocked.

'Who is there?' asked the lady from the balcony.

'I am the Kehaya's son,' he replied.

'What dost thou want here?'

‘I am he who sent thee the hundred sequins and the kerchief.’

‘Go away to the place you came from, for it is ever so long since the music finished, and my door does not open now!’

In a rage he went home to his chamber and lay awake many hours pondering how he might be revenged upon this wily woman.

Before he was well awake in the morning the Vizier’s son came to learn if he had gone to the Beauty, and how he had fared. The youth, however, kept his own counsel, and replied that he had fared splendidly, and that she was both beautiful and witty, and that if he liked he would send the old woman to announce to her that the Vizier’s son was coming. So again the old woman was set to work.

‘O my lady!’ said she, when she was shown in by the Negro, ‘what luck you have! The Vizier’s son desires to come this evening and pay you a visit, if it please you.’

‘Certainly, he does me honour; but he must send me a present of two hundred sequins and be at my door while the music is playing; neither sooner nor later will I receive him. And if he

does not come then, I shall keep the sequins, and he must bear me no grudge.'

The Vizier's son accepted the terms, and sent two hundred sequins, tied up in a gold-embroidered kerchief.

The Negro then took in his hand twenty gold pieces, and went to the Gypsies. Giving them the ten in advance, he promised them another ten if they would play an hour earlier than usual that afternoon. The Vizier's son consequently also heard the music when he was still in the bath. He immediately washed and dressed as fast as he could, hastened to the Beauty's door, and knocked. She looked out at the window, and asked who was there.

'I am the Vizier's son, and, if it please you, open and let me in.'

'Our agreement was that you were to be at my door while the minstrels were playing, and it is an hour since they finished, so go back whence you came.'

Well, does not the proverb say—*At a deaf door one knocks in vain?* So our good youth wends him back to the palace. Here he finds his friend the son of the Kehaya, who, on seeing him, cries,

‘Why, what art doing here?—Didst not go to the Beauty’s house?’

‘Of course I went, but, my dear fellow, I had no luck. My watch had stopped, and I was late in arriving; so I found the door barred against me. And there go two hundred good sequins!’

The other laughed, and said, ‘And I, my dear fellow, had just the same luck, though I said naught of it that you should not have the laugh of me, but go and fare as I did! Now, let us send the Prince, and if she tricks him too, we will have her brought to justice.’

So the pair of them went to the Prince and told him of the fair lady who had come to live in the house opposite the palace. And once more the old woman was set to work, but this time on the part of the Prince.

Said Sweet Blossom to her when she had received the message, ‘My greetings to the Prince, and gladly will I welcome him to my poor house if he will send me beforehand of his munificence one thousand five hundred sequins. But should he slip once as he ascends my stairs, he must come no farther, but go his ways, and owe me no grudge.’

Well, the young Prince accepted the conditions,

and sent the sequins by the old woman as the others had done. No sooner had she gone than our good Negro set to work and washed the staircase with soap-suds. Then he scattered on the steps a quantity of soap-shavings, and over these millet and lentils. When the appointed hour drew near, our Princess donned her most beautiful dress and her finest jewels, and stood at the head of the staircase to receive her royal guest. When the Negro had admitted him, she cried :

‘ Prince, you are very welcome ! ’

Seeing her stand there so lovely and so handsomely dressed, he had eyes only for her, and had no sooner placed his foot on the first step than he slipped and fell.

‘ O Prince, I hope you are not hurt ? ’ cried Sweet Blossom. ‘ No ?—Well, as you are a Prince, I will excuse you for slipping once ; but be careful not to slip again, or I must keep to my bargain, and beg you to retire. ’

Our poor Prince then tried a second time to mount the stairs, but once again he slipped and fell. The Princess laughed merrily, wished him ‘ Good evening, ’ put out the lamp, and vanished. The Negro opened the street-door, and, willy willy, the

Prince hies him forth again, disappointed and angry, to find his two friends.

‘Well, and so fared we!’ said they, ‘but we thought you, being a Prince, would have had better luck. As your father the King sits to-morrow on the judgment seat, we will have that woman punished for playing us this trick, and get back our sequins.’

So the Prince went to his father and said to him, ‘My father, when to-morrow you sit in judgment, I, too, shall have a complaint to make to you.’ And the King promised that his case should be heard first.

On the following morning, therefore, a Writ-server came to our Princess’s door, and knocked loudly. When the Negro had opened to him, he cried,

‘To-day, Ordani, thou and thy lady must come to the Court, where she will be called upon to give an account of herself.’

Said the Negro, ‘What have you to do with my lady?’ But the Writ-server only replied as before.

Then said the Princess, ‘Return thou to those who sent thee, and say that I will in due season appear before the Court.’

She then went to her chamber and arrayed her

in a regal gown of fair white silk broidered in green and gold, twined strings of pearls and diamonds in her hair and round her slender neck and arms, threw a veil over her head, and then went down to the carriage Ordani had brought for her, and came to the Court. All made way for her as she entered; and when she was come before the King, all those who were seated with him doing justice rose to their feet and gazed on her as she stood there like a lemon-tree covered with fruit and blossom.

Salaaming low, she said, 'My King, I wait on your orders. You summoned me, and I hastened hither.'

Then sprang forward the Kehaya's son and cried, pointing his finger at her, 'O King, this woman cozened me of a hundred sequins; the Vizier's son of two hundred; and your unlucky son she robbed of fifteen hundred, no less!'

As the Princess began to answer him with scornful words, the Prince stopped her, saying, 'Lady, I know not who you are, but he who accuses you is the son of a grandee. Keep, therefore, a bridle on your tongue!'

'What has come to thee, my Iskender? Canst thou already have forgotten Sweet Blossom

and all that she has done for thee?—how, when thou camest a lonely captive to our land, I tended thee, brought thee rose-water to wash with, and put on thee a shirt of finest silk wrought with rarest broidery?’ And Sweet Blossom wept sorely.

The King looked from one to another, and then said to his son,

‘Bethink thee well, Iskender; may not this be the maiden of whom thou didst speak when our eyes again fell on thee after thy captivity?’

‘O Iskender!’ then cried the Princess, ‘go kiss thy mother dear once more, so, please God, thy wits may return to thee!’

‘Yea, go, my son!’ said also the King. Then the puzzled Prince hastened home to the palace, kissed his mother, and remembered everything. Running back into the Court, he cried,

‘Sweet Blossom, my beloved, light of mine eyes, at last I know thee—my Princess, my deliverer! As for you, my friends, I will pay to each of you the coin you claim. But, Sweet Blossom mine, spend thou on thy wedding-dress the gold thou hadst from me!’

Then the old King took Sweet Blossom by the

hand to lead her to the palace; and the Queen came down the staircase to receive her, saying,

‘Now welcome to my daughter dear, who saved my son from death and worse, and brought him back to his sorrowing parents.’

Then they sent out heralds to announce the betrothal of the Prince to the beautiful Princess whom he had brought back with him from the foreign land in which he had been three years a prisoner.

But amidst all the rejoicings, Sweet Blossom often bethought her of her father, left lonely in his palace, and sick of a disease for which there was now no remedy. As she was walking alone in the palace gardens one day, the King met her, and seeing that her eyes were full of tears, he asked,

‘What ails my dear daughter? Is she not happy here in the palace with us?’

‘My King,’ replied the Princess, ‘I were indeed ungrateful not to be happy in the palace with those who are so good as to love and cherish me. But I was thinking of my poor father. You cannot but hate him, my King, as he would have slain your son, my betrothed. But he has always been to me the kindest of fathers, and I have left

him desolate, and grievously sick.' And she wept afresh.

'My daughter, thou dost well to remember thy parent. His malady is indeed a grievous one. But we have in our country a Physician who has cured men who were leprous; and, if thou wilt, he shall go to thy father, and perchance may heal him likewise.'

Well, a ship was got ready, and the Physician was sent in her to the country of the King who was Sweet Blossom's father. Time passed, but no news came to her; and it was not until the young couple had been wedded that the ship returned again with the Physician. The King, he said, was now whole again, and he gave Sweet Blossom a letter which he had written to her, giving her his blessing and his forgiveness, and begging her to come with her husband to visit him, as he greatly longed to see his dear daughter again. 'As for Ordani,' said the letter, 'though I forgive him, I would not see him again. Give him his freedom, and let him bide with you, or go where he will.'

So Sweet Blossom kissed her father once more. I left them all happy. And may your honours be happier still!

VII

THE THREE WONDERFUL DRESSES

IN the garden of a King's palace there grew a wonderful apple-tree, which every year bore three golden apples. But up to the time my story begins, neither the King nor any of his family had ever tasted the fruit of this tree.

‘Why do we never eat of these golden apples?’ asked the three Princes of their father one day, just as the fruit was ripening.

‘Because,’ replied the King, ‘as soon as the fruit is ripe, a Monster comes on three successive nights, and every night he takes an apple.’

‘If that is so,’ declared the youths, ‘we three will watch the tree in turn, and prevent the Monster taking our fruit.’

‘Do as you will, my sons,’ said the King, ‘and may good luck attend you.’

So that same evening the eldest Prince hid himself in the garden near the apple-tree and there awaited the arrival of the Monster. As soon as the

palace clock had struck midnight he heard coming nearer and nearer sounds as of heavy feet tramping across the garden beds, with snortings and growlings; and the valiant Prince, frightened out of his wits, ran away as fast as his legs could carry him. In the morning, when his brothers asked him how he had sped with the Monster, he replied,

‘There was no Monster! I watched till long past midnight, but heard and saw nothing. Belike the Monster will not come again, and we shall now ourselves taste these apples.’

But when the King went to look at the tree, lo! there were only two apples left, and all the grass and herbs all around the tree were crushed and trampled!

That night the second Prince went to keep watch; but he proved no braver than his brother; and in the morning the King found only one apple left.

Well, on the third evening, it was the turn of the youngest. He, however, did not hide himself, but laid him down on the grass at the foot of the apple-tree, and waited. And the roaring of the Monster did not frighten this brave youth in the least; for, as soon as he heard the noise of his

tramping, up he jumped, and before the creature could come near the tree, aimed a javelin at him, and wounded him in the eye. Roaring frightfully, the Monster fell to the ground, but rose again and made off. The Prince, however, watched till dawn, and then, satisfied with his success, went home to bed.

‘Well,’ asked his brothers when they met in the morning, ‘didst thou wound the Monster?’

‘That I did,’ he replied, ‘I think I almost killed him. Take your javelins and come with me into the garden.’

The two Princes followed him with mocking laughter; but when they came to the apple-tree they saw that their brother had really had an encounter with the terrible Monster, for the ground all about was reddened with blood, a long track of which showed which way the wounded creature had gone.

‘Let us follow this trail,’ said the youngest, ‘and we shall find out his lair.’

He led them out of the garden into the forest, and presently they came to a deep well, where the trail stopped.

‘He must have gone down this well to die,’ said



"ON THE BANK NEAR BY SAT A YOUNG MAIDEN WEEPING"

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the eldest. ‘Tie your girdles together, fasten them to mine, and so long as I call out “Cold, Cold!” let me slowly down; but when I say “Hot, Hot!” pull me up again as fast as you can.’

The others did as he bade them; but the eldest had hardly got half way down the well when he cried “Hot, Hot!” and was drawn up again.

The second Prince then offered to go down; but when he was near the bottom he, too, lost courage and cried to his brothers to pull him up.

‘Let me down now,’ said the youngest, ‘and when I call “Cold, Cold!” you may pull me up.’

He went down, and down, and still lower down, till at last he came quite to the bottom, and there, to his great surprise, he found himself in a strange and beautiful country, with tall, shady trees, flowery meadows, and running waters. Walking about here, he presently came to a splendid palace. The door stood wide open, but there was no one to be seen, neither man nor djin. He entered a wide marble hall, and after passing through several apartments, each more magnificent than the last, he came to one in which sat three maidens as beautiful as the Angels in Paradise.

‘Who art thou, stranger?’ they asked him.

‘Ladies, I am a King’s son, and I am come to seek the Monster who inhabits this country.’

‘Then thou art welcome indeed. For we are three Princesses whom he took captive. But dost thou not fear him greatly?’

‘I fear neither man nor djin,’ replied the youth, ‘and I will deliver you, or perish.’

‘Listen then, brave youth. The Monster is now lying down in the chamber hard by. If his eyes are shut, he is awake, and it is all up with thee. But if his eyes be open, he sleeps. Throw then thy javelin and slay him; but beware of throwing a second, for then he would again be whole, and we should all be lost.’

The Prince hastened to the chamber the Princesses pointed out, found the Monster asleep with his remaining eye open, hurled his javelin, and wounded him in this eye also.

‘Listen, O man!’ cried the creature as he was expiring — ‘If thou art mortal, throw another javelin at me, I pray thee!’

‘I was born only once, I have but one life, and I deal but one blow. Die, Monster, die!’

When the Prince had made sure that the creature

was really dead, he hastened with the good news to the Princesses, who, after praising his valour, led him to a table on which were dainties of all kinds, together with sweet wines and delicious fruits, and among the fruits were two golden apples which they placed before him. When they had eaten and drunk, said the youth, addressing the two elder maidens,

‘Fair Princesses, when my brothers—who are comely youths—see you, each will, I am persuaded, desire to wed one of you. So, I beg of you to allow me to give to each of you a ring as a token of betrothal. I, being the youngest, would fain wed your youngest sister, if she desire me.’

Well, the youngest Princess had already fallen in love with her handsome and heroic rescuer; and her sisters, deeming that his elder brothers could not be less worthy Princes than he, gladly consented. Having placed a ring on the hand of each, he led them out of the palace to the well-opening, at the top of which the elder Princes still waited, wondering why their brother tarried so long below.

Our hero then tied the eldest Princess to the girdle which was still hanging down, called out

‘Cold, Cold!’ and the maiden was pulled up. The second followed, and then the youth said to the third, whom he had chosen for himself,

‘Now it is your turn, my beloved. Fear naught, I will follow thee to the upper world.’

‘Thou art my betrothed,’ she replied, ‘and I love thee. But I trust not thy brothers, and fear they may do thee an ill turn. Take, therefore, these three walnuts; each of them has within it a wonderful dress. One resembles the Sky with the Sun, Moon and Stars; another the Earth with her Trees and Flowers; and the third the Sea with its Shells and Fishes. Guard them well, for they may serve thee in time of need.’

When the two elder Princesses appeared at the mouth of the well, the youths were amazed, and thought they had never seen such lovely maidens. But when the betrothed of their brother was drawn up they at once began to quarrel for her, while in the meantime the poor young Prince below was crying, ‘Cold, Cold!’ The others, however, took no notice, but hurried the three Princesses away to the palace, telling them that they would send men to draw up their brother, as their arms were weary and they feared

to let him fall. By and by the poor youth realised that his brothers had cruelly deserted him, and that he must achieve his own deliverance. So, leaving the well-bottom, and walking about in the country down below, he presently came upon an old gardener digging, and greeted him with 'A good day to you, my good man!'

'And a good day to you, young Sir! What can I do for you?'

'I am lost in this country. Can you tell me how to find my way back to the upper world?'

'Oh, I know a very easy way. Go to the other side of that little wood, and there you will find two rams grazing together, one white as snow, the other black as night. When you are come near them, shut your eyes, seize one of the rams and mount on his back. Should you have seized the white one, he will lead you to the upper earth; while the black will take you to a land still farther away from your own. But see that you open not your eyes again until you are come to one or the other. I wish you a good journey, young Sir!'

The King's son did as he was directed, and soon found the two rams grazing together. But, alack! it was the black ram that he got hold of, and he

felt that he was being carried swiftly down into a still lower world. When he opened his eyes again he found himself on the banks of a stream which, issuing from a cleft in the rock, flowed gently through the valley, and on the bank near by sat a young maiden weeping.

‘Who art thou, O lovely child?’ he asked.

‘Alas! noble stranger, mine is a dreadful fate. A terrible Dragon has here his abode who lives on human flesh and blood. This stream is the only one in the land, and the Monster will allow none to take water from it unless a young maiden is given to him every day. Fate has so willed it that to-day my turn has come; and I am waiting here until this frightful seven-headed Dragon comes to devour me.’

‘And whose child art thou, fair maiden?’

‘I am the King’s daughter, his only child; and my father is sorrowing in the palace, believing me, perhaps, already dead!’

‘Take courage, beautiful Princess! I am valiant, and I may be able to deliver you from the Dragon.’

As he spoke, a frightful hissing noise was heard close at hand, and the Monster with seven heads

now appeared from behind a rock. On catching sight of the young hero, he stopped a moment as if startled, and the Prince, seeing his opportunity, hurled a javelin straight at his heart. A torrent of flame issued from his seven terrible mouths, together with a roar that shook the hills. But that was all; and the Monster, stretching his hideous length on the grass, lay there dead.

‘Farewell, my deliverer!’ cried the maiden, as she hurried away, whilst the youth cut out the Dragon’s seven tongues to keep as a trophy. Then, fatigued by all his late exertions, he lay down at the foot of a tall tree and slept. Soon, however, he was awakened by the hiss of a serpent which was on the point of seizing a nestful of Eaglets perched on a branch above. With one javelin-stroke the reptile was killed as the Dragon had been, and the Prince went to sleep again. Soon afterwards the King of the Eagles arrived to seek his young ones. Seeing a youth stretched on the ground, he swooped down to tear him with beak and claw. But the Eaglets began to cry,

‘Father, father, see that you do him no harm!’

‘Why, my children?’

‘Because he saved us from the serpent which was going to devour us!’

The King of the Eagles then spread his broad wings over the Prince and shaded him from the sun’s rays until he awoke.

‘Young man,’ then said the Golden Eagle, ‘thou hast saved the lives of my little ones. Tell me how I can show my gratitude?’

‘I deserve less gratitude than you seem to think, noble Bird,’ replied the Prince. ‘Anyone in my place would have done as much.’

‘Thou art a hero, I say. Speak! What shall I do for thee?’

‘Well, then, if thou art able, carry me up to my own land again.’

‘Alas! willingly would I do so; but the way is long, and with a man to carry I should die of hunger and thirst before reaching the upper earth.’

‘Could I not get provisions for the journey?’

‘Thou couldst—but I should require forty sheep and forty skins of water. Where are they to be had? The King only could furnish them!’

‘Well, as I have just delivered his daughter from the Dragon, he will surely not refuse me such a gift. I will go and ask him.’

‘Go!’ replied the Eagle, ‘and I will await thee here.’

So the Prince went into the city and inquired the way to the King’s palace. All the people were rejoicing, for the news had soon spread that a hero had slain the Dragon and delivered the Princess; and heralds had been sent out to proclaim that the King would give a rich reward to his daughter’s saviour. Already knights had ridden in claiming to have done the glorious deed, and after them came charcoal-burners who had found the dead Dragon in the wood and cut off his heads.

‘’Tis we who have slain the Monster!’ cried these, ‘and here are his heads to prove it!’

‘Nay,’ said the knights, ‘how could such as you have slain him? It is we who fought with the Dragon and left him dead by the spring. The reward is ours!’

‘They are all telling lies,’ remarked the Princess. ‘My saviour was a handsome young hero, no doubt a stranger.’

At this moment the real Dragon-slayer entered the Council Chamber, and approached the King.

‘Sire,’ said he, ‘I have killed the Dragon to whom you have hitherto paid the terrible tax of

young maidens. Here are the creature's seven tongues.'

As he spoke the Princess threw her arms round his neck and cried, 'Yes, yes, my father! This is indeed he who slew the Dragon, and all those men are but liars and impostors.'

Then the King had the knights and charcoal-burners driven out, and, embracing the young Prince affectionately, he asked him,

'Dost thou desire all my treasure, or the half of my kingdom? Or wilt thou wed my daughter and be King after me?'

'Sire,' replied the hero, 'I also am a King's son; but my country is far away. I thank you for your princely offers. Your daughter is beautiful; but I am already betrothed. I will ask of you only forty sheep and forty skins of water. I require nothing more.'

'If that is so, let it be as you desire,' said the King; and he gave him all he had asked for, packed on the backs of forty mules.

The Prince then returned to the Eagle, and when he had loaded his back with these provisions, the King of the Birds said,

'Now we will set off. When I call *Crak*,

crak! thou must give me mutton; when I say *Crouk, crouk!* thou must give me water to drink; if not I shall sink down again. Dost thou understand?—Yes? Then get on my neck and let us start.'

Well, the Eagle flew up, and up, and still higher up. Presently he cried '*Crak, crak!*' and the Prince gave him meat; then, '*Crouk, crouk!*' and he gave him to drink. But the provisions were finished before they arrived at the opening which led to the upper earth. '*Crak, crak! Crak, crak!*' cried the Eagle once more. The youth made no reply, but, drawing his poniard, he cut a piece of flesh from his thigh and placed it in the Eagle's beak.

'This is human flesh,' said the bird to himself, and he kept the piece under his tongue. At last, towards evening, he set down the King's son safely on the upper earth, in the garden of the palace.

'Here you are at last!—Walk now!' said the King of the Birds.

But the Prince could not move, so painful was the wound in his leg. 'Walk! I say,' repeated the Eagle. Then the youth confessed that, having run out of meat, he had given him a piece from his own thigh.

‘I knew it, and so I kept the piece under my tongue. Here it is!’ and with this he put back the flesh in its proper place, and the wound immediately healed. The Eagle then took leave of the Prince and flew away back to his nest.

‘What am I to do now?’ thought the youth. After reflecting a little, he waited until darkness had fallen, and then, without being seen by anyone, made his way to his own chamber. There he disguised himself as a working lad and set out for the shop of the King’s tailor.

‘I am a journeyman tailor,’ said he, when he had saluted the master, ‘and I am in want of a job.’

‘Thou art come in a lucky hour, my lad, for my best workman died yesterday,’ returned the tailor. ‘Go to the foreman and he will give thee work.’

So the young Prince went into the workroom, sat himself down cross-legged on the vacant board, and stitched away diligently. In the meantime his brothers did nothing but quarrel for the hand of the youngest of the three Princesses; and at length, to put an end to the dispute, the King decided that his eldest son should marry her.

‘Well,’ said the maiden, ‘I will marry him, if your Majesty will give me three things as a wedding gift.’

‘And what are they?’ asked the King.

‘Oh, merely three dresses. But one must be like the Sky, with the Sun, Moon and Stars; the second like the Earth with all her Trees and Flowers; and the third like the Sea with all the Fishes that swim in it.’

The King was rather taken aback; but all the same he promised that the Princess should have her wish. So the Court tailor was sent for, and received the order for the three dresses. The poor man returned bewildered to his shop, wondering how in the world he would be able to accomplish such a magnificent piece of work. Day after day he pondered, and all night long he dreamed of the dresses, but they were not a bit the nearer completion. At last he came to the conclusion that the task was an impossible one for him. His new journeyman, seeing him thus pensive, one day ventured to ask what ailed him.

‘My lad, the King has ordered me to make three magnificent dresses for the maiden our Prince is to marry; but my art is far below his Majesty’s

requirements, and I fear that he will withdraw his patronage from me.' And he described to the youth the fashion of the robes required of him.

'Is that all?' cried the pretended journeyman, laughing; 'why, 'tis but child's play!'

'Child's play!—art mad, boy?'

'No, master, I have all my five wits about me, and, what is more, I will soon make those dresses for you. So be of good cheer, master mine.'

'Out with thee! Dost thou, who art but now out of thy 'prenticeship, pretend to be a better workman than I—the first master-craftsman of the country and the Court tailor to boot?'

'Once more, my master, I say that I can make the three dresses.'

'But when?—in twenty years' time?'

'No, this night—to-morrow morning they will be ready!'

'But where wilt find the stuffs?'

'I will find them, never fear. Give me only a lamp, a bottle of wine, and a basket of nuts; leave me alone in my room, and come to me to-morrow morning at sunrise.'

Well, the youth passed the night cracking his nuts and drinking his wine without troubling his

head about the dresses. At early dawn came the tailor and knocked at the door.

‘Are the dresses ready?’ he asked anxiously.

‘Not quite, master mine. It is not yet sunrise.’

Then the Prince opened the three walnuts the Princess had given him, and took out of them the three marvellous robes broidered with the Sky, the Earth, and the Sea, and spread them out on his bed.

‘May I come in now?’ asked the tailor.

‘Yes, master, come in, the dresses are ready!’

When the good man saw the beauty of the stuffs he was thunderstruck, and thought that either he must be dreaming, or his new workman must be one of those djins of whose magical powers he had heard so many wonderful stories. Coming to himself, however, he took the dresses and carried them to the palace. When the Princess saw them, she asked,

‘Who has been able to make such beautiful robes?’

‘My lady, not I, I must admit; the credit belongs alone to a young workman of mine.’

‘I should like to see this clever youth. Go and bring him to the palace.’

But when the pretended tailor was led into the presence of the Princess, what was his master's amazement to see him, instead of humbly saluting her, take both her hands in his, and hear him say, 'Is it indeed thou, my beloved one?' and to hear the Princess reply, 'It is! it is! and I have waited for thee! But thy brothers——'

'Never mind my brothers! I will tell everything to my father, and he will judge justly between us.'

So they twain went to the King and told him all that had happened. And the King was so angered when he heard of the treachery of his two elder sons, that he would have killed them with his own hand had not the young couple interceded for them and begged that they might only be sent into exile.

Well, now the troubles of the brave Prince were at an end, and on the very next day preparations were begun for his wedding, which was before long celebrated throughout the land with great feastings and rejoicings.

This is the end of the story of the Three Wonderful Dresses.



OUR HERO MOUNTED WITH HER ON THE FALCON'S BACK AND DESCENDED FROM THE MOUNTAIN.

VIII

THE THREE BROTHERS AND THEIR THREE SISTERS

ONCE upon a time and a long time ago, there were three sisters who were orphans and lived with their three elder brothers. When the maidens were grown up their brothers sought husbands for them ; and the eldest they married to the Sun, the second to the Moon, and the third to the South Wind ; and each of them took his bride to his own home.

Some months afterwards, exactly how long I cannot say, the eldest brother said to the others,

‘ It is long since we had news of our sisters, let us now go and see how they fare.’

‘ By all means,’ they replied ; and, without more ado, the three got ready their provisions for the journey, shouldered their long-barrelled guns, stuck poniards and pistols in their waist-belts, and set out.

As they went, darkness overtook them while

crossing a plain at the foot of a high mountain. So they halted there, took out from their wallets the food they had brought, and lighted a fire. Supper over, the eldest brother said to the others,

‘Do you two lie down and sleep, and I will watch, lest harm befall us.’

The two accordingly lay down and slept, while he mounted guard. Presently a Koutchédhra, seeing the light of their fire, came up to them, and her mouth watering at the smell of human flesh, she rushed upon the watcher—who was the nearest—to devour him. Luckily, however, he was ready for her; and with a ball from his good gun, he stretched her dead on the ground. He then hid her body in some brushwood that his brothers might not see it, and when morning broke, they all three set off again on their journey.

On the second night, after they had lighted a fire and supped, the second brother watched while the others slept; and presently there came up another Koutchédhra, whom he slew as his brother had done; and he also hid the body of the Ogress, and said nothing of the matter to the others.

Well, the third night came, and when they had eaten, the youngest said gaily,

‘Now it is my turn to watch while you two rest! Sound slumber to you!’

‘But, no!’ they protested, ‘thou art all too young for that duty. Do thou sleep, and we others will take it in turn to watch.’

As, however, he was not to be persuaded, they at last, though very unwillingly, had to let him mount guard while they slept, and, sure enough, a third Koutchédhra presently came along. He at once raised his gun, but, lacking experience, he fired too soon and only wounded her. Writhing with pain and howling with rage, she rushed upon him, and would have torn him with her long claw-like fingers had he not drawn his poniard and stabbed her to the heart. But while she was thus writhing, her dragon’s tail had scattered the embers in all directions; the fire was extinguished; and as in the darkness he was unable to find his tinder box, he was unable to rekindle it. Seeing, however, a blaze as of a fire on the mountain side not very far away, he took up a piece of half burnt wood over which he had stumbled, and set off with it in that direction. He had not gone far before he met the Mother of the Day, whom he greeted, and inquired her errand.

‘Good youth,’ she replied, ‘I come from the East, bringing the Dawn, and I may not tarry to gossip with thee.’

‘Oh, please wait a moment, good Mother,’ he begged, kissing her hand respectfully. ‘Just give me time to light my dead brand from that fire away there, for when the day has dawned I shall not be able to find it.’

‘Well, good youth, I will wait,’ said she.

But, as he still did not quite trust her, he bound her to a tree with his girdle, so that she might not go on and dawn the day. As he came up to the fire, he saw upon it a great copper cauldron having twelve handles. Lifting it off, he lighted his torch at the flame, and was just replacing it when the Twelve Robbers to whom it belonged returned. Amazed at the strength of the youth, they asked him, ‘Who art thou, O stranger?’

‘I am a traveller,’ he replied. ‘My fire had gone out where I was camping on the plain below, and I came up here to get a light from your fire.’

‘But,’ they asked again, ‘how canst thou, with thy sole strength, lift the cauldron? The dozen of us, when we want to lift it off the fire, take each

a handle, and even then it is as much as we can manage.'

'Oh,' replied our hero carelessly, 'I did not find it so very heavy,' and he lifted it again.

'Then you must be the Champion of Champions!' cried the chief of the band, 'and you are the fellow to help us steal the King's horses. So come along with us, for now is the time.'

Well, they set off, the thirteen of them, to rob the King. Arrived at the palace, they made a hole in the high outer wall through which they, one by one, entered the courtyard where the royal stables were, while the youth remained outside on guard. Left alone, he began to reflect.

'Until to-night,' he said to himself, 'I have been an honest youth, and have never committed the smallest theft. I see but one course open to me now—to kill these rascals and run away.' So he began to shout through the hole in the wall,

'Quick, save yourselves! We are discovered!'

On this the robbers came out as fast as they could; but as each one came through the hole, our honest youth ran at him and stabbed him to the heart with his poniard. Having thus slain

them all, he himself entered the courtyard, and looked about him. Seeing a well in the centre, he went up to it, stuck the point of his blood-stained poniard between the coping stones of the well-head, and went his way back to the brigands' lair. After lighting his torch, he returned to the Mother of the Day and loosed her, rekindled the fire, hid the body of the Koutchédhra in the brush-wood as his brothers had done, and, like them, kept his own counsel.

Let us now leave the three brothers, and return to the King's palace. Early in the morning the grooms sent word to their master that a strange thing had happened in the stable-yard during the night, and begged him to come down. And when the King was come, and saw the dagger fixed in the well-head, the hole in the wall, and the twelve dead men outside, he marvelled greatly and asked what this thing could mean? But no one could read the riddle. Then the King gave orders to the masons to build hard by, at a place where four roads met, a Khan for travellers. When it was finished he put one of his servants in charge of it, bidding him give food and lodging without payment to every wayfarer who would

relate to him the story of his life, whether good or bad.

Time passed, and many people came, and told their tale, and left; and as chance would have it, the three brothers also came and supped there, and slept. In the morning when they were about to leave and the eldest brother asked for the reckoning, the Khan-keeper replied as was his wont, 'Here we take no money from travellers; we only ask each to tell his story, good or evil.'

So first the eldest told his story, and among other things how he had slain the Koutchédhra; and the second brother the same. But when it came to the turn of the third, and he had related not only his adventure with the Ogress, but how he had slain the brigands when they were in the act of robbing the King, the Khan-keeper cried, 'Thou art the man the King is seeking.'

Well, the two eldest brothers went on their way, and we don't know what became of them. As for the youngest, the King, having heard his story, made him the second person in the Kingdom, and gave him his daughter in marriage.

Now I should tell you that it was the custom in that country, on the occasion of a royal wedding,

to set free a certain number of prisoners. Among the people then in the city prison was an outlandish creature who was half flesh and half iron; and as he had not been set free with the others—being condemned for life—he cried and complained so continually that the bridegroom, moved with compassion, begged the King to set him likewise at liberty. At the moment his fetters were struck off, the Princess happened to be standing close by; and in a moment he had seized her and disappeared!

Maddened by this misfortune, the unhappy King drew his sword and would have killed his son-in-law. But the youth sprang aside and cried to him,

‘Nay, Sire, slay me not, for I will find her and bring her back again. Give me but a pair of iron shoes and an iron staff, and I will not fail before the year is out to return here with your daughter.’

Well, with the shoes on his feet and the staff in his hand, he set out, and came in time to the dwelling of his sister who had married the Sun.

‘Who is there?’ she cried, when he knocked at the door. But great was her joy on seeing her

brother. Presently she heard her husband coming, and fearing that he might destroy the youth if he should find him unexpectedly in the house, she pushed him into a cupboard. Hardly had the Sun entered than he asked,

‘What is there for supper? I smell fresh meat.’

‘Nay, you are mistaken,’ she replied, ‘there is no meat in the house to-day.’ But seeing that he began to look about for it, she added, ‘It would be better for thee to eat me than to eat my young brother who came in just before thee.’

‘Then let him show himself, and I will not harm him.’

So the youth came out of his hiding-place; and, on seeing his brother-in-law, the Sun shared the joy of his wife. Presently our hero asked his relatives if they knew where was the abode of Half-man-half-iron.

‘No,’ they both replied, ‘we know nothing about him; go and ask the Moon.’

To make a long story short, the next evening he arrived at the dwelling of his sister who had married the Moon; but as she and her husband could also tell him nothing, he went on to the

third who had wedded the South Wind. She likewise did not know, but gave him this counsel :

‘Go forth to-morrow before daybreak, and take that road thou seest over there, and in such and such a place thou wilt find a falcon who is so big that he cannot fly. Come up behind him very softly, seize him by the head, and say, “If thou tell me not where Half-man-half-iron lives I will kill thee.” When he has told thee that, and other things, set out to find him thou seekest.’

Well, he did as his sister the wife of the South Wind counselled, and mastered the falcon, who said, ‘I both know where he lives and I will take thee to him if thou wilt bring me many stones of meat and then wait till my wings be grown again, for I am old.’

So the youth killed game and fed the falcon till his wings were grown again, and also made store of provisions to feed him with by the way. For the place to which they were bound was a mountain so wondrously high and steep that no man had ever climbed it. It was called ‘the Other World,’ and it was there that Half-man-half-iron had taken the King’s daughter. Then, with

the meat in his lap, he bestrode the falcon, and the bird began its flight. As they ascended, the youth gave him pieces of meat from time to time; and after many hours they alighted in front of a palace. He knocked at the door, and—O joy! it was his own wife the King's daughter who opened. Seeing her husband, she cried,

‘Is it indeed thou, my beloved? How didst thou come here, and who has carried thee?’

He told her all his adventures, and, fearing for his life, as the hour was approaching for her tyrant's return, she hid him in the loft. When Half-man-half-iron came in, he asked, like the Sun, ‘What is there for supper? I smell fresh meat,’ and looking here and there, he saw through a hole in the planks that there was some one in the loft. In a moment he had seized our hero, and drunk his blood; while as for his skin and bones, he threw them out of doors, and then went away. When the falcon, who was resting on a great plane-tree hard by, saw the dead body of the youth, he said to himself,

‘This is the youth whom I carried hither. I must be off quickly and fetch some swallows' milk so as to bring him to life again.’ And without

loss of time he spread his wings, and sailed off to a mountain which opened and shut, for it was there that the swallows' milk was to be found. He arrived, filled his mouth, and returned as fast as he could fly.

Hardly had the milk touched the lips of the dead youth than he came back to life. Entering the house, he said to the Princess his wife, 'Do thou feign to be ill, and when Half-man-half-iron comes in, say to him, "We have lived now so long together, yet you have never revealed to me where your strength lies. I am going to die, so you need not fear to let me know." Then perchance he may tell thee.'

Well, she did so; and first the Monster said that his strength was in the broom which lay on the hearth. So next morning they burnt the broom. But he returned in the evening none the worse. Then she pretended to be a-dying, and again pressed him to tell her; and at last he said,

'Well, as thou seemest to be at death's door, I will tell thee, to content thee, so that thou mayst die in peace. There lives on that opposite mountain a wild Boar, one of whose tusks is of gold and silver. It is hollow, and within is a hare ;

within the hare are three pigeons, and in them my life and strength reside.'

In the morning, when he had gone about his business as usual, the Princess sought her husband in his hiding-place, and told him the words of Half-man-half-iron.

'Now he has told thee true!' exclaimed the youth; and without losing a moment he set off towards the mountain. Arrived there, he came across a shepherd who was tending his flock, and inquired of him where the famous Boar with the gold and silver tusk had his lair.

'Don't speak too loud, young Sir, or he will hear you and come and destroy us all,' whispered the Shepherd. But the youth made still more noise, and presently the Boar came up and rushed on him. He then drew his dagger and defended himself; and while they were fighting thus, the Boar cried,

'If I had but a tree-root to sharpen my tusks on, thou wouldst see!'

'And I, if I had but a cake of fine flour, some broiled trout and a jar of wine, *thou* wouldst see too!' retorted our hero.

In a trice the Shepherd had brought the victuals for the hero and the root for the Boar. When they

had both refreshed themselves, the fight began again and continued until the Boar, pierced to the heart, fell dead on the mountain side. Then the King's son-in-law split open his gold and silver tusk, took out the hare, and out of the hare the three pigeons.

Let us now return to Half-man-half-iron. Hardly had the Boar expired than he felt his strength leaving him; when the hare had been opened he felt still weaker, and could hardly stand. At this moment the youth, having cut off the heads of two of the pigeons, and holding the third in his hand, returned to his wife. When Half-man-half-iron saw him enter, he tried to rise, but could not. The youth cut off the head of the third pigeon, and he immediately expired. Then our hero took the Princess his wife, mounted with her on the falcon's back, and descended from the mountain. The falcon they left where the youth had first found him, and returned as fast as they could travel to her father's palace. And I will leave you to imagine—for it would take me a whole evening and longer to describe them—what feastings and rejoicings there were both in the palace and throughout the city when the young couple returned home again safe and sound.

IX

THE MOTHER'S BLESSING

THIS is the beginning of the story—I make my salaams to all the noble company!

Once upon a time, there was a wealthy merchant who had a good and beautiful woman for his wife and two very handsome sons who went to school every day and were the joy of their parents' hearts. After a time, however, luck seemed to desert the merchant; his ships were lost at sea, his customers became bankrupt, and he every year grew poorer and poorer. After matters had gone on like this for some time, he came home from the bazaar one evening, and said to his wife,

‘Something must now be done, wife, to retrieve our fortunes, for lately everything has gone from bad to worse. The boys are growing up, so I will leave them to keep thee company, sell what goods remain to me, and go to trade elsewhere. When I have gained a little money, I will return and apprentice our boys. But be thou of good cheer, and do not despair.’

Then when he had sold everything save the house they lived in, which his wife had inherited from her father, he left them what money he could spare, commended them to God, and set off on his journey.

Weeks passed, and months, and then years, and frugal though the good mother was, there came a day when their last coin was spent. But the boys managed to hide from her that they were in such misery; for she was grieving that no news came from her husband, and if she should have to grieve also for their poverty, they feared she might die of sorrow. So the boys pretended to go to school in the city every day as before, but they went to work instead, and every evening they brought back provisions for the family. Then their clothes wore out, and work as hard as they might they could not, being so young, earn enough money to buy new clothes. What were they to do? After much thought, the elder said one day to the younger:

‘Thou must bind me, lead me through the city, and sell me as a slave. I am young and healthy, so thou will get much money as my price, and our mother and thou can then live in comfort

until our father's return when he will redeem me.'

But his brother wept, and was unwilling to do this. Said he, 'Thou hadst much better sell me, and remain with our mother thyself.'

'Nay, not so,' replied the elder, 'for thou hast coaxing ways and wilt console her; but I have not, like thee, the ready tongue.'

Well, at last they settled to go and tell their mother that the elder boy was going to seek his father. When she heard this the good woman cried, and made a great to-do; but finally she consented, gave him her blessing, and said, 'Go, then, my brave boy, and return with thy dear father.'

The two boys went off towards the city, and the younger then bound the elder and led him through the streets, crying, 'Slaves! Slaves! Who'll buy a smart slave?' But nobody seemed to want a slave, and when they had passed through many streets, they by and by got tired and hungry.

Presently, however, as they were passing by the Vizier's palace, and the younger boy cried once more, 'Buy a slave! Who'll buy a smart slave!'

the Vizier himself popped his head out of an upper window and called out,

‘Hallo, you there! How much dost want for that young slave?’

The lad looked up, and replied, ‘A bushel of sequins.’

‘Bah! I’ll give thee forty piastres!’

Then cried the pretended slave, ‘Donkey! I have heard it said that thy father the Kadi was to be bought for forty piastres, but my price is a bushel of sequins.’

When the Vizier heard these words he was furious, and wanted to cut off the head of the impudent lad who dared thus insult both him and his father, the judge. But in order to do this, he must first buy him. So the boys, at his bidding, entered the courtyard, and the Vizier gave the bushel of sequins to the younger, who made his salaam and went away home to his mother with the money. By this time, however, the Vizier’s anger had cooled; and when he looked at the lad and saw how handsome and well grown a youth he was, he took a great fancy to him, and had no further thought of cutting off his head; but to frighten him a little, he said,

‘Thou art very bold to-day, my young cockerel. Let us see if thou wilt crow so loudly at even when the bowstring is round thy gizzard!’

The boy was not, however, at all afraid that the Vizier, after paying so much money for him, would send him to the executioner. He made a lowly obeisance, and then, standing before his new master with arms crossed on his breast and downcast eyes, replied,

‘My Lord Vizier! my insolence—for which I crave your pardon—was but a device to make you buy me, for my owner asked a heavy price. I desired to enter your honourable house, and I will be your Excellency’s most devoted slave.’

‘Well, well, thou art evidently not a fool. Go thou then to the gardener, and tell him to give thee work till we see what thou art good for.’

So the new slave, to whom they gave the name of Youssouf, went to work in the Vizier’s garden; and as he did his best, he soon became the head gardener’s right hand.

Now the Vizier had an only daughter, beautiful as the day, and she was the very apple of her father’s eye. This maiden would come down every day into the garden to gather flowers and

fruits, or sit on a divan in the kiosk with her embroidery while her old nurse amused her with stories, and Youssof would pluck for her the freshest and most fragrant flowers and the choicest fruits. Some time passed thus, and the Vizier's daughter came oftener and more often into the garden, and it was 'Youssof' here and 'Youssof' there, till the old nurse began to suspect how matters were; and though loth to injure the lad in any way, she thought it her duty to separate the young people. So one evening when the Vizier came home from the Court, she approached him and said,

'My lord Vizier, I would fain reveal a certain matter to you, though I fear you will slay me for my pains. Yet it is my duty to tell you that my lady, your daughter, seems to have a great fancy to the boy Youssof.'

'Ha! Is that so? Thou hast but done thy duty in telling me,' replied the Vizier.

Then he sent for the head gardener, and said to him, 'Do thou at once get ready in a basket the seeds of all kinds of fruit-trees,—peaches and pomegranates, figs and apricots, and every other sort,—and send it to me by the boy Youssof. If

my daughter ask thee to-morrow of the lad, see thou tell her nothing.'

When the seeds were ready, Youssouf carried them to his master, who bade him take this basket of seeds and set out on the morrow at dawn for a distant spot where he had an estate. 'There,' said he, 'thou must plant these seeds, and in a year's time bring me of the fruit which thou hast grown from them. Without these fruits in thy hand see that thou set not foot again in my house, or off will go thy head; but if thou bring them, all that land shall be thine, and I will free thee.'

The unlucky youth carried the basket with its contents to his chamber, and at dawn he set off, taking nothing else with him but a loaf of bread. With a sad heart he walked on, and on, not knowing whether he would ever return from the wild land to which he was bound, such a place of barren rocks and rugged precipices as he believed it to be. Towards evening he grew weary, and coming to a lonely shrine by the wayside, he entered and laid him down to sleep. As he slept he saw in his dream an Old Man of kindly aspect, who asked him,

‘Whither goest thou, O Youssouf?’

‘Alas! Whither should I go!’ he replied, and then told the Old Man all his story.

Said the Old Man to him, ‘Listen, my boy. When thou hast gone ten paces from this shrine thou wilt see a great rock, and at its foot a marble slab. Raise the slab, and beneath it thou wilt find tools; take them, and go on thy way. Fear nothing, I am thy Mother’s Blessing, and will be ever near thee.’

When Youssouf awoke, he looked around him like one dazed, expecting to see the Old Man, but there was no other person in the chamber of the shrine. So he arose, took the basket of seeds, went to the rock and saw the slab, raised it, and there indeed were the tools he required—spade, and pick, and rake, and everything else. Shouldering them, he went on until he came to the place for which he was bound. The soil there he found so stony that it was impossible that any seed could sprout in it. Looking about him, however, he presently caught sight of something green on the summit of one of the precipices above him, and climbing up through the rocky bed of a torrent, he found there a wood of chestnut trees and under them quantities of rich

soil. Setting to work with pick and spade, he cast quantities of this earth over the precipice, working part of the night as well as all day long; and while he slept the Old Man brought food for him and left it at his side.

When he had worked thus for a day or two, he one morning at sunrise saw something shining on the summit of a neighbouring cliff, and throwing down his spade, he made his way to the spot and found that the shining object was a great brazen vessel, very heavy, the cover of which he was unable to open.

‘I will cast it down on the rocks below,’ he said to himself, ‘and when I have time I may perhaps find out what the jar contains.’

When he had thrown down all the earth he needed for his garden, he descended again by the torrent bed. Then he set to and levelled the soil, and planted the seeds. In their due season the rains of heaven fell and filled the channels which he dug around the beds to hold the water, the warm sun shone, and before long, green shoots sprang from the seed through the brown soil. These grew so fast that in a month or two they became trees as tall as he, and were bursting into blossom.

‘Now,’ thought he, ‘as I have less work to do, I will go and look for the brazen vessel.’ So he set off for the foot of the cliff from which he had cast it down. When he came to the place he found that the jar had burst in falling; and a number of large gold pieces were lying among the rocks and stones, while within were many more, together with quantities of precious stones, rubies and emeralds and diamonds. He carried this treasure to a cave which he had discovered, and in which he slept; and as it was now sunset, he ate his supper, and laid him down to rest.

That night he dreamed again of the Old Man, who came to him and said, ‘Did not the Vizier tell thee that if thou brought him fruit grown on this spot from the seeds he gave thee, all this land should be thine? Thy trees now require but little care, so place on thy hand the ring thou hast in thy treasure, and hie thee to the city which is but a day’s journey beyond these rocks, and there hire masons in the Vizier’s name to build for him hard by on the meadow-lands a summer palace. There is in the jar wherewith to pay them, and stone thou hast here in plenty; but the wood and marble and everything else they must bring with them

from the city. Let them be good craftsmen and bind them to have the palace ready with all its furnishings in three months' time. When thy fruits are ripe, carry them to the Vizier, and then invite him to visit thee at thy palace here.'

When Youssouf awoke from this dream and saw the dawn lighting up the mouth of the cave, he arose, and proceeded to do the bidding of the Old Man. Taking the ring from the jar, he placed it in the folds of his girdle, together with a few of the gold pieces. He then set out, and arriving in the city as the sun was setting, went to an inn to eat and sleep. Next morning he inquired of the innkeeper who was the best builder there, and sought his abode. At first the master-mason was unwilling to treat with him for the work; he looked so young, and his clothes and shoes were dusty. But when the youth showed him the ring on his finger—which was such as are worn by Sultans and Viziers—and told him that his master had ordered him to pay half the sum agreed upon on the day the building should be begun, and the remainder month by month, he consented, and sent for a carriage, and they drove to the lands of the Vizier. Then

Youssouf showed them the spot which he had chosen. For all the ground was not barren like that on which his master had bidden him plant the seeds, but was covered with pleasant woods and meadows through which a little river flowed. Their business concluded, the masons returned to the city, and Youssouf to his fruit trees.

Months passed, and by the time the palace was finished the fruits were beginning to ripen under the hot summer sun. About this time the Old Man again appeared to Youssouf in a dream, and in obedience to his commands our hero went again to the city where he had hired the masons, bought rich furniture and clothing, besides two fine carriages with a pair of prancing horses to each, hired coachmen and grooms, cooks and other servants, gave to all of them money to provision the house and stables, bade them hasten to put everything in order—for the Vizier, he said, might arrive now any day—and returned to his garden. All was at last in order at the palace, and the fruits being now ripened to perfection, Youssouf selected the choicest of each kind, placed them, wrapped carefully in green leaves,

in the basket in which he had brought the seeds a year ago, and set off for his native city.

Let us now see what had been happening there in his absence. When the Vizier's daughter found that Youssof had been sent away and could learn no tidings of him from any one, she fell sick for very grief and laid her down to die. Doctors and doctresses were brought to her, one after another; but their remedies were of no avail, for the maiden pined and grew weaker day by day, and her constant cry was for Youssof. If the door creaked on its hinges she would start and cry 'Youssof!' Whenever she heard a footstep outside it was again 'Youssof!' And at last it was all 'Youssof!' for no other word did the Vizier's daughter utter; and at the end of twelve months you might have seen daylight through her, so wasted was she. What to do her father and mother knew not. Youssof they looked upon as lost; for, as they said to one another, 'There where the poor lad has gone, he must by this time have starved or been eaten by wild beasts.'

When the youth arrived at the palace with his basket of fruit, and the courtyard gate was

opened to him, the Vizier's daughter heard the hinges creak and cried again, 'Yousseuf! Yousseuf!' And when he entered the courtyard the servants crowded around him, crying, 'It is Yousseuf! our Yousseuf has returned safe and well!' and led him at once to their master, while the women ran to the chamber of their young mistress with the good tidings.

When the youth, after making his salaams to the Vizier, uncovered his basket, and offered him the fruit, his master gazed at him in amazement, and then exclaimed, 'What! Yousseuf!—and art thou still alive?'

'With Allah's help, my lord, I am; and I bring here to you of the fruit of the garden you bade me plant.'

'Did those fruits indeed grow from the seeds I gave thee, and on the spot to which I sent thee?'

'Truly, my lord, from those same seeds and on that selfsame spot.'

'Thou liest, boy! Where didst thou plant them?—on the rocks belike, and they grew into trees and bore fruit?'

'If my lord doubts my word, let him come

with me and see for himself,' replied the youth respectfully. 'To-day, with his permission, I would see to certain business of my own; but to-morrow I will return at noon and accompany him thither.'

'My daughter and I would likewise go to see this garden,' cried the Vizier's lady from behind the lattice, where she was sitting.¹

'With my lord's permission I will bring also a carriage for my noble mistress and the young lady,' said the youth, without, however, looking towards the lattice.

'Let it be so,' agreed the Vizier.

Having made his salaams, Youssouf at once hurried to his mother's house to find, to his great joy, that his father had returned a few days previously, again a rich and prosperous man.

'I, too, have made my fortune,' he cried, as he embraced his parents and brother; and when he had related all his adventures his mother wept, and said,

'Ah, my poor boy, my brave boy, what hast thou

¹ The *Kafess*, a screened recess in the wall of an apartment with separate entrance, from which the ladies of a Moslem household can, while themselves unseen, observe what is going on in the public rooms of the house.

not suffered for my sake! But again thou seest how thy Mother's Blessing has brought thee good luck.'

Then Youssouf begged his parents to go with him that very day to the house he had built on the Vizier's country estate, and there make ready to entertain on the morrow his noble guests. So they all set off together in a hired carriage which they sent back before they were come to the house. He spent the night there with them, and at dawn he caused the four prancing horses to be harnessed to the two grand gilt coaches, donned a fine suit of clothing, took his seat in the foremost coach, and came about midday to the Vizier's gate. Hearing the clatter of the four horses' hoofs on the stones, the Vizier looked out of a window, and seeing the two gilt coaches enter his courtyard and a handsomely dressed youth descend from the first, he hurried to the staircase to receive him.

Said Youssouf, salaaming low, 'My lord, I have come to take you and your ladies to see the garden. Will you honour me by using these carriages?'

The Vizier was amazed. He, however, made no remark, but sent a servant to fetch his wife and daughter who took their seats in the first carriage,

while he with Yousseouf and two of his attendants followed in the other. In a few hours' time they arrived at the garden, and the Vizier, to his great amazement, saw young and vigorous fruit-trees growing where formerly all was barren land. Bidden to explain the marvel, Yousseouf related how he had found tools under the slab, and with them thrown down earth from the cliff top, and so forth; but said nothing of the treasure, as the Old Man had charged him. When he had told all this, he said to his master,

‘My lord will not have forgotten that, when he gave me the seeds and bade me plant them here, he promised that if in a year's time I brought him of the fruit grown from them, all this land should be mine, and I should have my freedom?’

‘I have not forgotten, the land is thine, and thou art free.’

‘Then, my lord, will you and the noble ladies sup and pass the night in the house I have built on the green meadow?—the way is long to the city, and the hour is late.’

As all were curious to see the house of which they now heard for the first time, they hastened to re-enter the carriages which quickly brought them

to the door of the palace. Youssouf's parents and brother were at the door to receive them, and when they had exchanged greetings the Vizier turned to the younger lad, saying,

‘Thou wert right to ask for thy brother a bushel of sequins, he is worth that and more. But how camest thou to sell him for a slave?’

‘Ah, my lord!’ exclaimed the father, ‘it was Youssouf himself who would have it so, to save his mother from want. I all my life had coin enough and to spare until a few years ago, when my luck changed, and nothing seemed to prosper with me. I then went abroad to trade, and my ventures taking me to far distant lands, it was long ere I could return, and the money I sent to my wife by the hand of a friend never reached her, for he died on the road. Our boys did what they could; but being young, and knowing no trade, how could they support themselves and their mother? So Youssouf bade his brother bind and sell him as a slave, and his price supported her until I returned a few days ago, once more a man of wealth and substance.’

Then they all sat down to supper, the Vizier with the host and his two sons, and his wife and

daughter with Youssouf's mother in her private apartments, as was the custom in that country. When they had eaten, and the maiden had gone to her chamber and the two mothers were sitting on the divan, sipping their coffee and smoking jewelled tchibouks, the Vizier's wife said to the hostess,

‘Lady, my daughter has for a whole year past been sick of love for your son; and now that he is returned safe and sound and that we know him the son of worthy parents, the Vizier would fain have him for his son-in-law. If you and his father are willing and the youth is also willing, why should they not wed?’

Well, not to make a long story of it, thus it was settled, and the young couple were betrothed. The roses quickly bloomed again on the fair cheeks of the happy maiden, and in due time the wedding was celebrated with befitting pomp and splendour.

Said the Vizier, as he signed the marriage contract, ‘*This world is a wheel, and lucky is the man who can turn it!*’

X

THE QUEEN OF NIGHT

THERE was once an old man who had three daughters. All of them were beautiful, but the youngest, whose name was Rosa, was not only more lovely, but also more amiable and more intelligent than the others. Jealous and envious exceedingly were the two sisters when they found that the fame of Rosa's beauty was greater than the fame of theirs. They, however, refused to believe that Rosa was really more lovely than they were, and they resolved to ask the Sun's opinion on the subject.

So, one day at dawn, the sisters stood at their open window and cried, 'Sun, shining Sun, who wanderest all over the world, say who is the most beautiful among our father's daughters?'

The Sun replied, 'I am beautiful, and you are both beautiful; but your youngest sister is the most beautiful of all.'

When the two girls heard this, they were beside

themselves with anger and spite, and determined to get rid of the sister who so outshone them. Saying nothing to her of what the Sun had told them, they on the following day invited Rosa to accompany them to the wood to gather a salad of wild herbs for their father's dinner. The unsuspecting Rosa at once complied, took her basket, and set out with her sisters, who led her to a spot she had never before visited, a long way from her father's house, and surrounded on all sides by forest. When they were arrived, the eldest sister said,

‘Do thou, Rosa, gather all the herbs that are here; we will go a little farther on, and when we have filled our baskets we will return.’

The wicked girls, however, went straight home, abandoning Rosa to her fate. When some hours had passed, and she found that they did not return, she feared that she might, while seeking for the herbs, have wandered from the spot where her sisters had left her. Too innocent to suspect them of the wicked treachery of which they had been guilty, she only blamed herself for her carelessness, and wept bitterly at the thought of remaining all night alone in the wild and lonely wood.

After a time the sun set, the twilight came and

passed, and darkness fell. The birds ceased their songs, and the silence of the forest was broken only by the flutter of a bat or great grey moth, the melancholy hoot of an owl, and the faint little rustle made by the other flying and creeping things that come forth with the stars. Seated on a great tree trunk, Rosa wept more and more bitterly as the darkness deepened, and no one came to her aid. Hours passed, the air grew chilly; and faint with hunger and cold, she was about to lay herself down to die, when suddenly a brilliant light, like the sparkling of many stars, shot through the wood and advanced towards the spot where she sat. It was the Queen of Night, who, attended by all her Court, was returning to her palace after her usual journey, for it was now near dawn. Rosa, dazzled and frightened, covered her face with her hands, and wept more bitterly than ever. Attracted by the sound of her sobbing, the Radiant Lady approached the weeping girl, and in a kind and gentle voice asked how she came to be there. Rosa looked up, and, reassured by the benign countenance of the Queen of Night, told her story.

‘Come then and live with me, dear girl; I will be your mother, and you shall be my daughter,’

said the Queen, who knew perfectly well how it had all happened.

Gladly the poor girl accompanied the Queen to her palace, and being, as we know, as amiable and intelligent as she was beautiful, her protectress soon became very fond of her, and did everything in her power to make her adopted daughter happy. She gave Rosa the keys of all her treasures, made her the mistress of her palace, and let her do whatever she pleased.

But let us now leave this lucky girl with the Queen of Night for a little while, and return to her sisters. Though they fully believed she must either have perished of hunger or been devoured by wild beasts, they after a time, to make quite certain, went again to their window and cried,

‘Sun, shining Sun, who wanderest all over the world, tell us who is the most beautiful of our father’s daughters?’

The Sun replied as before, ‘I am beautiful, and you are both beautiful; but your youngest sister is the most beautiful of all.’

‘But Rosa has long been dead!’

‘No,’ replied the Sun, ‘Rosa still lives, and she is in the palace of the Queen of Night.’

When the sisters heard this, their rage and spite knew no bounds. Long they consulted together as to the best means of bringing about her death; and finally these wicked girls decided to obtain from a Witch of their acquaintance an enchanted kerchief which would make the person wearing it appear to be dead.

Well, they set out, and presently arrived at the palace at an hour when they knew that the Queen of Night would be absent and they might find their sister alone. Rosa was delighted to see them, for though they had often been unkind to her, she loved her sisters very dearly, and welcoming them warmly, she offered them everything she had, and pressed them to remain. They, on their part, pretended to be overjoyed at finding again the sister they had mourned as lost, and congratulated her on her good fortune. When they had eaten and drunk of the good things she set before them, and were about to take their departure, the eldest sister produced from her basket the enchanted kerchief.

‘Here, dear Rosa,’ said she, ‘is a little present which we should like you to wear for our sakes. Let me pin it round your shoulders. Good-bye,

dear !' she added, kissing her affectionately on both cheeks, ' we will come and see you again before long and bring our father with us.'

' Do, dear sisters, and tell my dear father that I will go to see him as soon as my kind protectress may give me leave.'

Rosa watched her sisters from the window till they were out of sight, and then turned to the embroidery frame which she had laid aside on their arrival. She had not, however, made many stitches, before a feeling of faintness came over her ; and letting her work slip from her hands, she fell back on the sofa and lost consciousness. When the Queen of Night came home, she went first, as was her wont, to the chamber of her dear adopted daughter, and finding her thus, she said, as she bent over the maiden and kissed her beautiful mouth, ' She has tired herself, poor child, over that embroidery frame ; she is so industrious.'

But the beautiful lips were cold and white, and the maiden neither breathed nor stirred. Distracted with grief, the Queen of Night began to unfasten Rosa's dress in order to ascertain whether her death had been caused by the bite of some poisonous reptile, and while doing so, she observed that the

kerchief on her shoulders was not one that her daughter was in the habit of wearing. When she had unpinned, and taken it off, Rosa heaved a deep sigh, opened her eyes, and seeing the Queen bending over her, smiled and stretched out her arms to her dear mother, saying,

‘I must have slept a long time! Oh, I remember!’ she added, ‘I was feeling faint and giddy and lay down, and, I suppose, fell asleep immediately, for I don’t recollect anything else.’

‘But where did you get this?’ asked the Queen, picking up the kerchief from the floor. ‘I don’t remember having given it to you.’

‘Oh, I have not told you that I had a great pleasure yesterday. My sisters, who had thought me for ever lost, found out where I was and came to see me, bringing this kerchief as a present. Is it not pretty?’

These words told the Queen of Night the secret of the whole matter; but, not wishing to distress her daughter by acquainting her with her sisters’ cruel perfidy, she only replied, ‘Yes, very pretty. Will you give it to me, Rosa? I should like to have it for myself.’

Rosa was naturally only too pleased to be able to

give her kind protectress something in return for all her favours ; and she also promised her, though not without tears, never again to receive any visitors, not even her sisters, when she was left by herself in the palace.

These wicked creatures in a little while again stood at their window and cried, ‘ Sun, shining Sun, who wanderest the world over, say, is there now anyone more beautiful than we are ? ’

But the Sun only replied as before, ‘ I am beautiful ; you, too, are beautiful ; but Rosa is the most beautiful of all ! ’

The sisters looked at each other in dismay. ‘ The kerchief has then failed,’ said the elder to the younger. ‘ We must try some other method of getting rid of her.’

So the wretches went to the same old Witch who had given them the magic kerchief, and got from her an enchanted sugarplum. When at nightfall they again knocked at the door of the palace, the porter informed them that his mistress was absent, and had given orders that the palace gates were not to be opened until her return. They, however, saw Rosa at her window, and pretending to be greatly distressed at their exclusion, asked her at least to

accept from them the delicious sugarplum which they had brought for her.

‘Let down a basket,’ said the eldest; ‘I will put the sugarplum inside, and you can draw it up.’

Rosa did so, and drew up the sweetmeat.

‘Taste it at once,’ cried the second sister, ‘and if you like it, we will bring you more of the same kind.’

The poor girl, suspecting no evil, put the sugarplum into her mouth; but scarcely had she tasted it, than she fell back as if dead; and her sisters, seeing this, hurried away home.

When the Queen returned and again found her favourite lifeless, she was both grieved and angry. All her servants, however, when questioned, assured her that no one had entered the palace during her absence, and that Rosa’s sisters had only been allowed to speak to her from a distance as she stood at her high window. In the hope of bringing her to life again, as on the previous occasion, the Queen of Night searched every fold of the maiden’s dress, but in vain; she could not discover the fatal charm.

‘Perhaps,’ said she to herself, as she sat and gazed on the lifeless features of her adopted daughter,

‘ what I cannot discover, chance may, and I could never bring myself to bury her, dead though she seems to be.’

So the grieving Queen sent for a cunning workman, who made at her orders a coffer of silver ; and after dressing Rosa in her most beautiful clothes and jewels, she laid her in it, closed the lid, fastened the coffer on the back of a splendid horse, and let him loose to wander at will.

The horse, following his fancy, carried his fair burden in a few hours’ time into a neighbouring country, the ruler of which was the handsomest man of his time ; and this King, being that day out hunting with his Court, happened to catch sight of the horse. Attracted by its beauty and fleetness, and by the strange shining burden it bore on its saddle, he approached, and seeing the animal to be masterless, he bade his people seize and lead it to the palace. The silver coffer the King caused to be carried into his bed-chamber, and there he opened it. Imagine, if you can, his surprise on seeing within the form of a beautiful maiden. Though apparently lifeless, she was more lovely than any living woman he had ever beheld, and his heart became filled with such ardent love for her that he would sit for hours

together gazing upon her beautiful features, neglecting duties and pleasures alike ; and when his ministers came and prayed him to accompany them to the Council chamber, he only said,

‘ Go, I pray you, and do justice in my name.’

Days passed, his gentlemen tried to tempt him out hunting, but again he only replied,

‘ Do you go without me.’

The royal cooks vied with each other in preparing the most delicious dishes for his table ; but these he hardly tasted, nor did he even appear to notice what he was eating. When this state of things had continued for some days, the Ministers became alarmed, and sent a messenger to inform the Queen-Mother, who was away at her country palace. She came with all speed, and was much distressed to find her son so dispirited and melancholy. To all her anxious inquiries, however, he only replied that he was quite well, but preferred to remain alone in his bed-chamber. The Queen had, of course, already heard from the courtiers the story of the riderless horse and the silver chest ; and she rightly guessed that her son had been bewitched by what he had found in it, and determined to discover what this might be.

So the very next day, while the King was at dinner with his Vizier, his mother went to his chamber—for she had a master-key that would open all the doors in the palace—and there, extended on the divan, she saw the silver chest. Going hastily up to it, she raised the lid which the King had closed before leaving. At first she could only gaze in astonishment at the wonderful beauty of the maiden lying within; but her admiration presently changed to anger when she thought of her son; and seizing poor Rosa by her long hair, she dragged her out of the coffer and shook her violently, saying,

‘You wicked dead thing! Why are you not decently buried instead of wandering about casting spells on Princes?’ But as the Queen shook her the enchanted sugarplum was jerked out of Rosa’s mouth, and she immediately came to life again, and gazed around her in bewilderment. And as she opened her large, lovely eyes, the Queen’s anger passed away, and she embraced and kissed Rosa tenderly, weeping with delight the while. The poor girl was so astonished by the strangeness of everything around her, that it was some minutes before she could ask :

‘Where am I, noble lady, and where is my dear mother?’

‘I know not, my child, but I will be your mother. For you shall marry my son, the King, who is dying for love of you.’

As she spoke, footsteps were heard at the door, and the King entered. Imagine, if you can, his amazement and joy at finding, seated on the divan by his mother’s side, the maiden he loved so dearly, restored to life, and twenty times lovelier than before. Not to make too long a story of it, the King took her by the hand, and asked her to be his wife. And when Rosa heard of his love for her, and saw how handsome and noble he was, she could not but love him in return. So they were married with great splendour, and there were feasts for the poor, and fountains running honey and wine, and rejoicings for everybody.

Well, the King and Rosa lived very happily together for some time; but her troubles were not over, for her wicked sisters had not yet done their worst to her. They had for long feared to go near the palace again, and nearly a year passed before they learnt what had been the result of their last visit. One day, however, in order to

make quite sure that Rosa was dead, they once more stood at their window, and cried,

‘Sun, shining Sun, who wanderest all over the earth, tell us if thou hast, since our youngest sister died, seen any maiden fairer than we?’

But the Sun only replied as before, ‘I am beautiful; you, too, are both beautiful; but your youngest sister is the fairest of all.’

‘But Rosa is dead!’

‘No, Rosa lives, and she is the wife of the King of the neighbouring country.’

Well, if these wicked women could not bear that their sister should be considered fairer than they, still less could they allow her to be a Queen. So, disguised as two old women, they set off at once for Rosa’s palace. When they arrived in the royal city, great rejoicings were going on because a baby prince had just been born.

‘That is good news,’ said the elder to the younger when she heard this, ‘for now we will be the nurses.’ So they went to the Queen-Mother and gave themselves out to be wonderfully clever nurses from the neighbouring country who had nursed the princes there; and the Queen-Mother, deceived by their story, put them in charge of

her daughter-in-law and the baby. On the pretext of keeping the young Queen and her child free from evil spells, the make-believe nurses sent away all the other attendants from her apartments; and when they were left alone with their sister, they stuck into her head an enchanted pin.

She was immediately changed into a bird, and flew away out of the window; and her eldest sister laid herself down on the bed in her place.

When the King came in to see his wife, he could hardly believe his eyes. This could not be his wife. The false Queen, guessing his thoughts, said,

‘You find me changed, dear husband? It is because I have been so ill.’

The King, however, pretended not to have observed anything, but his heart froze within him as he looked on the object of this pretended transformation.

It was his custom to breakfast alone every day in the garden; and one day while he was sadly musing there, a pretty bird flew down, perched on a branch overhead, and said, ‘Tell me, my lord, have the King, and the Queen-Mother, and the little Prince slept well?’



IT WAS THE QUEEN OF THE SPIRITS

The King smiled and nodded, and the bird continued, 'May they ever sleep sweetly. But may she whom they call the young Queen sleep the sleep that knows no waking, and may all things over which I fly wither away!'

This said, the bird spread its wings, and wherever it passed, the grass and flowers withered, and the place became a desert. The gardeners, in despair, asked the King if they might not kill the bird which caused the mischief; but he forbade them, on pain of death, to do it any injury.

Afterwards the bird came every day while he was at breakfast in the garden; and the kind voice of the Prince soon made it so tame and fearless that it would perch on his knee and eat from his hand. This familiarity enabled the Prince to observe the bird's plumage more closely, and one day he caught sight of the pin in its head. Surprised at this, he ventured to withdraw it, when the bird disappeared, and his own dear wife stood again by his side. When he had recovered a little from the joy and surprise caused by this strange event, and had welcomed his wife back, he asked her to tell him how it had all happened. And Rosa, whose eyes were now fully opened to the malice

and wickedness of her sisters, told him all she knew of her own adventures.

When the Prince had learnt the evil deeds of his sisters-in-law, he bade his guards bring these wretches before him, and condemned them both to a death suitable to their crimes. In vain did Rosa entreat him to pardon them. The King was inexorable. But when, at sunset, the criminals were being led away to execution, the Queen of Night appeared on the scene, followed by all her train; and touched by the distress of her adopted daughter, she prevailed upon the King to change the sentence he had pronounced. The two evil-doers were then offered the choice of dying a violent death, or living to witness their sister's happiness while deprived of the power of ever again being able to injure her.

They chose the latter fate; and it was not long before they both died of spite and jealousy.

XI

ASHMEDAI AND KING SOLOMON

WHEN Solomon the King was about to begin the building of the Temple at Jerusalem, he was greatly perplexed as to how the work was to be accomplished, for no iron tool might be used in its construction. So he called together all the wise men of the land and asked their counsel in this difficulty.

Said one aged Rabbi, ‘O King, I have heard tell of a marvellous worm called the Shameer, which, when placed on stone, or wood, or metal, cuts it into any shape that may be desired. It was used by Moses when he made the breastplate of Aaron the High Priest; but is now in the hands of the Djins, who have hidden it, none knows where.’

Then King Solomon dismissed the assembly, and having power over the Djins, he called two of them before him, and asked of them,

‘Which Djin of you all has the Shameer in his keeping?’

The Djins replied, trembling, ‘O our King and Lord, only Ashmedai our master knows where this marvellous worm is hidden!’

‘And where is Ashmedai?’

‘He is far away, on such and such a mountain, where he has his abode, and there he has made him a cistern from which he drinks. When he has drunk from this cistern, he places a great stone on the mouth, and seals it with his seal so that none may meddle with the water.’

Then Solomon dismissed the Djins, and called to him his chief Captain, Benajah. When he had told this officer all about the Shameer and how it was in the keeping of Ashmedai, he gave to him a chain and a ring, both of which were engraved with the mystic Name, and bade him bring to the palace at Jerusalem this King of the Djins, bound with the chain.

Then Benajah provided himself with many skins of wine and some muleloads of wool, took the chain and the ring, and went in search of the mountain where Ashmedai had his abode. When he came to the place and saw that no Djin was at hand, he set to and made a hole low down in the side of the cistern, through which all the water quickly escaped.

He then filled the hole with the wool, and bored another higher up, through which he emptied all the skins of wine into the cistern, filled that hole up likewise with the wool, and then awaited the coming of Ashmedai.

Presently the King of the Djins returned, and being thirsty, he went straight to the cistern to drink. After looking at the seal on the stone to see that all was right with the water, he removed it; and when he had drunk so deeply that he became intoxicated he lay down there and fell asleep.

Now was Benajah's chance. Taking the chain which bore the mystic Name, he bound with it the King of the Djins, who, when he came to himself, strove in vain to break its links.

'Thou dost struggle in vain!' cried Benajah. 'Follow me to King Solomon, my master and thine.' And leading Ashmedai by the chain he brought him before the King.

'Where hast thou hidden the worm Shameer?' demanded the King of his prisoner.

'I have not the worm, O King, it is in the keeping of another. I know not his name nor his abode,' replied the crafty Djinn.

'Thou liest!' cried the King. 'Thou art now

in my power, and if thou tell me not where I can find this worm, I will slay thee !’

Then Ashmedai revealed to King Solomon where he had concealed the worm Shameer, and how it might be found. And Benajah went again to the abode of the Djin, and when he had brought back the marvellous creature, they began to build the great Temple at Jerusalem.

King Solomon then reigned long in glory while Ashmedai lay bound with chains in a darksome prisonhouse ; but all this time the Djin was devising means for regaining his liberty and being revenged on his captor. Then one day he sent word to the King, praying that he might speak with him in private as he had that to say which might not be heard by others.

Solomon consented, and when they were alone together, Ashmedai said,

‘O King, take this chain from me, and place only for a moment thy ring on my finger, and I will make thee ruler of all the wide world.’

Then the Son of David, allowing himself to be tempted by this bribe, removed the chain from the wrists of the Djin, and placed on his forefinger the ring bearing the mystic Name. But no sooner

was Ashmedai free than he seized the King and hurled him thousands of miles away, took upon himself forthwith the likeness of Solomon, and reigned in his stead. Fearing, however, to wear the ring which bore the mystic Name, he threw it into the sea.

While Ashmedai thus reigned at Jerusalem, Solomon wandered from place to place seeking his own land; but when he told people that he was the King of the Jews they only mocked at him, deeming him mad. And when at last he came to Jerusalem and announced himself as the Son of David, none could he find among all his people who would listen to or believe him. Afflicted and cast down, he again left the city and came to the seashore. There he met a fisherman who was offering a fish for sale. He bought it; and when the fish was opened, there inside he found the mystic ring which the Djin had cast into the sea.

The moment he placed the ring on his finger, Solomon felt himself another man and once again Solomon the King. Returning to Jerusalem, he made himself known to the Sanhedrim, and when he had related to them his strange adventures, they sent for Benajah, who confirmed all that the

King had said. Then the Council, calling the women of the palace, asked of them,

‘Have ye ever seen the feet of him who is now living in the palace as King Solomon?’—for the Djins have not human feet, but claws like those of a cock.

‘Nay,’ replied the women, ‘we have none of us seen his feet, for he covereth them ever with his mantle.’

The Sanhedrim were now convinced that it must be Ashmedai himself who had usurped the likeness and the throne of the Son of David. And they counselled Solomon to present himself unannounced before the impostor, holding the mystic ring towards him. When the Djin saw the ring, he uttered a terrible shriek and vanished forthwith; and Solomon the King reigned as before.

XII

THE AMAZON QUEEN

FAR, very far away, in a land of the East, rises a vast mountain over whose green slopes tall trees throw their cool shadows in the long warm summer days which follow each other throughout the year. Sparkling rills, fed by the clouds which at dawn rest awhile on its many peaks, flow through swelling valleys, and birds of every hue fill the woods with song; while on every hand, under the spreading branches of giant plane-trees, stand gay silken tents within which are spread tables laden with the choicest meats, the most delicate wines, and fruits as luscious as those of Paradise. But between this favoured region and the dwellings of mankind there stretches, like a protecting rampart, a wide expanse of arid desert on which not a blade of grass can grow, and neither bird nor beast ever approaches.

The Kings and Princes of the neighbouring countries knew of this mysterious land, but all regarded it with dread; for of those who had

ventured in bygone days to cross its borders none had ever returned, even when they had taken their armies with them into this desert. And in those days it was customary for the fathers of families, when making their wills, strictly to forbid their sons to cross its borders; for occasionally some fool-hardy youth on becoming his own master would be found anxious to risk the adventure.

Over one of these adjacent countries ruled an old King who had seven sons, and he likewise adjured them never to set foot in this awesome land. But no sooner had his eldest son mounted the throne after him than, setting at naught his father's counsels, he summoned his courtiers and his guards and set out a-hunting in that very direction.

His brothers awaited his return; but days, weeks, and months passed, and as there was no sign either of the King or of any of his company, the second Prince was made ruler of the country in his stead. After a while he also decided to go a-hunting in the forbidden land. But alas! neither he nor those who went with him ever returned.

Well, not to make a long story of it, in course of time six of the old King's heirs had thus perished, and the youngest at last wore the crown. As

he was still very young, he for some years lived quietly in the palace with his mother the Queen, studied with his tutors, and did only what his Twelve Councillors advised. As he grew up, however, he also became fond of hunting, and went often to the chase with his courtiers.

One day, after they had followed the chase for some hours, the royal hunting party came to the borders of the mysterious land, and there the hounds lost the scent. Reining in his horse, the King sat silent for some minutes gazing into the distance. Then putting spurs to his horse, he cried, 'Who loves me, follows me'! and rode forward. They had gone some distance across the desert when from behind a rock appeared a beautiful white doe, which fled before them. The King and his people gave chase, and presently entered a forest in the depths of which the doe disappeared.

As they reined in their horses and looked around them, all were amazed at the beauty of the spot in which they found themselves. Dismounting, they wandered here and there and entered the tents, admiring the luxury of their furnishings, the vessels of gold and the rare meats with which the tables were laden. But while the King was content to

ride about, gazing at the magnificent trees, the fountains and the flowers, his people, unable to resist the temptations to eat and drink, sat down at the tables spread in the tents. Returning from his stroll, the King, to his great grief and dismay, found his followers in a pitiable state. Some were already lying dead on the ground both within and without the tents; others had fallen from their seats and were writhing and groaning in agony, poisoned by the food so cunningly spread to tempt them.

‘Ha!’ cried he, ‘this is how my six unfortunate brothers and their followers must have perished!’ Then, deeming that those who had prepared this snare would not be long in showing themselves, he rode his horse to a rising ground hard by, tethered him, and climbing into a thickly-leaved walnut tree, hid himself in the branches.

Hours passed, the sun set, and just as the dew was beginning to fall there rode up from the opposite direction a horseman on a snow-white steed, followed by a number of attendants on foot. Some of these, entering the tents, stripped the bodies of the dead, dragged them by the feet to the edge of a deep ravine and threw them over;

others meanwhile rounded up the horses pasturing in the wood, which they loaded with the spoils piled up by the first in front of the tents, and led off in the direction from which they had come. The horseman then bade two of his men go loose again the hart to entice other unwary hunters, and the rest to garnish afresh the tables within the tents, and rode on until he came upon the King's horse.

‘We have caught as many horses as we have found dead men—to whom does this horse then belong?’ exclaimed he in surprise.

‘Hands off! Son of Satan!’ cried a voice from the tree. ‘Hands off! This horse is mine! Is it a knightly deed to entrap and poison those who come peaceably into thy borders? Hands off! In front of thy abode will we meet in single combat!’

The horseman, raising his eyes and perceiving the King among the branches, first frowned, and then, alighting, said in courteous tones,

‘Son of Adam, I pardon thee. But if thy heart be as proud as thy words, I will leave thee. Mount and follow me. I am Zoulvisia. If thou seek me, thou wilt find me.’

And as the horseman remounted and rode away, the King observed that the horse seemed of fire and

his rider of flame, with long hair of gold floating over his shoulders.

‘Could this be the Queen of Queens?’ he asked himself wonderingly. ‘Or was it a Princess of the Amazons, those female warriors of whom his father had often related strange legends to him and his brothers?’ For this Zoulvisia was surely a maiden!

The rider was by this time quite out of sight, but still he pondered and hesitated what to do. At length, following in the direction which she had taken, he by and by came to a fountain near which were three castles and three kiosks. In each of these dwellings lived an old Witch-wife, and each wife had forty sons, young imps all of them; but as their mothers took a fancy to the young King they molested him not, but made a bond of brotherhood with him.

‘Whither art thou bound, young hero?’ then asked of him the three Witch-wives.

‘Good mothers,’ he replied, ‘I go to seek this Zoulvisia who has entrapped and slain my six brothers and so many of our people, for I would fain avenge them.’

Then from all three houses came forth the cry,

‘Alack! Alack! She yesterday passed and returned. Had we known of thy quest we would have seized and held her prisoner!’

But this was not so, for the Witch-wives and their imp children trembled like water at the very thought of Zoulvisia. And they therefore tried to persuade him to abandon his quest of the Amazon Queen, and remain with them.

‘Thou shalt be our elder brother!’ said the young imps, ‘and we will all be thy little brothers. Bide thou with us.’

‘I thank you all,’ replied the King, ‘but that cannot be—I must avenge my six unhappy brothers.’

He then took from his girdle a pair of scissors and gave it to one family, a razor to the second household, and to the third a mirror, saying,

‘When you shall see the scissors, the razor, and the mirror sweat blood, know that I am in danger of my life and come ye to my aid.’

‘Go in peace, and good luck go with thee!’ replied the imps and their mothers, pointing out the road he should take.

The King then set out, and after riding for some hours under the moonlight he suddenly came upon

a great castle with many windows in the upper storey, and from each of these streamed a light as bright as that of the noonday sun. Amazed, he came nearer and rode roundabout, seeking the door. But door there was none! As he sat on his horse there, gazing in wonderment, the King presently became aware of a sound like a loud snoring, which seemed to come from a spreading oak-tree that grew close by. Guiding his horse beneath the branches he saw that the tree trunk was of great girth and hollow, and within lay an old man asleep, a lighted lanthorn on the ground before him. Dismounting, the King went up to the old man who, awaking, asked him,

‘Who art thou, who belongest to the earth-born? The serpent crawling on his belly, the bird, wingborne, cannot enter this region; and thou, how camest thou here?’

‘I come to seek Zoulvisia.’

‘Ha! Thou art come to seek Zoulvisia? Knowest not how many thousands of men she has destroyed? I myself am one of her victims—I, the son of the King of China. Among a thousand, me alone did she spare, but has kept prisoner for all these long years, and now I am old.’



HE HELD THEIR CURLING ENDS IN HIS HANDS AND COVERED THEM WITH PASSIONATE KISSES.

The King then told the old man of the fate of his six brothers, and that he had proposed to avenge them; but having once seen Zoulvisia with her golden hair and eyes of flame, and having heard her angelic voice, his hatred of her had given place to the most ardent love.

‘So now, good father,’ he added, ‘advise me how I may win her love in return.’

‘I will tell thee, my son. Every morning, at sunrise, Zoulvisia dons her pearl-embroidered gown and goes up into the kiosk of glass that is on the roof of the palace to discover whether any man or demon has, during the night, entered her domain. She then comes forth on the palace roof and utters three terrible cries, which inspire such dread in the hearts of those who hear that they die of fright. But do thou set up a bough having two twigs in view of the kiosk; hang on it thy robe and thy turban; and then hide thyself. When she has uttered the third cry, come forth and look her in the face. She will invite thee to approach, and thou needst fear nought.’

The youth did all that the Chinese Prince counselled; and when the Amazon Queen had

uttered her third cry, he showed himself. Recognising him, she cried,

‘Thou hast vanquished me! Thou art a hero, and art worthy of my love. Before to-day no man has heard my cry and lived. That ordeal was my condition to those who have sought me. Come nearer, my hero!’

The King came up to the castle wall, and Zoulvisia, leaning over the rampart, let down her hair, her long golden tresses, of which the perfume alone was enough to deprive a man of his wits. And as he held their curling ends in his hands and covered them with passionate kisses, she drew them up and the young King with them.

Now, Zoulvisia had in her service forty young maidens who formed her body-guard, and accompanied her when she rode abroad. These, approaching, formed a semicircle round her, standing with arms crossed on their breasts. Pointing to the stranger, their Queen addressed them, saying,

‘Behold your master, my maidens. As you have hitherto faithfully served me, so henceforward serve this valiant hero who refused to die of terror on hearing my cry. For ’tis he who has

broken the charm that bound me ; I am his wife and he is my husband ! My lands, my houses, my wealth, and my person all belong to him.'

So saying, Zoulvisia took the King by the hand and led him to the seat of honour in the kiosk. The forty damsels brought rose-water and laved his hands and face, clad him in rich raiment, and, one after another, kissed the hand of their new master.

Well, *for newly married folk*, they say, *there is neither morning nor evening*. But all the same one must work to earn one's daily bread or there would be neither living nor loving. So when they had kept their wedding week, said Zoulvisia one morning to her husband :

'I am now going to be a house-wife. I shall go no more out hunting nor riding over my domains. It is thou, my well-beloved, my hero, who must henceforward undertake these tasks and provide for the daily needs of our household.'

Turning to her maidens, she bade them saddle the horse of fire ; and when he was brought before the castle, she cried to him :

'O thou, my fiery horse, behold now thy master ! Obey him and let him mount thee. Take him wherever he would go !'

Kissing the eyes of the faithful steed, she placed the reins in the hands of the King, who kissed his neck and patted his shoulders and flanks, while the horse turned his shining eyes on his new master and sniffed him as if he would recognise him by the perfume of his person. The King mounted, bade his wife adieu, rode away a few yards, and again returned to her side.

‘What is it? What wouldest thou?’ she asked.

‘Ah, how can I leave thee, my Zoulvisia! I cannot exist without thee, I must see thee, feel thee every moment!’

‘Go, go, my love!—Evening will soon come, and I am always here on thy return.’

‘Fain would I go!—but no!—I cannot leave thee!’

Then Zoulvisia cut off a lock of her hair, placed it in a pearl-studded snuff-box,¹ and gave it to him, saying,

‘Wear this on thy heart.’

Then at last he rode away. A few days afterwards, while out hunting, he started a hart, which fled for safety to the river then in flood. The King hastened to the bank and let fly an arrow,

¹ See p. 15.

which struck and wounded her. But as he bent to draw the bow-string, the pearl-studded box slipped from within his vest and fell into the water. The swift current carried it away, and it was useless to attempt its recovery. The King grieved, but could do nothing.

Well, the flood carried the box at last through the lands belonging to another King, and up the mouth of a little mountain stream which flowed into the river, where it lodged among some rushes growing near the bank. And it chanced that a water-carrier, who supplied the palace of that King with water, came to the spot to fill his pots on the day after the flood had spent itself, and, catching sight of this gleaming object among the rushes, waded through the shallow water and took it in his hand.

‘Eh, well,’ said he to himself, ‘here’s a fine thing. But such gauds are of no use to the like of us poor folk. So I’ll e’en take it to the King who mayhap may give me a gold piece in return for it, and then I can at last marry my daughter to the neighbour’s son.’

When the King held in his hand the pearl-studded box and saw within it the lock of golden

hair, he marvelled much what this should signify. Giving a gold piece to the water-carrier who had found this wonder, he called to him his Vizier and the Twelve Counsellors, and said to them :

‘ Tell me the meaning of this strange thing, and without delay, or your heads shall pay the forfeit.’

‘ May the King live for ever ! But of your grace give us three days to read this riddle.’

‘ Three days, then—not an hour longer !’

They carried away the box and its contents, and called together all the wise men and the magicians of the land. But all shook their heads and were dumb. At last, on the third day, the Vizier bethought him of an old Witch-wife who had great skill in magic, and sent for her. When she was shown the box and its contents, she laughed and said,

‘ Yea, my lords, I know right well what this is. But what will you give me if I read the riddle for you ?’

‘ A handful of gold !’ cried they.

‘ A handful only, my lord Vizier ?—when it is to save your head and those of the Twelve ? ’Tis too little, I shall require my two hands full.’

‘ Agreed, agreed, good dame !’ they cried. ‘ But

to-day is the last day the King has given us, and there is no time to lose.'

When the Witch-wife had received her guerdon, she revealed to the Twelve that the hair was that of Zoulvisia, and related all she knew of her. Much relieved, they hied them to the King with the news, which they pretended themselves to have discovered. But when he forthwith charged them to seek and bring to him Zoulvisia, the sun ceased to shine for the Vizier and the Twelve. In this difficulty they betook themselves again to the old Witch-wife, crying,

'Good dame, thou canst accomplish the possible and the impossible! 'Tis thou, therefore, who must seek and bring to us Zoulvisia. Name thyself thy guerdon!'

The old Witch first went and sought a number of serpents, some of which she hid in her bosom, some in her wallet, while of two she made a staff and a whip. Hiring a boat, she rowed herself up the river until she came near Zoulvisia's palace, when she hid the boat among the reeds. She then donned old, ragged clothing, and took the road to the house, sighing and weeping.

The King, Zoulvisia's husband, chanced to be

returning from the chase soon afterwards, and overtaking the old woman, he stopped and asked how she came there.

‘Oh, my son, may God keep thee! I was on my pilgrimage to Jerusalem, when I happened to get left behind in the desert. I wandered this way and that, and am now dying of hunger. For the love of God, give me a crust of bread and let me share the straw of the dog that watches by my lord’s gate, and afterwards I will set out again on my pilgrimage.’

The King, moved with pity, took up the old woman behind him on his saddle. But the horse, mistrusting her, reared and threw her off. Rising from the ground, she said,

‘Your horse is not accustomed to carry double, my lord, so go thou on at a foot pace, and I will follow.’

So the King rode slowly home, and the Witch followed. When he told his wife of the adventure, she shivered and cried,

‘Let her not enter the house, for she brings misfortune with her! Give her food and send her on her way!’

But the King laughed at her fears, and bade the

servants take care of the guest, keeping her meanwhile away from the presence of the Queen, who, he told them, did not wish to see her.

This Witch was, however, full of wiles. She amused the maidens with such wonderful tales and marvellous legends that finally they persuaded their lady to allow her to come into her presence. And once admitted to the Queen's apartments, the old woman found means to remain there. One day, after paying the lady a thousand compliments, the hag spoke of the King, praising him unstintedly.

‘A man of wit and wisdom must he be,’ said she, ‘to have found out the Queen's secret and become master of her heart!—*May God preserve him from the machinations of Satan!* But what may be the King's secret?—Knowest thou, my Queen?’

‘I know it not.’

‘Thou knowest it not?—Then what sort of husband is thine?—If he loved thee, he would have already told thee his secret.’

These words of the old Witch made the Queen very uneasy, for she had before had no thought that the King also might have a secret; and that selfsame night she prevailed on him to reveal it to her. Said the King,

‘My secret is this: My strength is in my sword which, as thou knowest, I wear always by day, and at night place beneath my pillow. But swear to me in the name of God that thou wilt reveal this to none, or I am lost.’

Well, the Queen took the oath, and they exchanged their rings as a pledge of fealty. But the next day the cunning Witch contrived to worm the secret out of her, and then sought an opportunity for carrying out her evil designs against the royal couple.

It chanced that a few days afterwards a great feast was held in the palace, and when it was over and every one had gone to bed more weary than usual, the Witch-wife rose while all slept, made her way to the King’s chamber, and softly drawing from under his pillow the sword, she carried it off and threw it into the stream which flowed by the palace gardens.

When morning came, and the King did not awake at his usual hour, his servants went and listened at his door, and hearing strange sounds from within, they entered to find him with sunken eyes, senseless, and foaming at the mouth. Then was there weeping and wailing indeed! The

Queen hastened in from the adjoining chamber, and after her came the Witch, who, after lamenting louder than all the rest, disappeared to return with a sackful of serpents. Some of these she threw on the maidens, and then approaching the fainting Zoulvisia with one of these writhing creatures in each hand, she cried :

‘Come with me, O Queen, or these shall tear out thine eyes and devour thee!’ Then seizing Zoulvisia, who was powerless with grief and terror, she carried her, gagged and bound, out of the palace and to the banks of the stream by the garden whither, on the previous night, she had brought her boat from its hiding-place. Laying her captive at the botton, she covered her with leaves and branches, and then rowed with all speed to the river, where the swift current carried them to the country of the neighbouring King in whose palace the unhappy Zoulvisia soon found herself.

But let us now return to the husband of the captive Queen. In each of the three castles by the fountain where dwelt the imps, his adopted brothers, a strange thing had happened—blood ran from the scissors and the razor, and the mirror also was covered with a mist of blood. The hundred

and twenty sons of the three Witch-wives rose, and leaving their three castles, cried to each other :

‘Some misfortune has happened to our elder brother ! Let us go forth and seek him !’

The imps came to the palace, and when those of the servants who had escaped the bite of the serpents had led them to the chamber of the suffering King, they searched everywhere for his sword, but found it not. Evening came, and they would have eaten ; but there were no provisions left in the palace.

‘Let us go catch fish,’ then said one of the young fiends to his brothers ; ‘there should be plenty in the stream.’

Drawing in the net they found it full of fish, and among these was one nearly two *pics* long which struggled so frantically to get back into the water that it finally burst asunder, leaving exposed to view a shining sabre. It was the King’s sword which the fish had swallowed when it was cast into the water by the Witch. Carrying it to the King’s chamber, they placed it again under his pillow. He at once opened his eyes and sat up, astonished to see himself surrounded by his adopted brothers the imps.

‘Where is my wife, Zoulvisia?’ were his first words. When he learnt what had happened, the King ran to the stables, and found his beloved horse lying exhausted in his stall, having neither eaten nor drunk while his master was in distress. Throwing his arms round the neck of the faithful creature he kissed him on the eyes. The horse sniffed his master, sneezed, and rose to his feet. After he had given him to eat and drink the King groomed him, and then, bursting into tears, exclaimed,

‘O wise and faithful one! Thou alone wert aware of the evil that menaced us, and threw from thee that vile wretch whom in my folly I brought under our roof. Let us now go seek Zoulvisia!’

The sagacious horse seemed to understand his master’s words; he whinnied, snorted, and stamped with his hoofs as if to say, ‘I am ready, master mine, let us set out at once to seek my mistress!’

The King, however, before starting, gave to each of his wife’s damsels a rich present and her freedom, leaving to his demon brothers the castle and all his goods save the bag of gold and gems which he carried with him.

Following the river bank for many a mile, he

at length drew rein before a modest dwelling which stood on the outskirts of the city whither his wife had been carried, and knocked.

‘Good mother, I am thy guest for this night,’ said he to the woman who opened to him.

‘My Prince, this is no place for you. Go to a wealthier house.’

‘Take these ten gold pieces and be my hostess, I pray you.’

‘If the Prince so greatly desire it, my roof shall shelter him. There is also stabling for the horse.’

She gave him to eat and drink of the best at her command; and while at supper he learnt that Zoulvisia was well, and that there were great rejoicings in the city for the King’s wedding which was to take place in five days’ time. But the Bride refused meanwhile to be seen by any, and had declared that sooner than be married against her will she would destroy herself.

‘Canst thou keep a secret, good woman?’ then asked her guest.

‘Better than thou could’st desire, O Prince.’

‘Then take these gold pieces, go to the bazaar and buy for thyself handsome clothing; don it, and hie thee to Zoulvisia in the palace. Put this

ring on thy finger. It is hers, and she will know whence it comes. Then return to me with her message.'

When the woman came to the palace, the guards took her to be the wife of the Vizier, and let her pass into the *haremlik*.¹ And when Zoulvisia cried to the servant who announced her, 'I will see no one! no one!' she pushed her way in, and held out the ring for her to see. Then the Queen cried,

'You are most welcome, dear lady! I knew not it was you—excuse me, I pray!' And when the servant had departed she bolted the door, took the woman by the hand, and trembling with eagerness, asked her,

'Good mother, where is he who gave thee this?'

'At my poor house, my Queen, where he awaits your orders.'

'Say he must wait there three days, and on the third day I will find means to betake me to the King's pleasure garden which is beyond the city walls, and he must be there to carry me away. But go thou first to him who holds me captive, and tell him that I have listened to thy counsel and will wed him on the eve of the third day from now.

¹ The women's apartments.

Say also that on the morn of that day I will open the ceremonies in the pleasure gardens in order that the people may see me as I pass.'

The third day came, and the procession set out. In front rode forty horsemen with forty musicians ; then came the Bride, escorted on either side by forty damsels of high degree ; and behind them again rode forty youths who were all the sons of nobles. An immense crowd filled the streets to see the Bride and her escort, and gazed open-mouthed on her as she passed by and entered the flower garden, where she withdrew with her maidens within a sheltered walk out of view of the guards and male attendants. Suddenly a horseman mounted on a fiery steed appeared, and ere the astonished maidens knew what was happening, the Bride was mounted on the saddle behind him, and horse and riders had disappeared.

On hearing of this, the disappointed bridegroom mounted his swiftest horse, and, followed by an army of men, pursued the fugitives in hot haste. Zoulvisia, looking back and seeing a cloud of dust far behind, cried to her husband,

'My beloved, they come, they come, we are undone !'

‘Fear not, my Queen,’ replied he; and entering a thicket by the roadside he there hid his wife. Then, remounting, he rode on his foes, sabre in hand. With a thousand strokes he slew a thousand men, while his good steed trode underfoot a thousand more, and their leader, seized with terror, fell dead from his horse.

‘Who art thou, O Hero?’ then cry to him the rest.

‘I am the King of such and such a country, the husband of Zoulvisia whom your King stole from me and sought to wed against her will.’

‘Then return with us and be our King also! For fain would we be subjects of such a Hero and such a Queen!’

The soldiers conducted the royal couple with all honour back to their city and crowned them King and Queen. When the ceremonies were at an end, the royal couple went and sojourned awhile in the King’s native land, and made of the two countries one kingdom, over which their children ruled after them.

Then fell there from the sky three apples—one for me who has told you this tale; another for him who told it to me; and one for those who have listened to it!

XIII

THE PRINCESS OF TIFLIS

IN olden days there lived in the city of Bagdad a rich merchant who had an only son. When this youth was eighteen years of age his father fell ill. When nigh unto death he called to him his wife, the boy's mother, and after revealing to her the secret of his great wealth he gave into her hands the key of his iron chest, and charged her to keep the knowledge of its contents from their son so long as he should have any money left in his purse. He then made his will, turned his face to the wall, and died.

When the youth, whose name was Karabed, opened the paper containing his father's last testament, he read these words,

‘My son, thou art aware of the great riches I have amassed ; few kings have the equal. I leave all this to thee. Do thou also trade as I have done, and enjoy thy wealth. *But beware of the city of Tiflis.*’

The youth followed his father's advice. He divided into forty bales the merchandise that was in the warehouses, packed them on twenty mules, and set out with them for the town of Erzeroum. Arrived safely there, he, according to custom, took up his quarters in a *han*, where he also bestowed his goods and stabled his mules. After supper, as he sat outside his chamber sipping his coffee and smoking his tchibouk, he observed two travellers squatting side by side on a ragged carpet a few yards away, silent and sad. After inviting them to take coffee with him, he begged them to tell him the cause of their melancholy.

‘We thank you, young Sir, for your sympathy, but we cannot tell you why we are sad,’ replied the men.

On this Karabed became more deeply interested, and moved by compassion, he cried,

‘Speak without fear, gentlemen—I am ready to place my fortune at your disposal if by so doing I may console you!’

‘Ah, generous young man!’ exclaimed the elder of the two, ‘what a misfortune it is for you to have met with us! We were—if it must be told—merchants like you, and we betook us to Tiflis.

There we heard of the Princess whom they call the "Beauty without Peer," and desired to behold her. But only at the price of forty golden *liras*¹ would she show herself, and that merely through a glass window. Well, we gave each of us our forty *liras* and beheld her. But having seen her once, we must needs see her a second time, and a third; and ere many days had passed all our eighty bales of goods had gone this way. We might no more set eyes on the Princess; we were ruined and penniless, and of no account in the world.'

Karabed gave the men money, and the next morning repacked his bales, loaded his mules, and set out for Tiflis. No sooner was he arrived there than he sought the abode of the Princess and, paying his forty *liras*, saw behind the window-pane the Beauty without Peer. Having seen her once he must, like the two merchants, see her again and yet again, until neither goods nor gold were left him.

Returning home to his mother, he told her of his mishap, and begged her to open his father's iron chest in which there should be found that which might enable him to retrieve his fortunes. Opening

¹ A Turkish *lira* is worth 100 piastres, about 18s. 6d.

the chest, the lady took from it an empty purse which she handed to her son, saying,

‘Place now in this purse forty *paras*,¹ and tomorrow thou wilt find there forty gold liras. For three years to come the *paras* will thus change to liras. But during the following three years, if thou place in the purse liras, they will change into *paras*. Thus it will be for every alternate three years.’

‘Well, that is good business,’ exclaimed Karabed, ‘I shall now have plenty to spend!’ He at once set off again for Tiflis, where he every day paid forty liras for a sight of the Beauty without Peer, and was none the poorer.

The Princess, however, begins to wonder whence the youth derives all this wealth. Making up her mind to find out, she one day invites him to sup with her; and seeing how deeply in love with her he is, she promises to take him for her husband if he will reveal to her the secret of his riches.

Well, was there ever a young man whom a beautiful woman could not cajole? Karabed tells her his secret and shows her the purse. The Princess then pours out for him wine in which a

¹ A *para* (Turkish coinage) is the fortieth part of a piastre and equal to about the fourth of a farthing.

sleeping potion has been mixed; he sleeps, and she takes from his pocket the magic purse. At dawn the servants, at her bidding, turn him out of the palace.

The unlucky youth, having now neither purse nor para, turns his steps homeward, begs his mother's forgiveness, and vows that he will never again set foot in Tiflis. The good dame is at length persuaded to open the chest again, and takes from it a silken cap.

'This cap, my son,' says she, 'is endowed with a wonderful capacity. It renders its wearer invisible to mortal eye, though to him everything around remains visible.'

But, alack! no sooner is the cap in his hand than he sets out again in hot haste for Tiflis, and before one has time to ask 'Where art thou?' has arrived in the city. Entering the King's palace unperceived, he is able to gaze as long as he likes upon the Princess; and though her people become somehow aware that there is a stranger about, and search for him, no one can be found. After some days of this, however, the Beauty bethinks her of the name of her adorer, and calling him to her, says in a supplicating tone,

‘Do but show thyself to me, and I consent to wed thee.’

Karabed takes off his cap, and stands before her. ‘The Princess is sweetness itself to him.

‘Ah! dear Sir!’ she cries, ‘I have been dying of love for thee ever since thy departure! Why didst thou leave me? My heart has every day called for thee. I am thine, thine for ever! But if thou love me as I love thee, thou canst not refuse to tell me the secret of thy invisibility.’

Then Karabed, beguiled by the sweet words and glances of the Princess, tells her the secret of the silken cap. She again invites him to sup with her, gives him drugged wine, and steals his cap while he sleeps. And again at dawn, while still drowsy, he is turned out of the palace by her servants.

Arrived at Bagdad, after begging his bread all the way back and tramping the long distance on foot, he did not at first present himself before his mother, for greatly he feared her reproaches. Weeping, he went from one Bagdad matron to another, praying them to intercede for him with her and obtain permission to kiss her hand. Having at last received her forgiveness. Karabed vowed that, if she would now impart to him

another of his father's secrets, he would not rest until he had recovered the magical objects of which he had been robbed in the King's palace.

The good dame then went to the chest, and took from it a small box of carved ebony, which she handed to the youth, saying,

‘This, my son, is the last of your father's secret treasures. If thou lose this also, our last source of wealth will be gone from us, and we must then perish of want. Open now the box.’

Karabed took out of it an ivory whistle.

‘Put it to thy lips and blow.’

He did so, and immediately the house and garden were full of soldiers.

‘Blow now at the other end.’

He blew, and the soldiers vanished from sight.

‘Mother! With thy leave, I will make war on the King of Tiflis and recover all that I have lost!’

He took his mother's blessing and set out. Arrived near the city, he sat him down on a hill opposite the gates, put the ivory whistle to his lips, and blew loud and shrill. An army immediately appeared of which the soldiers were so numerous as to cover the ground all around the city. The



"PAYING HIS POLIRAS, SAW BEHIND THE WINDOW PANE THE BEAUTY WITHOUT PEER

King, struck with terror, sends out heralds to ask the intentions of their leader.

‘I have come to make war upon you! For whom did you take me that you entreated me so shamefully?’

Then they saw that this leader was none other than the young merchant from Bagdad, and the King, calling to him his daughter, said to her in anger,

‘’Tis thou who art the cause of this misfortune which has befallen the city! Go meet this young man, and make thy peace with him, or it will be for me to punish thee as thou hast deserved.’

Then the Princess wrote and sent to the youth a letter—‘I come to thee, my beloved, in all haste! Let us go forthwith to any church thou mayst choose and be wed, and return thence to my father’s house. Dismiss thy soldiers, for fear they behold me on the way.’

No sooner had Karabed read this letter than he saw the Princess with her escort approaching from the city. Raising the whistle to his lips, he blew into its reverse end, and the soldiers forthwith disappeared. Then the maiden comes up, bringing a message from the King, her father,

giving his consent to the marriage and accepting the youth as his son-in-law. With her blandishments she causes him to forget all caution, and he finally reveals to her the secret of the whistle, though he does not give it up to her. Then says the Princess,

‘Put it back in the box, and put thy seal on it. A servant shall bear it to the palace, for it would be a sin to enter the church carrying with thee such magic. After the wedding, when we have returned home together, thou shalt thyself remove the seal.’

The youth, suspecting no treachery, consents, and the box is sealed and sent by the hand of a servant to the palace. But when the couple arrive at the church door the Princess stops and exclaims,

‘I have forgotten something! I cannot be wed before I have kissed the hands of my parents and received their blessing. It would be unseemly, and would likewise certainly bring us ill luck! I will hasten back and return immediately.’

But when the Princess came to the palace with her attendants, she at once asked for the box, broke the seals, took out the whistle, and then

sent her people to maltreat the youth and drive him forth from the city.

Whither could he now go ! There was nothing to be gained by returning to Bagdad even should he obtain his mother's forgiveness. So he made his way to the seashore and embarked on a ship, determined to wander as far as possible from his native land. When they had sailed many days a storm arose and the ship was wrecked. Clinging to two spars which he managed to get hold of, he made his way to the rocky shore near, but only to find himself faint and weary on an uninhabited island. He managed, however, to satisfy his hunger with the fruits of many kinds that here grew abundantly, and thus he lived.

As he one day wandered over the island, Karabed came upon two immense apple-trees, the like of which he had never before seen or even heard of. The fruit of one of these trees, though fine and well coloured, was of ordinary size ; but those of the other were as large as a man's head. Plucking one of these immense apples, Karabed had no sooner eaten part of it than he found himself taking rapidly the shape of an ass with long ears and longer tail. The grass under his feet now became his chief

sustenance, though the mind of a man still remained to him, and he knew that he was a man changed into an ass.

One day, as he grazed here and there, he came again to the two apple-trees, and began to eat of the smaller fruit lying among the grass under the other tree. Suddenly, to his great joy, he found himself again a man, and at the same moment he caught sight of a ship passing at a little distance. The sailors, hearing his cries, put off in a boat and soon took him on board with them laden with the apples which he hastily collected, thinking that they might be of use to him. After hearing the story of his late adventures, the captain of the ship gave him clothes and money and a free passage, and in course of time he once more arrived in the city of Tiflis.

Taking his way to the market-place, Karabed squatted him down cross-legged on the ground and set out in front of him, on some broad green leaves, two of the monstrous apples. People soon began to stop and wonder at their size; some inquired the price; but no one bought, as for each one the vendor asked five golden liras. At length the fame of them reached the ears of the King's

daughter, who sent a servant to bid the merchant bring them to the palace. And when the Princess saw the size and beauty of the apples, she was so pleased with them that she sent down to him a purse of twenty golden liras instead of the ten he had asked for his wares. She then invited thirty-nine of her friends to dinner in the garden-parlour, and at the end of the repast the two apples were cut up into forty pieces, and eaten by the Princess and her guests. As each looked up to exclaim 'How delicious!' she saw her companions transformed into she-asses; and, led by the Princess, they all trotted off into the garden to graze on the lawns.

When the King heard what had happened he became as one distracted. All the physicians of the city were forthwith sent for, and consulted together; but none knew of a nostrum powerful enough to change back to their human forms the unhappy maidens. Nor of any effect were the many spells and incantations of the priests and dervishes, magicians and soothsayers, wizards and witches whom the great reward offered by the King brought in dozens not only from all parts of the kingdom but also from neighbouring lands.

For, after trying on the King's daughter all their diverse arts, they with one accord declared that it was her own wickedness that had thus brought the punishment of heaven upon her.

In the meantime our young merchant had bought and donned the habit of a physician, taken a shop in the bazaar, garnished its shelves with drugs, and now gave out that he was the famous Doctor Karabobo lately arrived from China. When the King heard of this, he sent in all haste for this newly arrived foreign physician who professed himself able to do all that was required of him, but on certain conditions only.

‘Ask half my kingdom!’ cried the distracted King, who sat in the council chamber with his twelve Viziers, ‘only give back to me my child and to these my friends their daughters!’

‘My conditions, O King, are three. When thou hast agreed to them before witnesses, I will proceed to cure the Princess and her ladies.’

‘Name them!’

‘First, the Princess must be given to me in marriage.’

‘Granted,’ said the King. The marriage contract was at once written out, signed with the

royal seal, and witnessed by the twelve Viziers. The Physician took the paper, placed it in his bosom, and went on:

‘I demand the restitution of the eighty bales of stuffs of which the Princess deprived the two merchants of Erzeroum.’

The bales were brought from the Princess’s apartments.

‘’Tis well. Bring now the forty bales belonging to the merchant of Bagdad, together with his purse, the forty liras which he paid out of it every day, his silken cap, and his whistle, all of which the Princess filched from him.’

The King, marvelling at the Physician’s knowledge of these things, had them all brought to him save the money which the Princess had squandered. Her father, therefore, begged him not to demand what the purse had contained from day to day as there was not enough money in the royal treasury to pay such an immense sum.

‘Then the King need not open his treasury—I have no wish to ruin my royal father-in-law to be,’ replied Doctor Karabobo, making a lowly salaam as he spoke. ‘Bring to me now my forty

patients, and let me heal them without more delay.'

The forty donkeys were then led into the council chamber, and the Physician, taking from his wallet an apple of ordinary size, cut it into ten pieces, which he offered in turn to ten of the animals, and these, immediately after swallowing the morsels, recovered their human shape. A second, third, and fourth apple were likewise divided, and with the same result. The King and the Viziers embraced their recovered daughters, and then there was both laughing and weeping.

Meanwhile the pretended Physician had blown thrice on his whistle, and soon the chamber was seen to be filled with armed men.

'Who are these?' cried the King in great alarm, seeing that the men were not his own soldiers.

'Let not the King be afraid; these are the body-guard who will escort my betrothed to my mother's house at Bagdad, where our wedding will be held.'

'Dost thou still desire to wed me in spite of all the evil I have wrought thee?' asked the Princess, recognising in the Physician the young merchant whom she had so grievously wronged.

‘Yea, my Princess, for I still love thee in spite of it all!’

Then the King’s daughter repented her of her misdeeds, and kissed the hand of her betrothed. She took leave of her father, and they set out for Bagdad.

Going by way of Erzeroum, Karabed sought out the two unlucky traders, restored to them their eighty bales of merchandise, and left them rejoicing. As the party neared Bagdad, he sent forward messengers to announce to his mother his return, and a large company of his friends came out to meet and welcome him. Mother and son at last embraced each other, and when the Princess had kissed the hand of the widow and been welcomed as her daughter-in-law, Karabed bade his men bring the bales of merchandise into the courtyard, and showing them to her, said,

‘There, mother mine, is all that I so foolishly lost! And here is the maiden of Tiflis on whose account thy son was not only reduced to poverty but changed into an ass. But by good fortune I was able to regain my shape as a man and to vanquish her, though not before she also had been

changed into a she-ass. Now she is again the most beautiful among women, and willing to become thy dutiful daughter-in-law. Let us at once set about preparing for the wedding ceremonies.'

Well, in a few days' time all was ready, thanks to the magic purse, and the couple were married in grand style. For forty days and nights there was feasting and rejoicing throughout the city, with music and dancing; and for years afterwards folks would talk of what grand doings there had been when Karabed the merchant wedded the Princess of Tiflis

XIV

HOW HASANEK OUTWITTED THE DEV

ONCE upon a time, and in a certain village of Kurdistan, there lived three brothers whose names were Shaban, Qasim, and Hasanek; and the last, though he was the youngest, had more wit in his little finger than the other two possessed between them.

One day at the beginning of harvest, Hasanek said to his brothers, 'Take your sickles, lads, and let us be off to another countryside, where we may find work to do and get good wages for doing it!'

They agreed, and the three made ready, put food in their double-sacks, and set off. When they had tramped half a day's journey, and were come to the uplands, they found, as they had expected, wide fields of yellow corn ripe for the sickle.

‘This is the place for us!’ cried Hasanek. ‘Come along, lads, let us set to and cut this corn. The owner is sure to turn up before long and pay us our wages.’

So the three went into a field and, stooping to their task, began to cut and bind the corn. They had worked for a couple of days without seeing any of the people of that country, when suddenly the ground began to tremble and shake, and Hasanek, looking up, beheld a Dev coming towards them. Cried he to his brothers,

‘Don’t be frightened lads, but there is a Dev coming, and belike these fields are his. Hold your tongues, and go on reaping, both of you, and let me do the talking.’

Then up strode the Dev, and shouted in a voice like the roar of a lion, ‘Who are you, and where do you come from, and why are you cutting my corn? I will make one bite of the three heads of you!’

‘*Effendi*,’ replied Hasanek, straightening himself and salaaming to the monster, ‘we are three brothers, and we were on our way to look for work when we came across these fields which seemed waiting for the sickle. So we bent our

backs and began to cut, deeming that the owner would presently come hither, and would pay us our hire.'

'Tis well, my son, 'tis well,' replied the Dev. 'Give me now thy sickle, and I and thy brothers will reap while thou goest on an errand for me. Sit thee down awhile, and I will give thee a letter to take to my wife.'

The Dev took an ink-horn from the folds of his girdle, and when he had written the letter, he put it into the hand of Hasanek. Then, pointing to the east, he said,

'Seest thou yonder mountain? On the top of it thou wilt find my house where live my wife and three daughters. Give this letter into the hand of my wife, and bring back to me what I have bidden her send by thee.'

So Hasanek took the letter and set out for the mountain, while the Dev, with Shaban and Qasim, reaped away until with sunset came the hour of evening prayer. But when the youth had been climbing the hills for a couple of hours he grew weary, and sat himself down to rest awhile. As he sat there he took out the letter, opened it, and read :

‘ When the youth who is the bearer of this letter is come within the house, do thou slay him and with his head make me a pilaf against the time I return home to-morrow.’

Hasanek laughed, tore up the letter into little bits, and wrote another as follows :

‘ When the youth who is the bearer of this letter comes to thee, see thou prepare for him a pilaf with the head of the brown bullock, and on the morrow send by him cooked flesh and loaves for the harvesters.’

He then went on until he came to the Dev’s castle. The Dev’s wife, when she had read the letter, prepared the pilaf for her guest’s supper, and spread a bed for him. When morning came she placed the bread and meat in a pair of saddle-bags, which she threw over the back of a mule ; and Hasanek, after saluting his hostess, drove the beast before him down the mountain-side, singing and whistling as he went.

When the Dev saw the youth thus returning safe and sound, he was both puzzled and angry ; but he took the provisions out of the saddle-bags, and they all four sat down and ate their fill. The Dev then took out again ink-horn and paper, and when

he had written another letter he gave it into the hand of Hasanek, saying,

‘Take the mule and return to my house. Give this letter to my wife, and see thou do her bidding.’

But as soon as Hasanek was well on his way up the mountain, he sat him down to rest as before, and taking out the Dev’s letter from his bosom this is what he read :

‘Thou evil woman, why hast thou not done my bidding? If thou neglect to do now as I charge thee, I will come myself on the morrow and cut off thy hands and feet. Slay me now this youth and make of his head a pilaf against I return on the third day.’

This Hasanek tore up as he had done the other, and wrote instead :

‘My good wife, when this is in thine hand, do thou slay the red bullock, prepare kebābs of the flesh, and send of them to me to-morrow, with six loaves of barley bread, by this youth whom I have betrothed to our youngest daughter.’

He then went on his way, and when he was come to the Dev’s castle, and had saluted his wife, he gave the letter into her hand. He rested

there that night after supping on the *kebābs*, and when he arose in the morning he bade the hostess give him the provisions that he might carry them down to the field for the Dev and his reapers. When she had laden an ass with the meat and bread, the Dev's wife gave the halter into his hand, saying,

‘Greet the Dev from me thus: “*O abominable man, wilt thou empty our house of provisions?*” But a good arrival to thee, my son-in-law to be, and have thou luck on thy journey!’

‘I thank thee, good wife,’ returned Hasanek, and may Allah look favourably upon thee.’

When the Dev saw from afar that Hasanek was returning a second time safe and sound from his castle, he began to suspect that the youth had outwitted him, and determined to take matters into his own hands forthwith. So when they had eaten he said,

‘Now, my lads, we can finish cutting the corn in an hour or two if we work with a will, and then you must all three come home with me that I may pay you your wages.’

So when they had cleared the field and stoked the corn, the four of them set off up the mountain.

As they went Hasanek found an opportunity of whispering to his brothers,

‘Keep your four eyes open, my lads, in the place whither we are going, and follow me when I bid you, or it will be the worse for us all.’

Well, by-and-by they arrived at the Dev’s castle, and as there was now plenty of meat in the house, and the Dev felt rather weary, he decided to put off the killing of the three youths until the morrow. So after supper he and his family went to their beds, leaving the brothers to sleep in the kitchen. Shaban and Qasim soon began to nod, but Hasanek watched with eyes and ears open until, by the regular snoring of the couple in the next room, he knew that they were fast asleep. He then rose, and going softly to the bedside of the Dev’s wife, slipped from her finger the ruby ring which brought good luck to its possessor. Returning to the kitchen, he woke up his brothers, and the three set off in all haste, and by daybreak came to the gates of a city just as they were being opened. Here they were safe, for the King of this city had many soldiers and the Dev dared not come within his borders.

Well, it was about this hour of the morning

when the Dev and his wife awoke. He got up and was looking among the knives hanging on the wall for the sharpest with which to kill his guests, when she cried from her couch,

‘Why Dev! why husband! my ring is gone!’

‘Has it?’ he answered, ‘then perhaps the lads too are gone.’ Hastening into the kitchen, he found it empty, and the door of the castle open. He then set off down the mountain in pursuit of the thieves; but, as they had such a start of him, he could not come up with them; so he turned back in a rage and went home to his castle.

Well, the three brothers decided to remain for the present in this city, and the eldest hired himself to a shoemaker, the second to a tailor, and the youngest to a carpenter, for each had served his apprenticeship to one of these trades, and could work at it. Now the eldest, Shaban, was jealous of Hasanek, because he had the ruby ring of the Dev’s wife, and he was ready to compass his brother’s death so that he might himself get possession of this jewel, which Hasanek had placed for safety in the hands of the master-carpenter for whom he worked.

So one day Shaban made up his mind what to

do; and straightway he went to the King in his palace, saluted him, and said,

‘My King, please your Majesty, you have many a fine thing in your palace already, but if you had besides the bed-quilt which belongs to the Dev who lives in the mountains beyond your borders, no other King would rival you in riches.’

‘Yea,’ replied the King, ‘I have heard of this wondrous quilt which, they say, is embroidered all over with pearls and diamonds. But how am I to get possession of it—for this Dev does not live in my kingdom?’

Said Shaban, ‘If your Majesty were to issue a proclamation saying that you would give a rich reward to whoever should be found valiant enough to obtain the Dev’s bed-quilt, some hero would surely come forward to undertake the task.’

‘Thou sayest well,’ replied the King, and he sent out his heralds. But though they made the proclamation throughout the length and breadth of the land, no one came forward to do the King’s behest, and at the end of ten days he sent for Shaban to come again to the palace.

‘What is to be done now, my man? It seems that I have among my subjects no hero valiant

enough to go to the Dev's castle and bring me the quilt.'

'Well, your Majesty, I feared as much. But I have a young brother who is very valiant and quick-witted, but so modest that he feared to offer himself. He also knows the way to the Dev's castle, and is just the man the King needs.'

'Then bring thy brother here to me!'

So Shaban went to the carpenter's shop where his brother worked, and bade him come along at once to the palace, as the King had sent for him.

'What does the King want with me? What wrong have I done?' asked Hasanek, who was rather frightened at his words.

'It is for thy good,' replied Shaban. 'The King is minded to make a great man of thee if thou do but his bidding.'

They came to the palace, and when Hasanek had made his salaams the King said to him,

'Thou hast heard the proclamation which my heralds have made?'

'Yea, my King, I have heard it.'

'Well, no man of my people deems himself valiant enough to brave the Dev in his castle. Thou who art a stranger from the neighbouring

country knowest the way, and hast likewise, they tell me, courage and wit. If thou bring me the Dev's quilt that is embroidered with pearls and diamonds the promised reward shall be thine, and I will also make a great man of thee; but if thou refuse or turn back from the task, I will take thy head; so choose quickly.'

Well, what could the poor youth do? He was indeed between the Devil and the deep sea! So, saying to himself, 'May the Blessing of my Father and Mother in Paradise be with me and aid me!' he set off on his journey to the mountains.

He had not gone very far before he met an Old Woman, whom he greeted with a cheery 'Good day, mother!'

'And a good day to thee, my son, and many more. Whither away all alone and in such haste?'

'Oh, I am bound for the Dev's castle, over yonder. The King has taken a fancy to have his pearl and diamond embroidered bed-quilt, and has sent me to fetch it.'

'Alack, my boy, I pity thy youth! why wert thou chosen for this terrible task? The Dev will devour thee!'

‘I had no choice, mother, it was the King’s command.’

‘Well, my son, let me advise thee. Go back to those that sent thee, and let them give thee three reeds filled with lice, fleas and bugs. Take these and come by night to the Dev’s house. Climb into the tree which is beneath the little window of his bed-chamber, and when thou hearest him snoring, enter—for the window will be open these warm nights—and empty the reeds upon his bed and go forth again. The Dev and his wife will presently awake, and not being able to endure the bites of all these creatures, will belike throw the quilt out upon the branches and leave it hanging there awhile. Then seize thou the quilt and make off with all speed; for if the Dev catch thee, thy last hour has come.’

The lad thanked the Old Woman for her advice, and having followed it, midnight found him running down the mountain side with the famous quilt tucked under his arm. In the meantime, the Dev, when he and his wife found themselves a little more comfortable, went to the window to take in his quilt again. Stretching out his long arms he felt among the branches for it, but quilt there was none.

‘Why, wife, the quilt is gone!’ he cried.

‘It has slipped down, belike,’ said she, ‘go out, and thou wilt find it on the ground.’

But when the Dev went down and looked, there was no quilt to be found anywhere! ‘It is that Hasanek!’ he cried, and set off down the hill in pursuit of him. Hasanek, however, had by this time reached the plain, and long before the Dev could overtake him, he had crossed the river which bounded the King’s territory, and thither the Monster did not dare to follow him for fear of being pursued by the soldiers. When he came to the city, the guards were opening the gates, and he carried his precious burden to the palace. There he sat on the marble steps until the servants should have carried his message to the King.

When he was brought before the King, Hasanek unfolded and spread the wondrous quilt before him; and when the King saw the sheen of the many pearls and the sparkle of the diamonds, he rubbed his hands with delight, and slapped the youth on the shoulder, crying, ‘*Afferim! Afferim!* Well done! Well done, my good lad! Saw ever anyone the like of this?—’Tis beautiful, BEAUTIFUL!

But the King was a very miserly man, and

instead of the rich reward he had promised to whoever should bring him the quilt, he gave the youth only a couple of suits of clothes and sent him away. So Hasanek returned to the carpenter's shop and continued to work at his trade, saying nothing to his brothers of his exploit.

Shaban, however, was very curious to know what had happened, and as Hasanek refused to answer any of the questions he put to him about his adventure with the Dev, he after a while went again to the King, salaamed, and said,

‘May the King live for ever! Has my brother brought you the Dev's pearl and diamond quilt?’

‘Indeed he has, and a very fine quilt it is, and more befitting a King's palace than the castle of a Dev.’

‘Then I rejoice that your Majesty possesses it. But the Dev has also in his stables a wonderful horse which can go like the wind; and outside the stable hangs a bell which rings whenever the horse neighs. The King has nothing so wonderful in the palace stables as this Dev possesses.’

When the greedy King heard this, he determined to obtain also the horse and the bell. So again the heralds were sent out to proclaim a rich

reward to whoever might bring them to him. But as no one offered, he sent word to Hasanek's master to bid the lad come to the palace.

So, willy-nilly, the youth must go to the King, who said to him,

‘Thou must go again to the Dev's castle and bring to me the horse and the bell that are in his stables. If thou bring them, the promised reward is thine; and more besides. If thou bring them not, thou wilt sorely rue it: so bethink thee well!’

What was the unlucky youth to do? ‘Even if I can manage to get into the Dev's stable,’ said he to himself, ‘the horse will be sure to neigh, the bell will ring, the Dev will hear it and come down to devour me. If I stay here, the King will cut off my head. If I run away, he will kill my brothers. I had best try my luck with the Dev; it seems my only chance.’

So the next morning at daybreak he set off, and as luck would have it, he had not gone far before he met again the same Old Woman, and saluted her.

‘Whither away, my son, thus early in the morning, and alone?’ she asked him.

‘Whither away, indeed, Mother—the King has

charged me to bring to him the Dev's horse and bell, or he will slay me; and as I thus have Death both before and behind me, I may as well risk the adventure. A man can anyhow die but once.'

Said the Old Woman, 'A hard *kismet* is thine, indeed, my son! But listen thou to me and thou mayst belike escape both the King and the Dev. Return to the city and provide thyself with forty-one plugs of wadding, such as are used for bottles. For the bell has forty-one holes, and if these are plugged it will not ring when the horse neighs. Be there about midnight, there will be no moon at that hour, and may the blessing of Allah go with thee!'

So Hasanek returned to the city, bought the cotton, and made of it forty-one plugs which he bestowed in his double-sack, and set out again, arriving at the mountain top where was the Dev's castle about the hour of midnight, when he at once set to work to plug the holes of the bell which hung outside the stable of the famous horse. He had already plugged forty of the holes when the horse neighed and the bell rang. Hearing the Dev coming downstairs from his chamber, he ran into the big barn, hid himself among the corn

which was still unthreshed, and held his breath while the Dev went round the stable, sniffing, and roaring, 'I smell human flesh!' But as he could find no one, and the bell had not rung at all loudly because forty of the holes were stopped, he thought he must have been dreaming; so, being very sleepy, he went back to bed again.

Hasanek waited awhile, and then leaving his hiding-place, carefully plugged the remaining hole of the bell, untied the horse from his manger, saddled him, fixed the bell to the saddle, and made off with all speed. But as ill-luck would have it, the mare at this moment whinnied, and the horse answered her and woke the Dev who, thinking something must really be wrong in the stable, ran downstairs to find his horse gone and also the bell. Mounting the mare in hot haste he galloped after the thief, whom he pursued almost to the gates of the city, crying after him,

'Thou rascal! thou villain! give up my horse and my bell, or I will do thee a mischief!'

'You are too late, good master Dev,' replied Hasanek. 'Look to yourself, for the soldiers are coming!'

At this the Dev got frightened; he turned the

mare and rode off the King's territory as fast as he could, while Hasanek made his way to the palace with the horse and the bell. The King was delighted to have the horse in his stables, and the bell they hung outside where it continued to ring whenever the horse neighed. But in place of the rich reward he had offered to whoso should bring him these possessions, he gave the youth only as much cloth as would make him a couple of suits, and ten silver pieces.

But the youth said to his brothers no word either good or bad. And when the covetous Shaban saw that he had not succeeded in destroying him, he cast about for some other means of getting rid of Hasanek. After cudgelling his stupid brains for the best part of a year he went once more to the King and, louting low before him, cried,

‘O King, live for ever! Has my brother brought the King the horse and bell of the Dev?’

‘That he has, and right glad am I to have them in my stables. A worthy lad is thy brother!’

‘Yea, my King, he is a clever lad and no coward. There are few men who would venture themselves within reach of that Dev. But why should not the King have the Dev himself in a cage side by side

with the strange beasts he keeps in the garden of his *serai*?¹—no doubt my brother would find means to bring him if the King bade him.’

So the heralds were once more sent out, and this time to proclaim that the King would not only give broad lands and much gold to the man who would bring to him this Dev, but also marry him to the Princess his daughter. But again no one was found willing to undertake this doughty deed; and presently word came to the master carpenter to send Hasanek to the palace. Said he to his journeyman, when the King’s messenger had departed,

‘Hearest thou that?—thou art to go now and bring the Dev himself to the King!’

‘How can I bring the Dev away from his castle? Were I now to approach him, wroth as he is with me—and well he may be!—he would soon make an end of me.’

‘Well, my lad, I am right grieved for thee, for a better journeyman I have never had in my shop. But no man may disobey the King’s command and live. And belike thy luck will serve thee, as before.’

¹ Palace.

Thus encouraged, Hasanek set out on his perilous errand, and, as before, he met the Old Woman not far from the city gates.

‘Whither away now, my son?’ she asked when they had exchanged greetings.

‘Oh, this time the King has bidden me bring the Dev himself; but how to set about it I haven’t an idea. Can you advise me again, good mother?’

‘Be of good courage, my lad, with Allah’s aid thou shalt outwit the monster and lead him captive to the King. But first return and disguise thyself as an old man in ragged attire, taking on thy shoulder a bag of tools, axe and adze and saw, and all the rest, together with a stout rope. Then hie thee up the mountain, and when thou art come to the castle do thou begin to hew down the plane-tree that grows before the gate. The Dev, when he hears the sound of thy axe, will come forth and ask what art about, and thou must say, “Oh, I bring good news for thee, Gaffer Dev!—Hasanek died this morning and I have come hither to make a coffin for him. But it is hard work for an old man like me cutting down this tough plane-tree.”’

Well, Hasanek followed the Old Woman’s

directions, and when the Dev learnt that his enemy was no more, he cried joyfully,

‘Hasanek is dead, sayest thou? The dog! That is good hearing! Here, old man, hand me the axe, and I will soon have the tree down that is to make his coffin!’

So between the pair of them, the tree was soon cut down, sawn into planks and the coffin nearly finished before the Dev noticed the size of it.

‘Why, old man,’ cried he then, ‘why hast made the coffin so long?—Hasanek was no taller than his fellows!’

‘Hast never heard that the youth grew two *pics* taller after he carried off thy bed-quilt?—thy inches and his are now about the same, and lucky it is for thee that the fever took him! So just lie down in his coffin a moment, like a good fellow, that I may know whether we have made it long enough and deep enough for Hasanek.’

Then the simple Dev laid himself down in the coffin, and the old man took up the lid, which was ready, saying, ‘Let us see now whether the lid fits properly.’

He clapped it on, and before the Dev began at

all to understand what he was about, Hasanek had driven in half-a-dozen stout nails.

‘Old man! Old man!’ then cried he, ‘let me out!—the coffin fits bravely, but I am stifling!’

‘Be patient awhile, Master Dev, for I am going to take you to the King who is anxious to make your good acquaintance. When we arrive at the palace you shall be let out, but not before.’

Then the Dev understood that it was no old man, but Hasanek, and that he had been tricked. The youth now doffed his rags and his turban, fetched the mare from the stable, fastened the coffin on the saddle, and brought it to the King. It was set in the middle of the courtyard, and all the people of the palace gathered on the balconies and at the windows to see the terrible Dev when he should be let loose, while the guards stood in their ranks below, and behind them the townsfolk among whom were Hasanek’s brothers.

‘Now,’ cried Hasanek, ‘with the King’s permission, I will open the coffin and exhibit the Dev. But let some of the soldiers be at hand when the lid is off, or the monster may do us a mischief.’

At the King’s orders fifty soldiers in armour

advanced and formed a circle round the coffin, and with them came Shaban, curious to know how his brother had accomplished this feat also. When all the nails save two or three had been pulled out, the Dev burst off the lid and, springing out of the coffin, seized Shaban, who happened to be nearest, and squeezed the life out of him before the soldiers could interfere. With a couple of mighty buffets he then laid low half a dozen of the guards, rushed out of the gateway, and made his way home again.

Then stood forth Hasanek before the King who sat at the palace door, made his salaams, and said,

‘ O King, when I set forth to bring thee the pearl and diamond quilt from the Dev’s castle, thou didst promise me a great reward and honour besides. My reward was two suits of raiment only. When the King sent me a second time to bring him the Dev’s horse and his magic bell, he promised me likewise a rich reward ; but I again received of his bounty only two suits and ten pieces of silver. A third time I went at the King’s command to the Dev’s castle, and now I was to bring the monster himself—a much harder task ; and this time the King promised not only to make a rich and mighty man of me, but to give me in marriage the Princess,

his daughter. I have indeed brought the Dev, as this company can witness, though all the King's soldiers have not been able to hold him. Give me, therefore, O King, the reward due to me, and let the betrothal ceremonies be held without delay.'

Then the King, fearing to be shamed before his people, took Hasanek by the hand, and cried in the hearing of all,

'O hero and son-in-law, I did but withhold thy just reward the first and second time in order further to prove thee! The betrothal shall be celebrated on the morrow, and from this day thou art my son and the heir to my kingdom.' And he took the gold chain from his neck and hung it round that of Hasanek, kissed him on both cheeks, and led him to the banqueting hall.

So the next day Hasanek was betrothed to the Princess, who had fallen in love with his handsome face and figure as he stood before her father on the palace steps. In a few weeks' time they were married with great ceremony, and the rejoicings and feastings lasted forty days and forty nights.

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